

WOMEN IN A DEGRADED AMAZON: STRUGGLES FOR LAND, BODY AND NATURE

Field studies in the Colombian
and Peruvian Amazon



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About the report

This report is commissioned by the IUCN NL. The underlying research was carried out in late 2023 and early 2024. In Peru, the study was conducted by Eliana Rojas Torres, with the help of Lya Segovia, Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental, Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes and Comité de Gestión de la Reserva Nacional Tambopata. The study in the Colombian Amazon was carried out by Catalina Oviedo Delgado, Laura Pérez Arjona, Camila Bermúdez, Paola Rojas and Nathalie Cedeño. Both studies were commissioned by IUCN NL.

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For security reasons, most names of people, communities and places have been anonymised.



About IUCN NL

The [Netherlands National Committee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN NL), is the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. Its mission is to safeguard nature as the basis for all life on Earth. Driven by its partners in countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, IUCN NL has been advocating responsible agricultural products for the past fifteen years. Its team of experts advises civil society organisations, governments, businesses and financial sectors on issues of agricultural governance, nature conservation, human rights and environmental rights.



About SPDA

The [Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental](#) (SPDA) is a civil association with educational and scientific purposes related to the care and protection of the environment. The organisation conducts research on public policy and environmental legislation, strengthening the capacities of the public sector, civil society and especially vulnerable populations, promoting dialogue and generating spaces for citizen participation, education, information and scientific research. SPDA works for a culture of citizen advocacy, to disseminate and guarantee the right to a healthy environment.



About FENAMAD

The [Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes](#) (FENAMAD) is the regional representative organisation of the Indigenous and native peoples composed of 38 native communities, isolated and initial contact people of the south-eastern region of the Peruvian Amazon. The organisation works in coordination with the organisation Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDSEP) and the Comité de Gestión de la Reserva Nacional Tambopata. FENAMAD channels local demands to the state and civil society, thus contributing to the protection of the rights of the communities.



About CDG

The [Comité de Gestión de la Reserva Nacional Tambopata](#) (CDG) is a participatory management space recognised by the National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State (SERNANP). Its mission is to protect, defend and conserve the Tambopata National Reserve — and in particular 80% of the Buffer Zone (230,000 hectares) — by preventing illegal mining from entering. CDG has a great capacity for advocacy in national and international spaces.



[Fundacion para la Conservación y Desarrollo Sostenible](#) (FCDS) is driven by a higher purpose: working collectively to transform realities and environments for the common good and the conservation of the Earth. Its mission is to promote sustainable and equitable development while safeguarding the natural and social integrity of Amazonian communities and ecosystems. Operating in Colombia and Peru, FCDS is committed to fostering a culture of peace through an inclusive, multi-level, and inter-institutional approach, working alongside communities, local and national organisations, diverse sectors and government authorities.



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Case studies

We deliberately selected relevant and representative cases of real situations experienced by women in the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon. The case studies in this report do not represent the situation of women in Peru and Colombia as a whole. We cannot guarantee the integrity of these case studies or whether the situations on the ground have changed for better or worse since the sources were consulted.

ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| PPA | Private protected areas |
| AFD | Agence Francaise De Developpement (French Development Agency) |
| AFIMAD | Asociación Forestal Indígena de Madre de Dios (Indigenous Forestry Association of Madre de Dios) |
| AIDSEP | Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (Inter-ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle) |
| CEM | Centro Emergencia Mujer (Women's Emergency Centre) |
| CDG | Comité de Gestión de la Reserva Nacional Tambopata (Management Committee of the Tambopata National Reserve) |
| CEDAW | Comité de la Convención sobre la Eliminación de todas las formas de Discriminación contra la Mujer (Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) |
| COHARYIMA | Council Harakbut, Yine, Machiguenga |
| COINBAMAD | Consejo Indígena de bajo Madre de Dios (Indigenous Council of Bajo Madre de Dios) |
| CONPES | Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (National Council for Economic and Social Policy) |
| COP | Colombian Peso |
| ECA-Amarakaeri | Ejecutor de Contrato de Administración de la Reserva Comunal Amarakaeri (Executor of the Administration Contract for the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve) |
| DANE | Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Statistics) |
| DAR | Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Law, Environment and Natural Resources) |
| DEMUS | Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (Study for the Defence of Women's Rights) |
| DEVIDA | Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas (National Commission for Development and Drug-Free Life) |
| DICAPI | Dirección General de Capitanía y Guardacostas de la Marina de Guerra del Perú (Directorate General of the Captaincy and Coast Guard of the Peruvian Navy) |
| DRA | Dirección Regional de Agricultura de Madre de Dios (Regional Directorate of Agriculture of Madre de Dios) |
| ECA | Ejecutor del Contrato de Administración (Executor of the Administration Contract) |
| EICDGB | Estrategia Integral de Control de la Deforestación y Gestión de los Bosques (Integrated Control of Deforestation and Forest Management Strategy) |
| ENUT | Encuesta Nacional de Uso del Tiempo (National Time Use Survey) |
| FAO | UN Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FEDEPALMA | Federación Nacional de Cultivadores de Palma de Aceite (National Federation of Oil Palm Growers) |
| FEMA | Fiscalía Especializada en Medio Ambiente (Environmental Prosecutor's Office) |
| FENAMAD | Federación Nativa del río Madre de Dios y Afluentes (Native Federation of the Madre de Dios River and its Affluents) |
| GOREMAD | Gobierno Regional de Madre de Dios (Regional Government of Madre de Dios) |
| ICA | Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (Colombian Agricultural Institute) |
| ICBF | Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare) |
| IDP | Internally displaced person |
| IFA | Incentivo Forestal Amazónico (Amazon Forest Incentive) |
| INEI | Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (National Institute of Statistics and Informatics) |
| REDD+ Initiative | Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation |
| ITPS | Instrumento de Transformación de la Producción Sostenible (Instrument for the Transformation of Sustainable Production) |
| IUCN NL | International Union for Conservation of Nature Netherlands |
| MADS | Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development) |
| ASM | Artisanal and small-scale mining |
| MDD | Madre de Dios |
| MINAM | Ministerio del Ambiente (Ministry of Environment) |
| MINCUL | Ministerio de Cultura (Ministry of Culture) |
| MIDAGRI | Ministerio de Desarrollo Agrario y Riego (Ministry of Agrarian Development and Irrigation) |
| MIMP | Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables (Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations) |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| MININTER | Ministerio del Interior (Ministry of the Interior) |
| MINJUSDH | Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos (Ministry of Justice and Human Rights) |
| NDC | Contribuciones Nacionales Determinantes (National Determinant Contributions) |
| NORAD | Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation |
| NICFI | Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| OJEIMAD | Organización de Jóvenes Indígenas de Madre de Dios (Organisation of Indigenous Youth of Madre de Dios) |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNODC | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| OPIAC | Organización Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonia Colombiana (National Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon) |
| PAC | Plan de Acción Conjunto (Joint Action Plan) |
| ED | Environmental defenders |
| PCM | Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros (Presidency of the Council of Ministers) |
| PIACI | Pueblos Indígenas en Aislamiento y Contacto Inicial (Indigenous Peoples in Isolation and Initial Contact) |
| PIVAC | Pacto Intergeneracional por la Vida del Amazonas colombiano (Intergenerational Pact for Life in the Colombian Amazon) |
| PNCVG | Plan Nacional Contra la Violencia de Género 2016-2021 (National Plan Against Gender Violence 2016-2021) |
| PNIS | Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito (Comprehensive National Programme for the Substitution of Illicitly Used Crops) |
| PNP | Policia Nacional del Perú (Peruvian National Police) |
| PES | Payments for Environmental Services |
| ACR | Reserva Comunal Amarakaeri (Amarakaeri Communal Reserve) |
| RD | Resolución Directoral (Directorial Resolution) |
| REINFO | Registro Integral de Formalización Minera (Integral Registry of Mining Formalisation) |
| SINEACE | Sistema Nacional de Evaluación, Acreditación y Certificación de la Calidad Educativa (National System of Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of Educational Quality) |
| SERNANP | Servicio Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado (National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State) |
| SINCHI | Instituto Amazónico de Investigaciones Científicas (Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research) |
| SPDA | Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (Peruvian Society of Environmental Law) |
| SUNARP | Superintendencia Nacional de los Registros Públicos (National Superintendence of Public Registries) |
| SUNAT | Superintendencia Nacional de Administración Tributaria (National Superintendence of Tax Administration) |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| GPR | Global participation rate |
| UGEL | Unidades de Gestión Escolar Local (Local School Management Units) |
| USD | United States Dollar |
| VM | Vice-ministry |
| GBV | Gender-based violence |

KEY FINDINGS IN A NUTSHELL



COLOMBIA

Colombian Amazon



In the **Colombian Amazon**, multiple drivers of **deforestation** relate to historically inadequate land formalisation processes, weak governmental protection and a lack of incentivised alternatives for people.



Women play vital roles within all of socioeconomic activities in the Colombian Amazon, but receive **unequal work benefits** to men, due to gender stereotypes, as well as no recognition for the care work they provide.

Although initiatives **promoting gender inclusion** in the region exist, **implementation gaps** persist – particularly in integrating Indigenous and peasant women's voices into conservation policies.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How do gender dynamics intersect with deforestation, environmental degradation, territory and violence in the Amazon region? By applying a gender lens to socio-environmental issues and focusing on the lived experiences of women in the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon, this report highlights how extractive economies, weak governance and structural inequalities contribute to environmental and social harm, disproportionately affect women.

Intersectional feminist approach

While Peru and Colombia face similar challenges, their distinct sociopolitical, economic and environmental contexts are examined separately — each with a tailored focus. The study applies an intersectional feminist approach to examine gendered dimensions of environmental degradation in the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon. In Peru's Madre de Dios, research focuses on the violence women environmental defenders face due to artisanal gold mining, analysing their political representation, freedom of movement and self-protection strategies. In Colombia, research expands across six departments to explore women's roles in deforestation drivers like land grabbing and mining, linking these threats to the concept of *cuerpo-territorio* (body-territory). Both cases assess the effectiveness of public policies in protecting women, highlighting areas for improvement in governance and gender-inclusive environmental strategies.

Findings: livelihoods, health, violence and leadership

The notion of gender has not been substantially included when exploring environmental issues in the Amazon. Also, the experiences of women in the context of deforestation and environmental degradation have been insufficiently documented. These studies in Peru and Colombia reveal that being a woman in these contexts adds layers of complexity and struggle, as deforestation and environmental destruction fuels gender-based violence.

Extractive economies — driven by illegal mining, land-use change and agribusiness — exacerbate deforestation and disproportionately impact women's livelihoods. Health consequences are severe, with pollution caused by mining and agrochemicals leading to mercury poisoning and reproductive health risks. In addition, women environmental defenders face systemic violence, yet institutional protections remain weak, with corruption and gender-exclusionary policies deepening their vulnerability. Leadership opportunities are limited, as stereotypes and resource disparities keep women out of decision-making spaces.

In Peru's Madre de Dios, women defenders confront not only environmental destruction but also human trafficking and violence, particularly Indigenous women who face growing insecurity due to illegal mining. Despite existing legal frameworks, weak enforcement and minimal female representation in governance structures hinder progress. In the Colombian Amazon, women are further marginalised by restricted land rights and economic exclusion, as land grabbing, illicit crops and mining drive both social and environmental degradation. While initiatives like Visión Amazonia promote gender inclusion, implementation gaps persist, particularly in integrating Indigenous and peasant women's voices into conservation policies.

A gender-inclusive approach

Women in the Amazon play a crucial role in environmental protection but face systemic barriers that threaten their safety and autonomy. Addressing these challenges requires a gender-inclusive approach that strengthens legal protections, expands participation and ensures equitable access to resources. Emphasising women's voices in environmental and policy frameworks, contributes to a just and sustainable future for the Amazon rainforest.

Recommendations: strengthening capacity and inter-institutional collaboration

For the Peruvian Amazon, adopting an integrated approach linking gender-based violence, environmental destruction and the criminalisation of women defenders is essential. Mental health services and protection mechanisms for affected communities must be strengthened. Indigenous and

local women require equal participation in decision-making structures. Capacity-building programmes for women defenders need to be expanded — with a focus on leadership, legal literacy and self-protection. And access to justice needs improvement by increasing institutional support, resources, and anti-corruption measures.

For the Colombian Amazon, it is crucial to integrate a gender perspective into forest conservation policies, recognising women's role in environmental stewardship. Land ownership inequalities need to be addressed by developing inclusive land redistribution schemes and tailored economic programmes. Women's leadership in territorial governance need to be promoted to ensure equitable access to financial resources and decision-making processes. And strengthening inter-institutional collaboration will provide comprehensive protection and economic opportunities for women defenders.

TABLE OF CONTENT

| | |
|--|------------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 13 |
| 2. FRAMEWORK | 14 |
| 2.1 Areas studied..... | 15 |
| 2.2 Methodology | 15 |
| 2.3 Key concepts | 16 |
| 2.4 Obstacles and limitations | 17 |
| 3. COUNTRY CONTEXT | 18 |
| 3.1. Peru..... | 18 |
| 3.1.1. Situation of environmental rights defenders in Peru..... | 18 |
| 3.1.2 Artisanal small-scale mining | 19 |
| 3.1.3. Gender-based violence | 21 |
| 3.1.4. Allegations of corruption in Madre de Dios | 22 |
| 3.2. Colombia | 23 |
| 3.2.1 Deforestation in the Colombian Amazon..... | 23 |
| 3.2.2. Land grabbing | 23 |
| 3.2.3. Cattle ranching..... | 23 |
| 3.2.4. Illicit crops | 23 |
| 3.2.5. Mining..... | 24 |
| 3.2.6. Agribusiness | 24 |
| 3.2.7. Population of the Colombian Amazon..... | 25 |
| 3.2.8. Roles of women in the Colombian Amazon | 25 |
| 4. STUDY FINDINGS | 27 |
| 4.1. Madre de Dios, Peru | 27 |
| 4.1.1. Overlapping land use rights and lack of security | 27 |
| 4.1.2. Lack of access to health services and education | 28 |
| 4.1.3. Effects of climate change, food (in)security and water pollution | 28 |
| 4.1.4. Insecurity, organised crime and impacts on communities | 29 |
| 4.1.5. Different types of violence women experience..... | 30 |
| 4.1.6. Political representativeness | 36 |
| 4.1.7. Access to justice | 39 |
| 4.1.8. Self-protection measures..... | 41 |
| 4.1.9. Public policies and state strategies for the protection of women defenders..... | 42 |
| 4.1.10. Policy implementation challenges..... | 44 |
| 4.1.11. Balance of inter-institutional coordination spaces | 47 |
| 4.2. Colombian Amazon..... | 49 |
| 4.2.1. Land grabbing | 49 |
| 4.2.2. Cattle ranching..... | 53 |
| 4.2.3. Illicit crops | 57 |
| 4.2.4. Role of women in mining | 61 |
| 4.2.5. Role of women in agribusiness..... | 65 |
| 4.2.6. Alternative livelihoods..... | 69 |
| 4.2.7. Gender approach in public policies related to deforestation | 69 |
| 4.2.8. Visión Amazonia | 75 |
| 5. CONCLUSIONS | 81 |
| 6. RECOMMENDATIONS | 87 |
| 7. LIST OF REFERENCES..... | 89 |
| ANNEX..... | 100 |

1. INTRODUCTION

Like other parts of the Amazon basin, the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon are hotspots of cultural and ecological diversity. At the same time, these regions face extreme violence. A primary source of violence relates to deforestation and environmental degradation, caused by numerous activities that operate within the areas. In combination with loose regulations, lack of institutional care and corruption, these activities contribute to an increase of violence with social, economic and environmental implications.

Even though Peru and Colombia have very different sociopolitical, economic and environmental contexts, and drivers of deforestation and environmental degradation may vary, both countries have constructed very similar realities for people living in the Amazon region. Indigenous peoples and local communities, and in particular environmental defenders belonging to these communities, are amongst those most affected. These people have been living within these biodiverse areas for centuries and often rely on the forest's resources for their livelihood — for both their cultural and material survival. Because of their need to protect their territories from deforestation and extractive activities, they are on the frontline.

In the past decade, 54 defenders have been killed in Peru¹ — making it the ninth most dangerous country in the world for people defending nature between 2012 and 2023.² The region of Madre de Dios, known as the 'capital of biodiversity', is not exempt from this problem, with two defenders killed in 2022 only.³ Illegal gold mining has contributed significantly to the environmental degradation in the region, contributing to deforestation, with negative environmental, social and cultural impacts. In Colombia, the increase in the number of deforested hectares in the Colombian Amazon has generated alerts in the departments of Guaviare, Meta, Caquetá and Putumayo, which are responsible for 52% of deforestation in the Colombian Amazon between 2001 and 2023.⁴

In both contexts, women environmental defenders and women in general are disproportionately exposed to these conditions, as they find themselves dealing with multiple types of violence directly linked to their gender. In Madre de Dios, this context has exacerbated gender-based violence — contributing to critical rates of femicide and reports of human trafficking. Numerous research efforts have been carried out to identify the causes and consequences of deforestation, also in the Colombian Amazon. Yet, little research adopts a gender approach or explores the role, effects and struggles of women in this phenomenon.

The main objective of this report is to incorporate a gender lens to the exploration of socio-environmental issues in the Amazon to identify the challenges that women in this region experience. This report elaborates on two studies conducted in the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon. The studies explore how gender dynamics intersect with the concepts of deforestation, environmental degradation, territory and violence, and how women are affected by these issues. In this way, it highlights how gender-based violence and environmental violence intersect.

¹ Global Witness. (2024). Justice restored after historical ruling upheld in retrial for murder of four Indigenous leaders. [Available here](#).

² Global Witness. (2024). Missing voices: The violent erasure of land and environmental defenders. [Available here](#).

³ IUCN NL. (2024). Indigenous environmental defender Victorio Dariquebe Gerewa killed in Madre de Dios. [Available here](#).

⁴ Global Forest Watch. Dashboard Colombia. [Available here](#).



Environmental human rights defenders

At an international level, the Office of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders defines environmental defenders as those who seek to protect and promote human rights related to the environment. Similarly, the Joint Report of Civil Society Organisations of the Organisation of American States (OAS) highlights that, defenders of land, territory and the environment work to protect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights associated with these issues.⁵

Both 'environmental human rights defenders' and 'environmental and territorial defenders' are commonly used. Among interviewees in Madre de Dios, where this terminology was more relevant than in the Colombian study, identification of the terms varies. Some accept and recognise its relevance in the international arena, while others consider that advocacy work is demonstrated in practice and does not require additional labels. Overall, the lack of definition and variability in the perception of terminology highlights the need for greater clarity and consensus to strengthen the identity and protection of women defenders in Madre de Dios.

In the context of this study, environmental rights and human rights cannot be seen as separate issues. In this report, we refer to 'environmental human rights defenders', as the term highlights the efforts of people defending the forest while also relating to the protection of basic human rights – as they have a direct connection and dependency on them, economically, culturally and politically. The term territorial defenders we apply more specifically when an emphasis is put on the fight of the people to protect their territories from extractive and illegal activities. In case of women environmental human rights defenders, 'women defenders' is applied as a shorter form.



Photo: Meeting of the Indigenous Kotsimba community in Madre de Dios. © SPDA / Diego Perez

⁵ IACHR, UN Human Rights and REDESCA. (2022). Joint message: We must urgently protect environmental defenders. [Available here](#).

2. FRAMEWORK

This section presents the practical details of this research. Specifically, it provides information on the locations where the studies were conducted, the methods and tools used for data collection and the key concepts that were used as a lens for the analysis. Finally, a brief explanation of the limitations of both studies is presented.

2.1 Areas studied

In Peru, research focused on the department of Madre de Dios, with emphasis on the native communities of FENAMAD and in the buffer zone of the Tambopata National Reserve. It also analyses public policies at the national and regional levels and at the community level with emphasis on the Tambopata province.



Figure 1. Map of South America indicating the region of study in Peru

In Colombia, research focused on two geographical areas related to the drivers of deforestation. On the one hand, the drivers of land grabbing, illicit crops, livestock and agribusiness are emphasised — with special attention for the departments of Meta, Caquetá and Guaviare. On the other hand, the drivers of illegal mining are explored — with priority given to the departments of Guainía, Vaupés and Putumayo.



Figure 2. Map of South America indicating the region of study in Colombia

2.2 Methodology

A mixed methods approach of data collection was employed in both investigations. On the one hand, qualitative and primary source data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informants and through focus groups. On the other hand, quantitative data collection techniques included the review of relevant secondary sources such as reports from public institutions, partner organisations, grassroots organisations and other entities.

1. Document analysis

Policies, legal norms, governmental and non-governmental instruments and tools were reviewed from a gender perspective — in the areas of protection, access to information and justice for environmental rights defenders in Peru, and as drivers of deforestation in Colombia. Relevant literature on the situation in each specific context was also reviewed.

2. Fieldwork

- Observation. The key territories were visited to observe the situation at first hand. In Peru, several communities in the Madre de Dios region were visited. In Colombia, several communities in the departments of Meta, Caquetá, Guaviare and Putumayo were visited.
- In-depth interviews. Semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted with governmental and non-governmental organisations.
- Focus groups. Focus groups were conducted with women community representatives and/or defenders who shared a similar profile in that they were community members and had leadership roles in their communities. Between four and fourteen people participated in each of these groups in person.

3. Data analysis

The qualitative information was stored in the form of audio files. These files were transcribed and a matrix for processing and analysing this information was developed.

2.3 Key concepts

For the analysis of both cases, an **intersectional feminist approach** was applied. Even though the contexts of these studies differ in socioeconomic, political and — in many ways — environmental conditions as well as scale of focus, both share an increased attention on gender as a point of reference to explore the environmental and social issues mentioned.

Gender is defined as ‘a term used to emphasize that sex inequality is not caused by the anatomic and physiological differences that characterize men and women, but rather by the unequal and inequitable treatment socially accorded to them’.⁶ **Intersectionalism** aims to understand the interaction between social constructs and categories of identity (race, class, gender, ethnic group, etcetera) to highlight how the convergence between two or more of these social categories will affect the life of an individual or social group. The approach was first proposed by the legal feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, revealing that oppression will be experienced in different levels and intensities when more than one of these categories of ‘difference’ converge — such as being a black woman.⁷

In the case of this report, exploring the environmental issues observed in the Amazon with a feminist interactional approach means that we examine the drivers and consequences of **environmental degradation** and how they interact with gender discrimination and gender struggles. We analyse the impact that deforestation and mining have on the lives of women, while taking into consideration the structural challenges they already face in relation to their gender within Peruvian and Colombian societies.

The two cases in this report differ in terms of approach. In Peru, a thorough analysis was conducted on the social and political rights as well as the violence that women in Madre de Dios experience in relation to the environmental issues unfolding in the area, as well as the mechanisms that exist for their protection. In Colombia, a broader scale was applied. The study was conducted on four

⁶ Riquer, F. (1993). Población y género. Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO).

⁷ Crenshaw, Kimberlé. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989, Article 8.

departments: Guaviare, Meta, Caquetá and Putumayo, and explored the **drivers of deforestation**, the role of women in these drivers and the drivers' impact on women.

2.4 Obstacles and limitations

In both regions of study, researchers had to deal with complex dynamics of insecurity and criminal activities. The safety and social issues affected the ways these studies were conducted.

In Peru, the study was focused on Tambopata due to geographic and logistic constraints, as well as limited time and financial resources — which made it difficult to access other provinces in Madre de Dios. However, the high rate of violence and insecurity in this department complicated access to certain communities.⁸ These factors also made it more difficult to create an environment of trust within the study activities, especially because the legal and illegal extractives have also increased conflicts within communities, which made it more challenging accessing these communities. In Colombia, the study was conducted within the context of the armed conflict and related social and safety issues. This situation prevented the formation of larger focus groups, for example, as many women in the communities are still afraid to speak out.

It is also important to note that different theoretical frameworks and methodologies were used to conduct each study. Hence, the findings as well as stages of research in both studies cannot be directly compared, contrasted and generalised.



Photo: Gold mining in Madre de Dios, Peru. © Tom Laffay / IUCN NL

⁸ IUCN NL. (2024). Indigenous environmental defender Victorio Dariquebe Gerewa killed in Madre de Dios. [Available here](#).

3. COUNTRY CONTEXT

This chapter provides the socio-political and environmental context in which both studies took place. For Peru, an analysis of the situation of environmental defenders within Madre de Dios and the artisanal and small-scale mining activities in this region is provided. Within the context of environmental degradation an emphasis is placed on identifying gender-based violence. For Colombia, the drivers of deforestation are analysed to identify the role of women in these processes, their participation and their rights, historically and presently.

It is important to note that the aim of these two studies is not to contrast or compare both regions. Firstly, as both regions have very different socio-political, economic and environmental conditions — resulting in different research approaches. Secondly, and more importantly, because the aim of these studies was not to find commonalities without aiming for comparative. Nevertheless, the studies show that women in both regions experience very similar realities of violence, patriarchy and inequality. Both regions are rich in women's stories that speak to the multiple types of obstacles and difficulties that exist when social, economic, political and environmental issues intersect with being a woman.

3.1. Peru

3.1.1. Situation of environmental rights defenders in Peru

In 2021 alone, 200 environmental human rights defenders were murdered globally – of which 40% was Indigenous.⁹ In this globally critical context, Peru was the ninth most dangerous country for environmental human rights defenders in the world — and the third South American country with the most murders of defenders between 2012 and 2023.¹⁰

In the past decade, 54 defenders have been killed in Peru.¹¹ Between 2021 and 2024, seventeen of these defenders were Indigenous.¹² These murders shed light on the weaknesses in state mechanisms for the protection of defenders, the lack of the presence of the state in the territories, the increase in illegal extractive activities, the organised crime in the Peruvian Amazon and, in particular, the lack of access to justice for defenders. In Madre de Dios, four environmental rights defenders, including an Indigenous leader, have been killed since 2015 for opposing illegal activities within their concessions — located either in the buffer zone of the Tambopata National Reserve or in their Indigenous communal territories, which include Natural Protected Areas. However, there are more people who are threatened, attacked, defamed and even criminalised for defending the environment, natural resources and territorial rights of their communities and towns in the region.


|  Environmental defenders killed in Madre de Dios since 2015 | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Alfredo Ernesto Vracko Neuenschwander (Community leader, killed in November 2015) | Roberto Carlos Pacaheco Villanueva (Community leader, killed in September 2020) | Juan Julio Fernández Hanco (Community leader, killed in March 2022) | Victorio Dariquebe Gerewa (Park Ranger, killed in April 2024) |

Table 1. Community leaders and park rangers killed in Madre de Dios since 2015

⁹ Global Witness. (2022). Decade of defiance: ten years of reporting land and environmental activism worldwide. [Available here](#).

¹⁰ Global Witness. (2024). Missing voices: The violent erasure of land and environmental defenders. [Available here](#).

¹¹ Global Witness. (2024). Justice restored after historical ruling upheld in retrial for murder of four Indigenous leaders. [Available here](#).

¹² La República. (2024). Defensores ambientales de todo el país se reúnen en Lima. [Available here](#).

The situation of women environmental rights defenders in the Amazon, specifically in Madre de Dios, has been poorly documented and addressed. Of the registered environmental rights defenders killed in the country since 2020, all are men except for the Junín defender Estela Casanto Mauricio of the Asháninka people. In 2022, 11% of the murdered defenders globally were women, as shown by the Global Witness report. It is key, however, to consider they do face gender-based violence and that their vulnerable situation often leads them to not report or to remain anonymous when reporting intimidation or violence. According to Global Witness, ‘this figure hides a much more complex reality’.¹³

The Peruvian State's main tool for advancing prevention, protection and access to justice for human rights defenders in Peru is the Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders approved by Supreme Decree No. 004-2021-JUS. However, this mechanism has considerable limitations.¹⁴¹⁵

3.1.2. Madre de Dios: capital of biodiversity and violence

Madre de Dios is recognised as Peru's biodiversity capital. Its forest-cover reaches 93% of its entire surface area, while 45% of the area is conserved by 25 private protected areas and six natural protected areas — the Manu, Bahuaja Sonene and Alto Purús National Parks, the Tambopata National Reserve and the AmaraKaeri and Purús Communal Reserves.¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸

With a population of 141,070 people, Madre de Dios is also the least populated department in Peru.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the region has a great cultural diversity and is the home of ten different groups of Indigenous peoples — the Amahuaca, Ashaninka, Ese Eja, Harakbut, Iñapari, Kichwa, Mashco Piro, Matsigenka, Shipibo-Konibo and Yine. Some of these communities are in isolation or - at an initial stage of contact. In addition, the territory of Madre de Dios has more than 37 native communities represented by two grassroots organisations called *organizaciones intermedias* and a regional federation, FENAMAD. In 2017, 40% of the population identified as Indigenous or native.²⁰



Indigenous peoples are specific social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral bonds to the land and the natural resources of the area they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced.

*World Bank definition*²¹

3.1.2 Artisanal and small-scale mining

This context of biological and cultural diversity in Madre de Dios coexists with a very strong increase in violence. In 2020, Madre de Dios registered the highest homicide rate among all regions in Peru, with 13.8 people murdered per 100,000 citizens.²² One reason for this high rate is attributed to the activity of artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASM) in the department, which is mostly informal and illegal.

¹³ Global Witness. (2023). Standing firm: The Land and Environmental Defenders on the frontlines of the climate crisis. [Available here](#).

¹⁴ Oxfam. (2022). Mecanismos que no protegen: una dura realidad que enfrentan los defensores y defensoras del ambiente y el territorio en el Perú. [Available here](#).

¹⁵ Including: 1) The low or non-existent budget that is allocated to implement measures instructed from the eight ministries involved and the National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs linked to its implementation; 2) An absence or weakness of guidelines and regulation of these key sectors that constitute it, including the directive of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations; and 3) Lack of coordination of state entities outside the executive, such as regional governments.

¹⁶ SINIA, Peruvian Ministry of the Environment. (2016) Cobertura y Pérdida de Bosques de Madre de Dios. [Available here](#).

¹⁷ Mongabay. (2021). La ruta de la deforestación en Madre de Dios: Los madereros han rodeado mi concesión. [Available here](#).

¹⁸ National Service of Natural Protected State Areas. (2020). Aprueban investigaciones prioritarias de las veinte y cinco (25) Áreas Naturales Protegidas del Sistema Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas por el Estado – SINANPE. [Available here](#).

¹⁹ National Institute of Statistics and Informatics. (2018). Censos 2017: En Madre de Dios viven 141 070 personas. [Available here](#).


²⁰ National Institute of Statistics and Informatics. (2018). Resultados definitivos de los censos nacionales 2017. [Available here](#).

²¹ World Bank. Indigenous peoples. [Available here](#).

²² National Census of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics. (2023). Compendio estadístico de Madre de Dios 2022. [Available here](#).

Gold mining is the main economic activity in the department of Madre de Dios.²³ A recent study on the mining population of Madre de Dios estimated that 46,601 people are directly engaged in mining — of which only approximately 12.6% operate formally. This means that over 40,000 people are active in either informal mining (67.4%) or illegal mining (20%) in the region.²⁴

Although current regulations differentiate between illegal and informal mining, illegal mining often masquerades as informal mining when it is incorporated into the mining formalisation process. Mining in the region is only permitted within designated areas known as a ‘mining corridor’.²⁵ These are areas that exclude Indigenous communities, natural protected areas or buffer zones near natural bodies of water. In fact, illegal mining in the region takes place in non-permitted areas, such as native communities, natural protected areas, or buffer zones near natural bodies of water — which is outside the mining corridor. This corridor, also known as the zone of ASM in the department of Madre de Dios, as well as the formalisation process initiated in Peru in 2002 was one of the main strategies of the Peruvian government to regulate the activity. By 2016, the Ministry of Energy and Mines created the Integral Registry of Mining Formalisation (INREFO) to identify people who practice ASM-activities and formalise their work.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
|  | <p>Illegal mining relates to mining operating in non-permitted areas like Indigenous communities, protected natural areas, buffer zones in natural water bodies or outside the zone known as ‘mining corridor’.</p> | <p>Informal mining is artisanal and small-scale gold mining that operates in areas where the extraction of mineral resources is permitted, although it is not authorised and may have initiated procedures to regularise the situation.</p> |
|---|--|--|

However, by January 2021, only 1% of the miners in Madre de Dios who had registered in REINFO managed to become formal miners.²⁶ By the end of 2023, according to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, Madre de Dios had 9,256 registrations in REINFO — of which more than 7,000 were suspended.²⁷ According to the regulations, once persons carrying out ASM activities are registered in REINFO, they cannot be subjected to a fiscal process since they are in the process of formalisation. Therefore, it is possible to assert that the mining formalisation process in Peru has brought along other problems — most notably environmental issues (like deforestation and contamination of soil), social issues (such as separation of communities and community conflicts) and cultural issues (human rights violations, precarious settlements, sexual violence and human labour and trafficking).²⁸

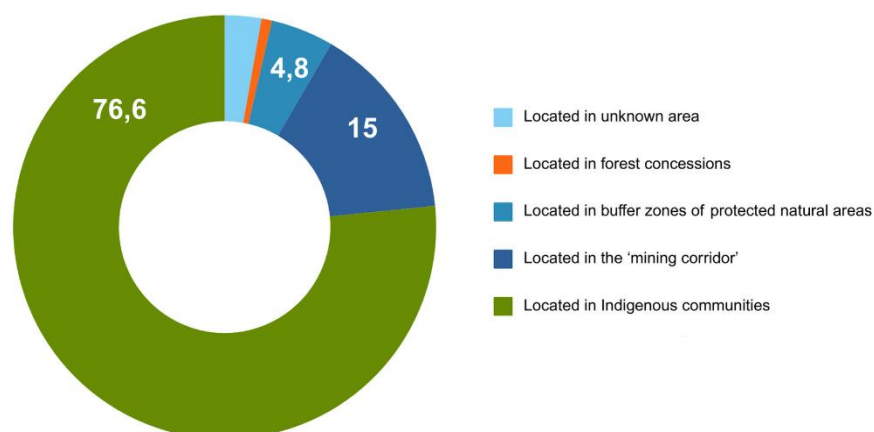


Figure 2. Location of deforested areas in Madre de Dios. © IUCN NL

²³ National System of Evaluation, Accreditation and Certification of the Quality of Education. (2021). Estado de acreditación y certificación en la región de Madre de Dios. [Available here](#).

²⁴ Conservación Amazónica. (2024). Peru – Prevent activity. [Available here](#).

²⁵ The mining corridor is the area permitted for mining in the department of Madre de Dios established in Annex I of Legislative Decree No. 1100.

²⁶ USAID. (2021). Ormalización de la minería artesanal y de la pequeña escala en la a Amazonia Peruana. [Available here](#).

²⁷ Ministry of Energy and Mines. (2024). Registro Integral de Formalización Minera (REINFO). [Available here](#).

²⁸ Finer, M. & Novoa, S. (2017). Patterns and Drivers of Deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon. MAAP: Synthesis #2. [Available here](#).

According to the most recent data, an estimated area of 18,421 hectares in Madre de Dios has been deforested because of gold mining.²⁹ As can be seen figure 2 above, 76.6% of the deforested area is located within the 'mining corridor'. These numbers show that most of the deforestation induced by illegal mining is concentrated in Indigenous communities — as informal mining is mainly carried out in the mining corridor.³⁰

3.1.3. Gender-based violence

Environmental degradation leads to gender-based violence, as it drives competition for increasingly scarce resources and exacerbates tensions and practices of exploitation.³¹ In this way, environmental crimes such as illegal mining exacerbate violations of women's rights.³²



Figure 3. Multi-layered issues increasing the chance of gender-based violence. © IUCN NL

The indicators of gender-based violence in Madre de Dios are very critical at a national level. For example, 20 femicides have been recorded between 2015-2023 within the area.³³ according to INEI. The region also faces the second highest number of complaints of human trafficking.³⁴ In addition, 65% of women above the age of 18 in Madre de Dios reported having been sexually violated by their intimate partner.³⁵

The Peruvian government has a series of instruments to address these realities. Firstly, Law No. 30364 prevents, punishes and eradicates violence against women and members of the family group (Regulation approved by Supreme Decree No. 009-2016-MIMP).³⁶ Secondly, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations developed the National Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Family Members — also known as the AURORA Programme.³⁷ The program works with the communities to develop actions that will prevent violence against women as well as design strategies that will promote the participation of women in such matters. This programme operates at territorial level, but with a scope that focuses on the level of native communities.

In Madre de Dios, the AURORA Programme offers various prevention and care services in cases of violence against women, children and adolescents. Examples include the *100-line* (telephone service) that receives complaints and cases, refuge shelter homes to protect the integrity of women and other members of their household who have suffered violence and employability programmes for economic, social and political empowerment — which tend to be deployed mainly among women between 14 and 25 years of age in the province of Tambopata. The programme also developed Women's Emergency Centres (CEM) to protect women in more severe cases of violence, and in coordination with the police. In Madre de Dios, five CEM locations exist in the provinces of Tambopata, Iberia, Inambari, Salvación and Huepetuhe. The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations also

²⁹ Finer, M.; Mamani, N. (2023). Deforestation by Gold Mining in the Southern Peruvian Amazon: Update 2021-2022. MAAP:185. [Available here.](#)

³⁰ Mongabay. (2023). Peru: satellite monitoring shows Madre de Dios lost more than 18,000 hectares of forest in two years to gold mining. [Available here.](#)

³¹ IUCN. (2020). Environmental degradation driving gender-based violence. [Available here.](#)

³² Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. (2016). Organized Crime and Illegally Mined Gold in Latin America.

³³ National Institute of Statistics and Informatics. Indicadores de género. [Available here.](#)

³⁴ Capital Humano y Social - CHS Alternativo. (2023). Press Release: Madre de Dios is the second region in Peru with the second highest number of complaints of human trafficking. [Available here.](#)

³⁵ National Census of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics. (2023). Compendio estadístico de Madre de Dios 2022. [Available here.](#)

³⁶ Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations. (2016). Decreto Supremo que aprueba el Reglamento de la Ley N° 30364, Ley para prevenir, sancionar y erradicar la violencia contra las mujeres y los integrantes del grupo familiar. [Available here.](#)

³⁷ Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations. (2022). MIMP: Programa Nacional Aurora implementa estrategias diferenciadas para la prevención de la violencia contra las mujeres. [Available here.](#)

approved Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP, thereby ‘guaranteeing prevention, care, protection and recognition of women human rights defenders in their diversity, as well as generating safe conditions for the development of their actions’.³⁸

3.1.4. Allegations of corruption in Madre de Dios

The risk of corruption at different governmental levels is another factor interrelated with the escalation of violence, environmental crimes and lack of protection for environmental rights defenders in Madre de Dios. As in other countries in the region, corruption is one of the main problems in Peru. In 2023, Transparency International ranked Peru 121st out of 180 countries (with the 180th country being the most corrupt country).³⁹ This perception is built on a series of events. Over the last thirty years, for example, most Peruvian presidents are or have been in prison — with prosecutions for crimes of corruption, trafficking of interests or serious human rights violations, among others.

In Madre de Dios, the most widely known case of corruption is related to *Los Hostiles de la Amazonia* — an alleged criminal network of corruption, chain of influence and illegal trafficking of forest resources allegedly led by the former governor of Madre de Dios during the period 2019-2022. In February 2022, he was sentenced to 36 months of preventive detention⁴⁰ — although the case is still open. There were allegations that this criminal network had a collaboration for illicit purposes with police officers from the Roads and Environmental Protection Unit, as well as with officials from the National Superintendence of Tax Administration (SUNAT) and the Specialised Environmental Prosecutor's Office (FEMA) of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Madre de Dios.⁴¹ At the same time, there is a case from December 2022 against *Los Ediles del Puerto* — a criminal network dedicated to chain influence allegedly led by the ex-mayor of the Provincial Municipality of Tambopata.

The complicity and collaboration of authorities concerning the risk of illicit acts extends from regional and local government officials to justice operators.^{42,43} It is therefore understandable that most of the people interviewed in this study mentioned corruption and impunity as the main characteristic of the Peruvian justice system.

To understanding the structural causes of risks and violence against defenders, it is also key to consider the recent enactment of the modification of the Forestry and Wildlife Law in Peru. This law has two pending requests for reconsideration — it has not gone through a process of prior consultation with the impacted Indigenous peoples, nor has it had the participation of the Ministry of the Environment. Even though participation is not binding or obligatory, it is recommended to ask for the opinion of the Ministry on legislative proposals to assess their suitability and impact.

The modification of the forestry law, by enabling the creation of ‘exclusion areas for agricultural purposes’ without properly assessing their suitability, could become a mechanism for impunity, destruction and human rights violations.⁴⁴ A major risk of this modification is that by granting land permits to outsiders, this will not only generate more conflict, but it will also weaken the processes of uncovering and denunciation of environmental crimes that are directly related to invaders and the establishment of private land in the area.

³⁸ Diario Oficial El Peruano (2023). Normas legales. [Available here](#).

³⁹ Transparency International. (2023). Corruption perception index. [Available here](#).

⁴⁰ Relevant links about this case in Noticias Madre de Dios. Noticias Madre de Dios available [here](#) and [here](#). Information from El Peruano [available here](#).

⁴¹ Public Prosecutor's Office. (2022). Prosecutor's request achieves preventive detention for governor of Madre de Dios. [Available here](#).

⁴² InSight crime. Peru profile. [Available here](#).

⁴³ Cárdenas, Juan Diego. InSight Crime. (2022) Corruption at all levels: who benefits from the destruction of the Peruvian Amazon. [Available here](#).

⁴⁴ Ojo Público. (2024). Una ley que facilita la destrucción de la Amazonía. [Available here](#).

3.2. Colombia

3.2.1 Deforestation in the Colombian Amazon

Since 2016, the increase in the number of hectares of deforestation in the Colombian Amazon has generated alerts in the departments of Guaviare, Meta, Caquetá and Putumayo. Since then, innumerable research efforts have been carried out that investigate different causes and consequences of deforestation. However, these investigations did not incorporate a gender focus. Also, little or no research exists that allows us to understand the role, effects and struggles of women in this phenomenon. The main drivers of deforestation in the Colombian Amazon — land grabbing, cattle ranching, illicit crops, mining and agribusiness — are outlined below.

3.2.2. Land grabbing

Land grabbing responds to the possession, accumulation and dispossession that, at least in Colombia, has marked a series of decisions at different levels, producing dynamics that have shaped the quality of life in the country. Borrás et. al. (2012) state that 'while land grabbing was initially linked to the acquisition of large tracts of land, the definition of this phenomenon has subsequently included other modes of access and control over land. There is now a consensus that, beyond the mechanisms involved, land grabbing is essentially a process of large-scale transfer of control over land at the global level, because of the political and economic power that this confers.'⁴⁵

Recently, studies on the impacts caused by land grabbing processes in the Amazon biome have increased. In the northwest Amazon of Colombia, the structural and indirect causes of deforestation are related to land speculation and land grabbing. This process accelerated with the implementation of the Peace Accord, which included the massive formalisation of small and medium-sized landholdings. This led to the appearance of new plots of land and their subsequent expansion with cattle ranching, logging and land grabbing.⁴⁶

3.2.3. Cattle ranching

Cattle ranching in the northern departments of the Colombian Amazon is probably one of the oldest exercises of the peasantry living in this part of the country. During the 1940s, cattle ranching was even promoted in the department of Guaviare with the participation of peasants and Indigenous people, according to Molano (2018).⁴⁷ Guaviare and southern Meta have been understood as an extension of the eastern plains of Colombia, hence the arrival and expansion of cattle ranching in this region. This interpretation is supported in ecosystemic terms. Although Guaviare and southern Meta have been recognised as part of the Amazon biome in more recent times, these departments encompass two enclaves of the eastern plains (savannahs). One enclave is located towards the Macarena, on the border with the Serranía del Chiribiquete National Park, called Las Sabanas or Llanos del Yarí. The other enclave is in Sabanas de la Fuga, a vicinity of the municipality of San José del Guaviare.

3.2.4. Illicit crops

The cultivation of coca, particularly in the Colombian Amazon, has been a decades-long practice tied to boom economies that drive financial and migratory flows in the region. This activity, characterised by its temporary and fluctuating nature, has been shaped by various policies, intervention mechanisms and the dynamics of armed conflicts.

⁴⁵ Borrás Jr, S.; Kay, C.; Gómez, S.; Wilkinson, J. (2012). Land Grabbing and Global Capitalist Accumulation: Key Features in Latin America. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 33(4), 402- 416. ISSN: 0225-5189

⁴⁶ FCDS. (2022). Seguimiento de la pérdida de bosques y cambio de cobertura en el arco de deforestación en la Amazonia colombiana (abril 2021 – marzo 2022). [Available here](#).

⁴⁷ Molano, A. (2008). Selva adentro – Una historia oral de la colonización del Guaviare. [Available here](#).

Emerging prominently in the 1980s after earlier booms in timber, leather and marijuana, coca cultivation now thrives in remote rural areas where people have limited access to basic rights. Over time, this cultivation has evolved significantly. New plant varieties have been introduced, cultivation practices and scales have shifted, while the actors involved in production, sale and transport also changed.

In Colombia, most coca cultivation is maintained by family farming. Estimates suggest that most coca leaf fields have two to five hectares in production, with the rest of the land distributed to other crops like *chontaduro*, cassava, or cocoa.

Others have transitioned to alternative productive activities. Also, the relationship between growers and those controlling the cocaine base paste trade has transformed, reflecting broader shifts in the illicit economy.

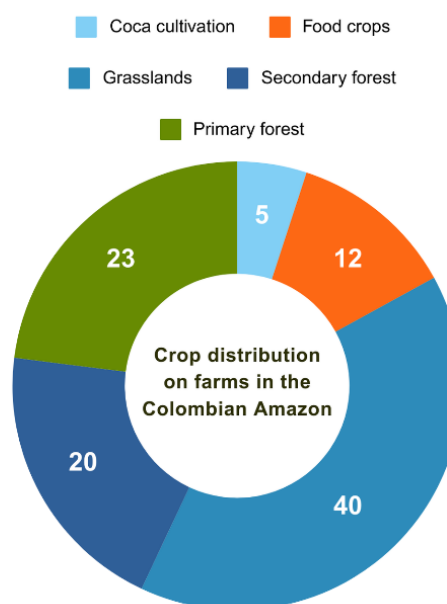


Figure 4. Crops in the Colombian Amazon. © IUCN NL⁴⁸

3.2.5. Mining

As one of the main drivers of deforestation in the Colombian Amazon,⁴⁹ mining is associated with three interrelated dynamics: deforestation due to ecosystem degradation, deforestation due to settlements and deforestation due to the use of timber and other forest resources.

Deforestation due to the degradation of ecosystems occurs especially in areas along riverbanks, affecting their biological cycles because of the use of metals such as mercury (in the case of gold mining), or because of methods such as dredging that increase sedimentation and thus alter the hydrological and biological cycles of the tributaries.⁵⁰ Deforestation caused by the construction of small and large settlements for work equipment that the extractive process requires is based on two types of settlements — floating settlements (where the settlement is constantly moving according to the findings and explorations) and permanent settlements (which generally occur due to mining *bonanzas* or because the very dynamics of trade that mining has generated allows for population growth). Deforestation for the use of timber and other forest resources occurs for the creation of aforementioned settlements, or to make fire for cooking purposes, amongst other applications.

3.2.6. Agribusiness

Agribusiness began with the cultivation of oil palm in Colombia in the 1950s and has continued over time, expanding and consolidating in different regions across the country with the support of different governments and institutions. Specifically, during the governments of Andrés Pastrana (1998 - 2002) and Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002 - 2010), oil palm cultivation was one of the primary economic proposals and part of the respective National Development Plans.

During the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, agro-industrial palm cultivation was one of the most advertised strategies offered to peasant farmers as a solution to escape the coca-growing economy. As has happened with other products that are presented as a solution to the economic problems of peasant families, the palm crop also came with the promise of high profitability in a short period of

⁴⁸ Based on different sources: Centre for Development Alternatives. (2020). *Habitar para conservar. Dynamics of forest transformation and community alternatives in the northwestern Colombian Amazon* Y Oviedo Delgado, L.C. (2017). Final degree thesis: 'Changes in the management patterns of food plants with the arrival of illicit crops in the village of Charras Boquerón in the municipality of San José del Guaviare'. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Bogotá, Colombia.

⁴⁹ IUCN NL. (2023). Drivers of deforestation in the Colombian Amazon: minerals, oil and gas. [Available here](#).

⁵⁰ López Vega, J. (2014). False bonanza, territorial restructuring and interethnic mobilisation in the Inírida River, Guainía, Colombia. Department of Geography. Faculty of Human Sciences. National University of Colombia.

time while requiring low investment. The successful results previously achieved in other regions and countries should not imply however that a single implementation formula can be applied to all other contexts. There is no room for doubt about the possibility of failure due to differences in the geomorphological conditions of the soil or the local conditions of each farm. The implementation of a singular method of palm cultivation across the country had significant environmental and social impacts both in the short and long term.⁵¹ Even though the Choco and Amazon rainforests were declared as areas unsuitable for this crop, both are now major sites of palm oil production in Colombia. According to the National Federation of Oil Palm Growers, Fedepalma, there are 596,000 hectares of oil palm planted across 158 municipalities in 21 departments.⁵²


3.2.7. Population of the Colombian Amazon

In the Colombian Amazon, Indigenous and peasant populations coexist. The latter is a population group with a distinct cultural identity — making them subjects of integral rights with special constitutional protection as well as the object of public policy. The peasantry population can be defined as an intercultural 'subject' that identifies itself as such, essentially involved in direct work with the land and nature, appearing in forms of organisation that are based on unpaid family and community work or the sale of their labour.

Rural areas in Colombia account for 24.2% of the total inhabited areas of the country. In these areas, women represent 48.2% of the rural population.⁵³ Although women make up almost half of the rural population in Colombia, information in terms of gender and ethnicity is limited, making it difficult to describe rural Colombian women by department. In addition, official figures lack Indigenous peoples who are not counted in compliance with Law No. 4633 of 2011 that aims to guarantee their right to remain in voluntary isolation. As such, there is no specific information on the Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero (NARP) populations in Colombia.

3.2.8. Roles of women in the Colombian Amazon

The role of women in the Colombian Amazon takes place in the sphere of production and social reproduction. Both roles must be recognised, as it would otherwise not be possible for day labourers, cowboys, *raspachines* and coca leaf collectors to do their share of the work.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | <p>Productive work: Set of activities in which goods and services are produced for the market for exchange or accumulation and, therefore, their performance is recognised and valued economically and socially. It is mostly paid work and generally associated with the public sphere.</p> | <p>Reproductive work: Activities oriented towards the transmission and access of economic resources and knowledge from one generation to the next. These are mostly unpaid activities, carried out mainly by women and generally associated with the private sphere.⁵⁴</p> |
|---|---|--|

The impact of deforestation drivers like illicit crop production and cattle ranching on women in the Colombian Amazon is visible. However, how practices like mining, logging and wildlife trafficking affect women are less documented — yet this does not make these processes less relevant. On the contrary, the peculiarities of these activities and the difficulties they entail in terms of security risks for the territories and those who inhabit them, require that they are researched in greater detail and depth.

In 2020, 36.2% of rural women in productive work in rural areas were employed in agriculture, livestock, hunting, forestry and fishing activities.⁵⁵ In 2019, the overall participation rate (GPR) of rural women was 39.1%, which is far below the number of rural men who had a GPR rate of 75%. These

⁵¹ Castiblanco, C., Etter, A. & Ramirez, A. (2015). Impacts of oil palm expansion in Colombia: What do socioeconomic indicators show? [Available here](#).

⁵² Fedepalma. (2024). La Palma de Aceite en Colombia – Cifras a diciembre 2023. [Available here](#).

⁵³ DANE. (2021). Población de mujeres rurales. [Available here](#).

⁵⁴ Colinas, L. (2008). Economía productiva y reproductiva en México: un llamado a la conciliación. ECLAC. [Available here](#).

⁵⁵ DANE & UN Women. (2022). Situación de las Mujeres Rurales en Colombia – resumen ejecutivo. [Available here](#).

numbers contrast with details provided by the 2019 National Time Use Survey stating that the average total working hours of women in rural areas is twelve hours and 42 minutes per day.⁵⁶ It is therefore important to define women's labour activities and why — despite working long hours — the GPR rate of rural women is low.

In Colombia, the participation of women in the agricultural sector is 36.2% — with the age group with highest participation being 55 to 64 years old. Half of the women in this sector went only to primary schooling, while 16.7% also completed high school. Four out of every ten rural women in Colombia are in a situation of poverty in various dimensions of their life.⁵⁷ Access to fundamental rights such as education is not guaranteed. Additionally, women often have no income or resources of their own and have restricted economic autonomy.



Photo: Women on a small farm in rural Colombia. © FCDS

⁵⁶ National Institute of Statistics and Geography. (2019). Encuesta Nacional sobre el Uso del Tiempo (ENUT) 2019. [Available here](#).

⁵⁷ DANE & UN Women. (2022). Situación de las Mujeres Rurales en Colombia – resumen ejecutivo. [Available here](#).

4. STUDY FINDINGS

Both studies demonstrate important findings on the intersection of gender and environmental issues. First, the Peruvian study (section 4.1) demonstrates the threats that Indigenous peoples and local communities in Madre de Dios face in relation to their territories. The study also delves into the presence of illegal and extractive activities in relation to women, analysing the multiple types of conflict, violence and insecurity they experience in all areas of their lives in Madre de Dios. Second, the Colombian study (section 4.2) shows that women experience unequal rights of access to land, work, security and economic independence in almost all activities. At the same time, women suffer from the environmental destruction that these activities cause on various levels.

4.1. Madre de Dios in Peru

Indigenous peoples and local communities settled in the buffer zones of natural protected areas in Madre de Dios are highly threatened by territorial conflicts, illegal and extractive activities associated with organised crime. This includes illegal mining, illegal logging and drug trafficking taking place in or close to their territories. The main areas affected by illegal and extractive activities, especially mining, are the buffer zone of the Tambopata National Reserve, the Bahuaja Sonene National Park and the Amarakaeri Communal Reserve.⁵⁸

The threats that were identified in the study are grouped into five themes and are analysed further on in this chapter:

- Overlapping land-use rights and lack of security.
- Lack of access to health services and education.
- Effects of climate change, food (in)security and water pollution.
- Insecurity, organised crime and impacts on communities.
- Different types of violence that women experience.

4.1.1. Overlapping land use rights and lack of security

The main territorial challenge mentioned by Indigenous and local women in Madre de Dios is the overlap of land use rights and the lack of legal security over their territories. It is common to find overlapping rights between Indigenous territories, oil plots, mining and forestry concessions and natural protected areas, amongst others.

Out of the total of 2,702 current and expired mining rights in Madre de Dios, 42.93% (1,160 rights) overlaps with forest concessions, while 12.32% (or 333 rights) overlap with Indigenous communities.⁵⁹ Between 1974 — when the Madre de Dios region started the process of giving land titles to Indigenous communities — and 2023, 27 out of the 35 recognised communities have been titled and eight were still pending.⁶⁰ However, the main challenge for legal security is the process of correcting the boundaries of already titled communities; also known as georeferencing.⁶¹ In some communities, this process has been delayed by the Regional Government of Madre de Dios (GOREMAD) due to a lack of resources, political will and conflicts of interest over the granting of different uses of community boundaries.

Another threat reported to the territory of Indigenous communities and buffer zones of protected natural areas is the corruption and conflict of interests of national, regional and local authorities in the area, especially between the mining and agricultural sector, as well as the operators of justice in

⁵⁸ Mongabay. (2024). Deforestation haunts top Peruvian reserve and its Indigenous communities. [Available here](#).

⁵⁹ FCDS. (2023). Hacia un futuro sostenible en Madre de Dios: conectando bosques, ríos y comunidades. [Available here](#).

⁶⁰ Lee Marks, I. & Mirvis, P. H. (2008). Joining Forces: Making One Plus One Equal Three in Mergers, Acquisitions, and Alliances. [Available here](#).

⁶¹ Tipula, P. (2021). Challenges in the georeferencing of peasant communities. Peruvian Centre for Social Studies - CEPES. [Available here](#).

general. The justice sector is considered the least credible among the Indigenous and local women as well as women defenders who got interviewed in the framework of this research.



‘The conflict is not only with the miners but also with the farmers. The engineer in charge of the area gives concession records on the area when, in fact, he should not be doing so. The problem is that we have not completed georeferencing. [...] It is the engineers who give permission to build farms, they already feel they are the owners. Another problem is the difficulty in achieving land titling.’

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios⁶²

4.1.2. Lack of access to health services and education

A second territorial problem identified by Indigenous and local women is the lack of access to quality health and education services. Some communities report difficulties with long-term presence of education and health professionals in their territories. These professionals often do not want to stay in these communities, because of their remote locations and/or fearing the presence of isolated Indigenous groups nearby. Due to increasing pressure on their territories and limited food supplies, caused mainly by illegal logging and illicit crops, these isolated groups are increasingly meeting with other Indigenous and local communities, shows this study.

In terms of overall education, the Indigenous women interviewed were very concerned about the limited capacity of teachers assigned to the schools in their communities to implement intercultural bilingual education, as well as to prevent school violence against Indigenous children by certain non-Indigenous teachers. Many of the women report having acted in response to this situation by contacting the corresponding Local School Management Units (UGEL).



‘I have gone to complain to the UGEL because in the kindergarten there is a teacher who does not know how to teach, has no patience and assaults the children. I don’t know why he was appointed. [...] Yesterday I went to the UGEL and they asked me for documents. [...] I have to collect evidence, because I would only be filing a complaint with my word.’

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios

4.1.3. Effects of climate change, food (in)security and water pollution

Thirdly, the effects of climate change and its impact on the food security of communities are identified as an issue for Indigenous and local women in Madre de Dios. Several women mentioned a growing scarcity of fruits and food in general. For example, there are communities where mango, lemon or grapefruit are no longer produced as in the past, while others have seen lower quality production. The high temperatures and lack of rain that afflict their regions are also mentioned by some people interviewed. The reduced availability of fruits and food affects the presence of animals and subsequently prevents hunting — which is an ancestral practice and an important source of protein for these communities.⁶³

⁶² Because of security reasons quotes of interviewees were anonymised.

⁶³ EarthRights International. (2023). Los impactos del cambio climático afectan gravemente a los pueblos indígenas de Madre de Dios y la Amazonía. [Available here](#).

Faced with this scenario of food scarcity, Indigenous women have implemented initiatives such as integral farms and reforestation or the exchange of products between communities. At the same time, women mention that this condition of climate change and food insecurity means that they must invest more time and greater economic resources to travel to the city or other places to obtain food.

Also, water contamination resulting from a series of pressures such as illegal mining, illegal logging, drug trafficking and other activities such as papaya cultivation is of concern to the women interviewed in the framework of this research. In most cases, rivers continue to be the main source of water for communities, with the consumption of river water affecting the health of children, young people and the community in general — especially the skin, respiratory, nutritional and gastric systems.

In Madre de Dios, several investigations carried out over the last few years have reported a strong impact of mercury use on public health. Very high levels have been identified in children, young people and adults, living in different areas across the region.⁶⁴ The effect of water contamination, which also limits food insecurity, on people's health is an issue of concern to all the women interviewed.

4.1.4. Insecurity, organised crime and impacts on communities

Fourthly, presence of mining activity in native communities generates a serious problem of insecurity for Indigenous and local women. The entry of foreigners into the territory and the presence of miners, criminal organisations, assailants and hired assassins means threats, harassment, extortion (collection of quotas), kidnappings or assaults on miners and community members.

In Madre de Dios, environmental crimes such as mining activity go hand in hand with a series of related crimes, such as organised crime. These crimes have been intensified by the construction of the third section of the inter-oceanic highway and the COVID-19 pandemic.^{65,66} This situation affects the quality of life of the peoples and communities and is commonly referred to in the accounts of Indigenous and local women with whom we spoke.

Faced with the pressure of legal and illegal mining activity, communities commonly organise themselves to establish security and control measures. Examples include vigilance committees and forest watchdog committees — both of which are promoted by FENAMAD. In several communities, checkpoints have been set up to prevent access to these communities. In some cases, economic and resource transactions are generated between communities and miners, for example to construct infrastructure and other services in the community.

The pressures on the territory from these informal and illicit activities have multiple impacts on the communities. On the one hand, these activities have cultural consequences. With the excessive influx of outsiders, the people of the communities are adopting western cultural patterns in contrast to the traditional patterns associated with the use of Indigenous language, traditions and customs — resulting to cultural loss. On the other hand, mining is fragmenting some Indigenous communities in Madre de Dios. These activities generate either trends of support or opposition, which in turn causes a divide between community leaders and between — and even within — families. The justification of those who support mining is often that there is no point in opposing, as the authorities do not guarantee the application of justice and prefer to take advantage of the natural resources, considering that exploitation will happen regardless.

For example, people living in the different buffer zones of the Tambopata National Reserve face encroachment on their forest, agricultural and formal mining concessions, among other uses. Illegal activities seek to take over part of their territories for extractive activities. Villagers are confronting invasions and illegality by putting their lives and those of their families at risk.

⁶⁴ Various sources. 1. Osorio, F.; Rojas, J.; Manrique, C. (2012). Informal and illegal mining and mercury contamination in Madre de Dios: A public health problem. *Acta médica peruana* [online]. 2012, vol.29, n.1 [cited 2016-01-15], pp. 38-42. 2. Artisanal Gold Council (2017). Inventory report: estimates of mercury use and consumption in artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Peru. Fernandez, L.; Vega, C.; Gonzalez, D.; Chhabria, R.; Hafzalla, G.; Cuquichicon, C.; Silva, J.; Muijica, O.; Hoops, H.; Sanders, J. (2019). Elevated mercury exposure in Amazonian Indigenous populations in Manu National Park, Madre de Dios, Peru.

⁶⁵ Ojo Público. (2022). Pandemia y drogas: incremento de opioides y consolidación de rutas en América Latina. [Available here](#).

⁶⁶ Ojo Público. (2023). El secreto financiero en EE.UU. abre las puertas a los delitos ambientales de la Amazonía. [Available here](#).



‘Mining activities have divided the communities. [...] These activities have a high social impact because apart from the division, the communities are losing their language and their culture, how do you recover that?’

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios

4.1.5. Different types of violence women experience

According to the Igarapé Institute (2023), women defenders experience moral violence, defamation and slander, psychological violence, threats, sexual violence and physical violence against them, their family or other close people.⁶⁷ This coincides with testimonies collected during the research of this report.

| | |
|---|---|
|  Gender-based violence | <p>Domestic and intra-family violence against women is a pattern of behaviour in a relationship used to gain power and control over a partner. It encompasses any abuse that threatens physical, sexual, emotional, economic, property or psychological integrity — including behaviour that frightens, intimidates, terrorises, manipulates, hurts, humiliates, blames or injures someone. In the context of women environmental rights defenders, domestic violence occurs when these women gain prominence outside their homes. The rise of a WHRD's professional role and attribution of power can make her husband, partner or other family members feel threatened or frustrated, which can lead to violence as a way of intimidating them and driving them to leave their homes.</p> |
|  Environmental violence | <p>The misuse of natural resources and environmental degradation are increasingly associated with a form of violence against Indigenous and local women. They are the main point of connection with different people and institutions, as well as the primary means of meeting primary needs — mainly when it comes to sustaining their families' livelihoods. Such interactions encompass activities such as collecting water for food preparation and cleaning, foraging in rivers and reefs, gathering firewood and cultivating the land — in addition to various activities related to care and survival tasks. To threaten these natural resources is to jeopardise the survival of entire communities and of these women specifically.</p> |
|  Moral violence | <p>Slander, defamation and libel. Examples include accusations of betrayal, moral judgement of the victim's behaviour, criticism, exposure of intimate life, insults that affect their character or belittling them because of the way they dress, amongst others.</p> |
|  Property and economic violence | <p>Retention, theft, partial or total destruction of objects or goods, work instruments, personal documents or economic resources, including those destined to satisfy their needs. Examples include forced dismissal, expulsion from the territory in which they produce or from which they derive their livelihood, payment of fees, stopping working or studying due to threats or impossibility of access to their own material or immaterial goods, amongst others.</p> |
|  Psychological violence | <p>Any conduct that causes emotional harm and diminished self-esteem, harms and disrupts a woman's full development or is intended to demean or control her actions, behaviours, beliefs and decisions. Examples include threats, coercion, humiliation, manipulation, surveillance, insults, blackmail, ridicule, amongst others.</p> |
|  Physical violence | <p>Any conduct that offends the integrity or bodily health of the woman. It can also be armed with the use of instruments that increase the harm to the victim. Examples include hitting, throwing objects, shaking, strangling, suffocating, punching, slapping, kicking, knifing, shooting, etcetera.</p> |
|  Sexual violence | <p>Any sexual act, attempt to commit an act or unwanted sexual advances; or actions to market or otherwise use a person's sexuality through coercion by another person, regardless of that person's relationship to the victim, in any setting, including the home and workplace. Examples include rape, being forced to perform sexual acts against her will, being forced to get pregnant or married, amongst others.</p> |

Table 2. Different types of violence against women. © IUCN NL⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Igarapé Institute (2023). Guide to the protection of women human rights and environmental defenders in the Amazon. [Available here](#).

⁶⁸ Based on: Igarapé Institute (2023). Guide to the protection of women human rights and environmental defenders in the Amazon. [Available here](#).

Gender-based violence

Women environmental human rights defenders in Madre de Dios deal with more violence compared to their male counterparts, simply because they are women. Among the main threats that women face are various types of violence, but also obstruction of their freedom of movement and autonomy, criminalisation, lack of political representation and limited access to justice.

Between January and October 2023, the AURORA Programme's Women's Emergency Centres in Madre de Dios handled 701 cases, most in Tambopata.⁶⁹ The majority of the cases (48.8 %) concerned physical violence, as shown in figure 5.

Specific data on women defenders was unavailable, as this category was only added to case records forms in November 2023. In 2024, it was also included in the Rural Care Service records.⁷⁰

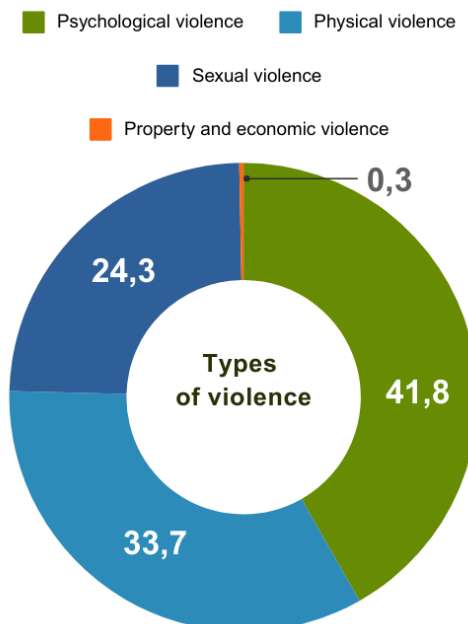


Figure 5. Types of violence reported by the AURORA Programme. © IUCN NL⁷¹

Environmental violence

Environmental violence is considered one of the main types of violence suffered by Indigenous women. All the Indigenous women consulted highlighted the negative impact of extractive activities, especially illegal and informal ones, on the environment, their health and that of their families. In this sense, the women interviewed strongly perceived that chemical inputs (mercury) and practices associated with mining (coca and papaya cultivation, among others) affect the water quality of the communities and surrounding populations, especially when they are carried out in the headwaters of rivers.

These same women report that the contamination of rivers, the main source of drinking water for the communities, has significant repercussions on the quality and availability of drinking water and fish. The presence of pollutants in rivers directly affects fish, introducing them into the food chain. As a result, communities that consume them as part of their diet are exposed to the detrimental effects of pollution. Therefore, river pollution not only affects the health of the Indigenous and local population, but also compromises the food security of these communities, generating negative impacts on their health and development, especially of their children, adolescents and pregnant women.



'The violence of not being able to live in a healthy environment. Women ensure food security and the security of their families; illegal activities damage the entire environment, pollute the air and directly affect pregnant women and children.'

Civil society organisation representative

⁶⁹ Reported by the National Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Family Members (AURORA Programme) of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations in response to the request for access to information submitted in the framework of the present investigation.

⁷⁰ By resolution N°087-2024-MIMP-AURORA-DE. [Available here](#).

⁷¹ Based on AURORA data.



Indigenous peoples, illegal mining and the defence of territory

The case of Tres Islas is emblematic in terms of Indigenous peoples' rights in relation to informal and illegal mining — not only in Madre de Dios, but in the Amazon basin in general. Tres Islas is an Indigenous community located in the district and province of Tambopata at the banks of Madre de Dios river and includes the Shipibo and Ese Eja people. This community has its own land since 1994 which covers 31,423 hectares. Following the presence of illegal mining in their territory — and the risks caused to their health and well-being, the community built a security gate and gatehouse in 2010 to control the entry of outsiders into their territory. Following this effort, illegal miners denounced four community leaders — amongst them Juana Payaba — to the judiciary for impeding the free transit that the Constitution guarantees to all citizens. The judiciary ruled against Tres Islas, after which the authorities destroyed the checkpoint.

After two years of struggle, and with the support of the International Institute of Law and Society (IISD), the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of the community leaders — in line with the provisions of article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This article recognises self-determination in article 149 of the 1993 Constitution and in Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation on the right to exercise jurisdictional functions within their territory in accordance with their customary laws and way of life. Community leader Juana Payaba subsequently participated in other cases together with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which in 2017 granted precautionary measure No. 113-16. These efforts promoted the case that resulted in the first instance judgment of the Civil Chamber of the Superior Court of Justice of Madre de Dios in 2019, which recognises the rights to prior consultation, territorial property, autonomy, life and physical integrity, health, environment and water.⁷²

Moral violence

Women defenders and women leaders who participate in decision-making and access to information spaces in Madre de Dios are often perceived as a threat to established patriarchal dynamics in their communities. This threat often translates into demoralising reactions and comments from men in positions of power, such as government and community leaders, who devalue or stigmatise women's participation in these spaces.

For example, some women interviewed commented that the mayor of their territory told them publicly that they only participated in training spaces because they wanted to find a partner. Other Indigenous women shared that their participation in training workshops often triggers comments of mockery and delegitimisation of their role as mothers or caregivers from the men in their community and even from other women.

Similarly, it is important to highlight the interconnectedness between different forms of violence experienced by women defenders. For example, both moral violence and criminalisation influence women leaders' motivation to take up leadership and advocacy positions in their communities, leading to burnout and discouragement that hinder their continued participation. This is because taking on such roles involves additional effort, given the burden of family responsibilities that also falls on them, a burden that society persists in assigning them disproportionately compared to their male counterparts.



'In the communities, gossip is often used to attack and isolate women defenders and stigmatise their role. There are rumours that they are in public spaces only to look for a husband or because of sexual immorality. Their role as mothers is also questioned.'

Civil society organisation representative

⁷² Retrieved through field study.

Property and economic violence

Some women interviewed noted that they face financial and economic repercussions in their role as leaders and environmental human rights defenders. For example, seeking access to justice entails considerable expenses. These costs vary according to the distance between communities and urban centres, the nature of the cases they are dealing with and the support networks available to them. Travel to the locations of government services for any activity often entails high costs — which includes transportation, food and accommodation. Women also need to make plans regarding the caretaking of their children. The ease of finding family members to support childcare varies from community to community and family to family.

In addition, women defenders face negative impacts on their professional and employment growth. Feeling threatened and restricted in their outings from home and community, women defenders stop fulfilling their educational commitments, such as attending face-to-face classes, and face obstacles in fulfilling their work responsibilities. Their advocacy work can also have consequences for their reputation and credibility. It can even affect their ability to obtain educational qualifications.

Another issue of concern, especially for those communities settled on smaller territories, is that the overlapping of concessions and use rights in their communities increasingly reduces the space for families to settle and secure their livelihoods (such as cultivating farms). Overlapping rights and associated conflicts are seen as putting pressure on the future heritage of the next generations. Also, the practice of forced collection of quotas by mafias and criminal gangs — demanding such contributions in exchange of providing security to the community and its members — puts pressure on local economies.

Finally, Indigenous women and environmental defenders highlight the risk to their personal and real property, especially in the face of operations against illegal mining and the stream of assailants and mafias that are settling in the surrounding communities and roads. This also involves state actors. For example, there have been reports of cases in which the authorities have confused the properties of community members with those of illegal miners, as illegal operations are established near them, causing damage to their houses, boats, animals and other property.



'This is also a red zone because of the miners' rafts, since the Peruvian Navy and the National Police (PNP) usually intervene on the riverbank and burn everything. The people who are harmed there are the brothers who have their little house near the rafts because they think they are also miners, so they also exploit their things. A teacher had her house burnt down.'

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios



Save yourself by jumping into the river

With the use of technology, a defender documented and denounced to the authorities the presence of illegal mining in its territory. With the collaboration of FENAMAD, the complaint was presented to the Fiscalía Especializada en Materia Ambiental (FEMA) who, together with the police, carried out an interdiction in May, capturing five people.⁷³ However, the interdiction had strong consequences in the community. Dozens of illegal miners arrived in two boats and set fire to community members' boats and doused them with fuel to set them on fire. FENAMAD asked for guarantees with the police, prefecture and FEMA for three community members who were brutally attacked in this incident. One of them was only saved from being burned alive because she jumped into the river and swam for hours.⁷⁴

⁷³ Mongabay. (2018). Peru: Masenawa community's phone app to fight illegal mining. [Available here](#).

⁷⁴ Retrieved through field study.

Psychological violence

Psychological violence is one of the main forms of violence to which women environmental rights defenders are exposed, according to the women and representatives of the organisations interviewed. The fear of reprisals and the concern for their safety and that of their families often ends up having an impact on physical aspects. These factors generate mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, difficulties in falling asleep and even heart and blood pressure problems — especially in the case of older adults.

Mental health and nervous system issues also affect women defenders who are also wives and family members of defenders who have been killed. In most cases, these women face difficulties without adequate support services or counselling. Anxiety, depression and other serious emotional problems are common. These affectations tend to impact not only on the defender and her partner, but especially on her children. The problem is exacerbated if the murdered defender was the main breadwinner in the household.



'When women lose their partner or husband as an advocate, they are also exposed. We have had the opportunity to attend to wives and children who wish to continue the work as their husband's defender, so it is necessary to extend the guarantees.'

Representative of government entity in Madre de Dios

Physical and sexual violence

Although this issue was not explored in depth, the Indigenous women interviewed mentioned that there is a worrying incidence of rape or sexual harassment directed at women and women defenders. This phenomenon is attributed to both reprisals and attacks perpetrated by criminal gangs surrounding their communities. In addition, the presence of physical violence was sporadically highlighted, underlining the need to urgently address these forms of aggression and vulnerability.



'It is important that they know how to defend themselves because there are many cases in which the men from the mines make our teenage girls fall in love with them, make them their wives and give them three or four children and then abandon them. The foreigners mistreat them physically, morally and psychologically. Many women are abused, but, out of shame, they keep quiet and don't report it.'

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios

Impact of violence on young people, children and families

In all the meetings held with women in the framework of this study, very relevant concerns have been expressed in relation to Indigenous youth and children in the communities. Firstly, young women's significant exposure to relationships with foreign men increases the risk of trafficking, violence, abuse, unwanted pregnancy and abandonment. This scenario reflects a particular vulnerability of young women in Indigenous communities and can have serious consequences for their physical and emotional well-being.

Secondly, some women highlighted a high level of alcoholism and drug use among young people, mainly boys, as an additional concern. This phenomenon can have negative impacts on the health and well-being of Indigenous youth, contributing to broader health and social problems in the communities. The relationship between alcoholism and other issues, such as vulnerability to violence or involvement in risky activities, among others, makes the challenges facing Indigenous youth in Madre de Dios more complex.

Thirdly, in all the women's accounts, a crucial theme stands out, related to the fear and trauma ingrained in the children due to the scenarios of violence they experience in their communities. The presence of armed people (miners, assailants or authorities such as the Navy, the Prosecutor's Office or the Police) and the violence happening near these children is generating a deep fear in them. This fear manifests itself in a reluctance to attend school or to leave their homes for fear that something will happen to them or their families. In addition, there are changes in the behaviour of the children, who show violent behaviour because of the psychological and emotional impact of these experiences.

The communities stress the importance of addressing this fear from an integral perspective, considering the need for coordination with educational institutions, patrolling in the area and control over the entry and exit of people in the communities.



'My daughter is going to a psychologist because of a huge trauma. [...] Even my older sister has a huge trauma, because every time she sees criminals she gets scared, very nervous, trembles and becomes obfuscated. It's worse for children, who should be free of fear. I took my little daughter to several psychologists, as she has also seen many things. She repeats phrases like 'I'm going to kill you' and when she plays, she becomes very nervous and aggressive with other children. [...] She's not a normal child, she wasn't like that.'

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios



Trafficking in the Peruvian Amazon

The trafficking of young women and the involvement of young men in drug use is a concerning issue. Limited sustainable productive activities and persistent poverty are identified as factors contributing to young people's involvement in these problems. Poverty leads to mothers and fathers not being able to devote the necessary attention to their children as they must seek income to support themselves. In this context, the importance of generating more sustainable productive activities is underlined as a key preventive measure. In addition, coordination with educational institutions, patrolling the area and controlling the entry and exit of people from the community are suggested to address these problems. Being close to the road increases the risk of human trafficking (especially for young women), because of exposure to outsiders engaged in illegal logging.⁷⁵

Limited freedom and criminalisation

One of the main effects on Indigenous women, local women and women defenders is the limitations on free movement in their communities (see Annex 4). The wave of violence associated with illicit and extractive activities in Madre de Dios, which is increasing exponentially in their places of residence, impacts on the free movement inside and outside their territories, affecting access to health, education and recreation services, among others, and limiting their daily activities and those of their families. For example, the Indigenous women interviewed report that they do not feel the same freedom and security as before when going to their farms or entering and leaving their communities alone. They fear being attacked by miners, loggers or farmers, or being assaulted by criminal mafias.

⁷⁵ Retrieved through field study.

Women defenders in Madre de Dios highlight the criminalisation to which they are exposed because of their work as defenders. Some of those interviewed mentioned that this aspect, criminalisation, is not being adequately addressed by current public policy. Thus, some of the women consulted commented that, in their defence work, they have been denounced. For example, in one community in Tambopata province, a leader has three complaints against her, one of them for metal theft. At least two of the three complaints against her have been made by miners living in the community. This criminalisation seeks to dissuade women from their advocacy work which, added to other types of violence experienced, such as moral and economic violence, generates great pressure on women and their families.



'In the communities that are exposed to mining, women cannot walk freely through their territory, they have to be careful not to expose themselves too much to avoid attacks. I don't feel free to walk around my territory either, but we still have to do surveillance and check every point to see if outsiders have entered, even though we don't have geo-referencing.'

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios

4.1.6. Political representativeness

A communal board of directors of peasant communities in Peru must have a percentage of no less than 30% of either gender. However, it is important to note that this rule does not apply to Indigenous communities.⁷⁶ The Ombudsman's Office⁷⁷ and consulted representatives of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations agree on the need to optimise coordination on this quota with entities such as the National Superintendence of Public Registries. Such an effort could improve the incorporation of these criteria when evaluating the registration of boards of directors and community statutes. The presence and participation of Indigenous and local women in decision-making in Madre de Dios has grown in importance and strengthened in recent years, although various challenges still need to be overcome, as can be seen further on in this report (see Annex 5).

FENAMAD

Indigenous organisations have seen increased female representation in leadership, with women holding at least 30% of leadership positions in FENAMAD, its intermediate organisations (COINBAMAD and COHARYIMA), and its technical units (OJEIMAD, AFIMAD, and ECA-Amarakaeri). However, women rarely occupy top authority roles, with exceptions such as the presidency of OJEIMAD and the vice-presidency of ECA-Amarakaeri. Notably, for the second consecutive period, two women serve on FENAMAD's board, while ECA-Amarakaeri has three women in executive positions—an improvement from 2017–2020, when none held leadership roles. At AFIMAD, all leadership positions are currently held by women (see Annex 1).

The representation of women on the boards of Indigenous communities varies, with no consistent cultural pattern. For instance, the Matsigenka communities of Yomibato and Tayakome, located in Manu National Park, the board of the former consists entirely of men, while the one of the latter is made up exclusively of women. Overall, according to FENAMAD data from this study, only 7 out of 37 (18.91%) native communities in Madre de Dios are led by women.

Indigenous women's issues have been structured through specific areas, agendas or programmes in some of the Indigenous organisations in Madre de Dios. In FENAMAD, the process of strengthening Indigenous women began in 2017 and was progressively positioned until in 2020 an Agenda for the Strengthening of Indigenous Women 2020-2022 was developed. Through the contact established with women leaders during the FENAMAD Regional Meeting in October 2023, it became evident that women leaders still face challenges in assuming leadership roles in their communities. Among these challenges are gender stereotypes, which lead to questions about the alleged neglect of women

⁷⁶ Article 19 of Law 30982. This provision has been gradually implemented at the national level since the enactment of the regulation in 2019.

⁷⁷ Ombudsman's Office (2019). Situation of the rights of Indigenous women in Peru.

leaders in their caring responsibilities towards their children and household chores. In Madre de Dios, as in other areas of the Amazon, women's representation in forest, environmental and territorial monitoring and control committees is still limited. Thus, FENAMAD has been working with 18 communities⁷⁸ and was involved in the selection of women forestry overseers in 16 of them.⁷⁹

Management Committee of the Tambopata National Reserve

In the case of the Management Committee of the Tambopata National Reserve (CDG), those consulted, both from civil society and from the Committee itself, point out that the leadership continues to be held by adult men. Unlike FENAMAD, the CDG does not have an organisational structure to address women's issues or the gender approach. In November 2023, only a few women leaders appeared on the board of the CDG, while the other members were men. A gender imbalance also appears in the composition of the Executive Commission, the CDG's executive body, which is made up of the CDG's president and vice-president and the head of the area, the National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State (SERNANP). Although there has been a recent increase in the presence of women in the meetings, a 2023 School of Leaders initiative in the CDG aimed to further strengthen the effective participation of women and younger generations. This initiative would train young leaders (both male and female) to facilitate a generational change in the CDG.

Additionally, of the 23 people, titular and alternate, that comprise the direction board of the seventeen sectors of the Tambopata National Reserve's buffer zone, nine are women. This board is part of the organisational structure of the CDG approved in May 2023 and made official by Directorial Resolution 208-2023-SERNANP-DGANP. Of these seventeen sectors, thirteen correspond to territorial divisions of the buffer zone, while the remaining four form alliances between organisations such as GOREMAD, non-governmental organisations, universities and grassroots organisations. Consultations with representatives of the CDG and native communities that are also part of the CDG have shown a growing interest in promoting the participation of Indigenous women in the committee's assemblies, which in the past has been scarce.

Factors that facilitate women's political participation

Discussions with various people consulted, especially Indigenous and local women, identified several factors facilitating women to take on leadership roles in their communities:

- The establishment of specific quotas for women in community statutes and in training and capacity building spaces. This factor determines women's access to information and decision-making. However, it is important to provide additional capacity building for women on soft skills issues — such as effective communication and self-esteem — to have them make effective use of the designated quotas.
- Having a family support network to take on the burden of household and care work in an equitable way and encouraging women's leadership in challenging scenarios.
- Having the example of family members who previously assumed leadership positions, especially other women during childhood. This contributes to their interest, sensitivity, motivation and training as community leaders.
- Having the support of an organisation that promotes women's leadership. In Madre de Dios, multiple interviewees mentioned the role of organisations that work for women's rights, such as Caritas Madre de Dios.
- Access to training or education is an enabling factor for the development of leadership and to access decision-making positions. This involves not only formal educational training, such as having completed basic or higher education, but also participation in training spaces on Indigenous rights, human rights or soft skills, amongst other elements.
- Being able to read or write in Spanish is highly determinant for taking on leadership roles and active participation. Some women in the communities shared that they often felt fearful of expressing their opinions, making mistakes in speaking and facing ridicule. There is a

⁷⁸ Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana - AIDESEP. (2022). Conociendo las veedurías forestales. [Available here](#).

⁷⁹ Community forest management in Peru is regulated by Law No. 29763 on Forestry and Wildlife and the Regulations for Forestry and Wildlife Management in Native Communities and Peasant Communities, approved by Supreme Decree No. 021-2015-MINAGRI. These provide peasant and Indigenous communities with the freedom to organise themselves internally and implement Community Forest Management (CFM), with the National Forest and Wildlife Service (SERFOR) being the institution in charge of strengthening and promoting it; and the Regional Forest and Wildlife Authorities (ARFFS) being in charge of operationalising its implementation.

significant sense of shame if they pronounce a word incorrectly, especially in front of their male peers.

- To be perceived as a dialogue partner with the ability to remain calm and encourage dialogue in conflict situations.

In this context, access to capacity-building spaces for Indigenous women is at an early stage, particularly in areas traditionally dominated by men — such as surveillance, monitoring and the use of technologies. However, FENAMAD and its Indigenous Women's Area have contributed to increasing women's representation in spaces for access to information and decision-making. To achieve this, the development of gender-sensitive methodologies and logistics has been beneficial. An example is the availability of child carers during programmes to facilitate the participation of women who are mothers. Another crucial element is the implementation of participatory and intercultural methodologies that promote learning by doing and the protagonism of women themselves. Also, the creation of safe spaces exclusively for women provides them with a sense of security and ensures better use of these programmes.



'We know that to strengthen a leader, we need to make her feel safe enough to carry out the activities while considering her children. These women have to a lot of work on their hands, and this creates additional constraints for them. For example, most women are not able to spend time outside the community for extended periods of time. If we don't take this into account, their training processes can be left unfinished.'

Civil society organisation representative

Participation in environmental defenders' issues

When asked about their participation in decision-making bodies, the elaboration of public policy recommendations and related training sessions, few women stated that they had had access to such opportunities. However, it was noted that those women who are members of the board of directors of Indigenous organisations and communities had participated in at least one workshop or training programme focused on human and Indigenous rights. Few of them mentioned having received training specifically on the work of environmental human rights defenders or the Escazú Agreement.⁸⁰

These training initiatives were mainly supported by national non-governmental organisations, such as SPDA and Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (DAR). In addition, in two isolated cases, the support of international organisations, such as Earth Rights International, was mentioned in the form of international experience sharing. These efforts reflect the importance of the support of different civil society organisations in strengthening the capacities and knowledge of women human rights defenders and Indigenous women human rights defenders. This approach would avoid duplication of efforts and foster more effective and coordinated collaboration. Identifying specific areas where these women need additional support and ongoing evaluation of training programmes will help to optimise resources and maximise the positive impact on these communities.



No changes, thank you

Maria, a fictitious name for her security, was elected leader of her community. When she tried to update the community's statute by proposing parity on the Board of Directors, changing the rule that expelled women with foreign partners (a situation that did not apply to men with foreign partners) and other reforms, she was not well received by the men in the community. They gradually isolated her and stopped supporting her because of this initiative. Maria stepped down a year ago. Women's participation in the Assemblies remains atypical.⁸¹

⁸⁰ The Escazú Agreement is a regional political treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean to improve access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. [Read more here.](#)

⁸¹ Retrieved through field study.

4.1.7. Access to justice

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in its implementation guide for the Escazú Agreement, conceptualises access to justice in a broad manner and not only limiting it to judicial means, but encompassing administrative and other non-judicial instances, such as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that may be available to resolve an environmental dispute.⁸²

From the perspective of environmental human rights defenders, there are barriers in Peru to access justice around human rights. Although regulations have been approved at the national level that establish guidelines for better compliance with these rights, their application is still incipient. For example, the Public Prosecutor's Office has ordered the Special Prosecutor's Office for Human Rights and Interculturality to address violence against human rights defenders and has approved a protocol to guide its actions in this type of case. However, the Prosecutor's Office is only responsible for investigating and formalising the cases before the judiciary, but it has no power to guarantee that these suggestions will be followed by the judges. In addition, these initiatives face a notable lack of resources, whether human, equipment or financial. Therefore, for women environmental defenders, the possibility of accessing justice is considerably reduced.



'The Public Prosecutor's Office has its own protocol for dealing with defenders, but we see shortcomings. We will soon publish a press release about a supervision we carried out in Ucayali and we realised that the prosecutors do not know the protocols, even though they were approved in 2021. They should know it by now. The prefectures and sub-prefectures also have their own protocols, but there are also deficiencies. As the Ombudsman's Office, we are carrying out training and capacity-building activities to ensure that they comply.'

Representative of the Ombudsman's Office

Limitations on access to justice

In general terms, and according to the accounts of the actors interviewed and the communities, there are considerable limitations among justice operators:

- The Public Prosecutor's Office presents significant delays in carrying out proceedings in response to complaints alleging lack of budget. This results in inefficient and untimely responses to cases reported by human rights defenders. In fact, it is perceived that defenders' cases often remain at a standstill.
- The Prefecture has significant delays in arranging personal guarantees and sometimes simply does not provide them. Even when guarantees are provided or the Mechanism is activated for certain individuals, it does not provide real protection.
- Disinterest and indifference on the part of the authorities, which is linked to a lack of knowledge and awareness of the intercultural approach, Indigenous rights, prior consultation, human rights defenders and the gender approach.
- Allegations of alleged corruption of some public authorities. There are allegations of alleged corruption.
- Authorities supporting criminal mafias. The filing of complaints increases the risk and threats against defenders. Complaints filter down to the local level, often resulting in increased threats to the lives of defenders and even kidnappings of defenders or their families.
- High level of paperwork and formalities related to applying for guarantees and protection for WHRDs. Some women have reported difficulties in identifying and accessing the documentation required in the procedures of the Prefecture and the Ministry of Justice and

⁸² ECLAC (2023). Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean: implementation guide. [Available here](#).

Human Rights, for example, either because of lack of knowledge of the process or because they consider it costly or tedious, especially in urgent situations.

- Severe budgetary constraints make it difficult to carry out investigations and investigations. On many occasions, resources are requested from the complainants to inspect and corroborate the facts *in situ* in their communities. The remoteness of these places implies significant costs that are not available to the judicial and administrative authorities and are often borne by the local and Indigenous communities themselves or their allied organisations.

In this scenario, there is a high level of distrust in local and regional authorities. This results in communities seeking support from national and international bodies, as well as organising themselves to strengthen their self-protection systems.

The greatest trust in the public sector is placed in the Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman's Office, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Environment. However, it is recognised that these institutions have limited budget to address related issues. Hence, grassroots organisations turn to non-governmental organisations and international cooperation agencies for advocacy work, media campaigns and to strengthen their defence of human and Indigenous rights. In addition, the authorities, especially the Prosecutor's Office, seem to have difficulties in distinguishing cases of criminalisation against human rights defenders — and in particular against environmental rights defenders. The Environmental Prosecutor's Office (FEMA) has been alerted to this situation.



'We have identified cases in which concessionaires file complaints for illegal logging. But when we analyse further, we realise that concessionaires also receive complaints as retaliation. It also seems that the complaint against the concessionaire moves faster. While it is true that the complaint is a valid legal mechanism, it should be mandatory to check if there was a background to the case. This way, it can be determined if retaliation took place because of their advocacy role. The work of defending human rights cannot be criminalised. The problem is that the statistics or the information from the mechanism itself does not clearly show this situation.'

Civil society organisation representative

The consulted communities mentioned that when complaints are filed against aggressors and criminals, these offenders are quickly captured and released. Especially those interviewed at the level of grassroots organisations and communities expressed that this situation is a constant and represents serious danger for defenders, their families and communities — as offenders tend to retaliate and incur threats and direct aggressions. As a result, many people choose not to file complaints at the judicial or administrative level. This phenomenon is not only limited to cases of environmental crimes but encompasses human rights violations in general, including sexual assaults. Indigenous and local women in Madre de Dios emphasise that there is a deepening belief in their communities that judicial and administrative processes will not produce only results but rather impact the physical integrity and mental health of defenders and their families.



'When it comes to muggers, we organise with the community and some police allies to catch them, but when we take them in and report them, they let them go. That is a big problem because when they release them they will want to take revenge on us for denouncing them.'

Indigenous woman from Madre de Dios

4.1.8. Self-protection measures

Faced with the lack of effectiveness and timely response from the state in terms of environmental justice and protection of environmental and territorial defenders, grassroots organisations are taking the initiative to design and implement strategies for self-protection. These self-protection measures involve direct action from within the organisations in collaboration with various actors, such as non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, international cooperation and, specifically, from the public sector, with help from the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights.

It is important to include women's perspectives in the development and strengthening of these self-protection strategies, systems, mechanisms and protocols. This could be achieved through the active participation of women leaders, advocates, women's rights organisations and the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations.

The inclusion of gender approaches as part of these initiatives will ensure a more comprehensive and equitable approach, thus strengthening the protection of human and territorial rights in these communities. Likewise, the articulation of this ministry will ensure that public policies on violence against women are better adapted to the attention and protection of women defenders and their families. This articulation between protection efforts and specific policies to address gender-based violence will contribute to creating a safer and fairer environment for women involved in the defence of human and territorial rights.

Cross-sectoral cooperation underlines the importance of a holistic approach where communities, together with governmental and non-governmental entities, work hand in hand to address environmental justice and protection challenges for defenders. This type of multidimensional collaboration is essential to strengthen response capacities and ensure a safer and fairer environment for those actively defending their rights and the environment. In the case of civil society organisations and international cooperation, gender and intercultural approaches are increasingly seen as fundamental requirements for providing support.

The role of FENEMAD and the CDG

FENAMAD and the CDG are engaged in a process of strengthening and expanding their self-protection strategies, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and other civil society and international cooperation actors. These two organisations also implement surveillance and monitoring systems with the support of partner organisations.

As an Indigenous organisation from the area, FENAMAD works in forestry watchdog groups where almost 20% of the total number of women custodians of the forest and wildlife heritage are already recognised in the Indigenous communities of Madre de Dios. On the other hand, in the CDG, the monitoring and warning system is coordinated by the Executive Commission. The 32 titular and substitute coordinators provide periodic reports on what is happening in their sector and are part of a coordination assembly. When emergency situations are identified, there is a direct communication channel with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights.

Additionally, the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDESEP) carries out actions through its early warning system. AIDESEP also developed an inter-institutional agreement with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights to address risk situations. According to the Ministry, this agreement has the potential to have a positive and gradual impact on Amazonian Indigenous organisations and territories.⁸³ These initiatives demonstrate the strategic collaboration between Indigenous organisations and governmental entities to address and prevent risk situations in the context of the defence of human and territorial rights in the Amazon region.

⁸³ Ministry of Justice and Human Rights.(2023). Pucallpa: Ministro de Justicia se reúne con líderes indígenas para fortalecer la protección de defensores de derechos humanos. [Available here](#).



'As a next steps for the effective implementation of the mechanism, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights plans to implement self-protection measures that involve working in coordination with Indigenous and local organisations, including the identification of safe places, contacts or approaches with the Indigenous guard in case a risk situation arises. [...] This is an initiative that we take up with AIDSEP through its early warning system, within the framework of the inter-institutional agreement.'

Representative Ministry of Justice and Human Rights

4.1.9. Public policies and state strategies for the protection of women defenders

The Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (hereinafter, Intersectoral Mechanism) is the main national regulation for the protection of environmental and territorial rights defenders in Peru.⁸⁴ Its objective is the prevention, protection and access to justice for human rights defenders to provide an adequate environment for their activities of promotion, protection and defence of human rights. The mechanism is implemented by eight ministries⁸⁵ and the National Commission for Development and Life without Drugs. Each entity is responsible for allocating the necessary budget to fulfil the objective of safeguarding the situation of human rights defenders in an effective manner 'without demanding additional resources from the Public Treasury'.⁸⁶



'The conclusion is that there is a significant gender gap in the functioning of the Mechanism as it does not consider cases of criminalisation. If this continues, most women defenders will be left outside the protection of the Mechanism.'

Civil society organisation representative

The Intersectoral Mechanism indicates the incorporation of gender approaches in its implementation.⁸⁷ The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, through its General Directorate of Human Rights, is responsible for coordinating and executing the actions established in the Intersectoral Mechanism within the scope of its competence. The Ministry is also responsible for promoting coordination with other entities for the fulfilment of its functions. In addition, in recent years, different sectors have promoted directives, protocols and guides for the prevention, protection and access to justice of defenders, the most recent being that of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations published in 2023 (see Annex 2).

Normative framework for action against gender-based violence

In 2014, a recommendation made by the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).⁸⁸ Subsequently, the Peruvian State approved Law No. 30364 (Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women and Family Members) in 2015. This legislation addresses all forms of violence against women (gender-based violence) and against family members.

⁸⁴ The Intersectoral Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders was created by Supreme Decree No. 004-2021-JUS and partially modified by Supreme Decree No. 002-2022-JUS. This amendment adds the National Commission for the Development of Drug-free Life (DEVIDA) to the entities linked to the Intersectoral Mechanism. This is an entity attached to the President of the Council of Ministers.

⁸⁵ 1) Ministry of Justice and Human Rights; 2) Ministry of Environment; 3) Ministry of Culture; 4) Ministry of the Interior; 5) Ministry of Women's Affairs and Vulnerable Populations; 6) Ministry of Agrarian Development and Irrigation; 7) Ministry of Foreign Affairs; 8) Ministry of Energy and Mines.

⁸⁶ According to article 4 of Supreme Decree No. 004-2021-JUS.

⁸⁷ The gender approach within the Intersectoral Mechanism provides central elements for the formulation of measures (policies, mechanisms, affirmative actions, norms, etc.) that contribute to overcoming gender inequality, modify asymmetrical relations between women and men, eradicate all forms of violence, ensuring women's and men's access to public resources and strengthening their political and citizen participation under equal conditions. <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/dispositivo/NL/1946184-4>

⁸⁸ The Committee is the independent body responsible for monitoring and following up on the proper implementation of the Convention. It submitted concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Peru.

Although it is a norm to address violence in both the private and public spheres, this combination of addressing both gender-based violence against women and violence against family members 'ends to make one of the two problems invisible or minimise the complexity of both.'⁸⁹ In addition, in practice, authorities in the field often do not fully understand gender-based violence, which means that the norm is often interpreted or reduced to violence committed in the context of family relationships.

In this context, addressing both issues together through Law No. 30364 implies a significant challenge to confront violence against women in an environment of environmental degradation or violation of territorial rights, such as the situation faced by women environmental rights defenders in Madre de Dios. This was the case of the complaint of violence filed by Máxima Acuña, a well-known environmental defender who fought against the Conga mining megaproject. In 2017, the Criminal Prosecutor's Office of Celendín in Cajamarca dismissed her complaint, stating that Law No. 30364 only applied to violence exercised in the context of family relationships.⁹⁰

Despite advances in policies to address violence against women in Peru, according to a 2022 study on the national policy against violence against women, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations 'has not yet been able to articulate the different management instruments' between 2015 and 2020.⁹¹ This lack of articulation seems to persist over time and is reflected in the limited coordination of intersectoral management instruments to specifically address the challenges faced by women defenders. This situation is evident even in the latest regulations approved in 2023, indicating the need to strengthen intra-institutional and inter-institutional coordination to guarantee more effective and comprehensive protection.

Multisectoral Rural Strategy

On 3 May 2023, the Multisectoral Rural Strategy⁹² was established by Supreme Decree No. 007-2023. Aiming to address and prevent cases of gender-based violence in rural areas in an intersectoral manner, the strategy represented a significant step towards the promotion of specific measures to prevent, address, protect and recognise women human rights defenders in various contexts, including those engaged in the protection of environmental and territorial rights.

Through this initiative, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations coordinates actions with several public institutions, including the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, as well as other institutions that are excluded from the regional coordination bodies such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MINAGRI) and Produce. However, the Ministry of Environment (MINAM) is excluded. Such exclusion could point to the need for greater integration of key actors related to environmental protection and territorial rights in these strategies in rural contexts.

As established and published by Ministerial Resolution No. 197-2023-MIMP on 9 May 2023, the implementation of the Multisectoral Rural Strategy is carried out through the Rural Attention Service. This service aims to strengthen the prevention of violence and attention to victims in rural areas. According to the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, this service is being implemented as a six-month pilot in the province of Tahuamanu, in Madre de Dios, to adapt and improve the implementation of the strategy. Subsequently, after evaluation, it will be adjusted and gradually expanded to the rest of the region. This pilot initiative represents an important step in the specific context of Madre de Dios.

Another approved 2023 regulation was Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP, titled 'Prevention, attention, protection and recognition of women human rights defenders' by Ministerial Resolution No. 223-2023-MIMP. This directive had generated great expectation, especially among civil society involved in the defence of the rights of women defenders of the environment and territory. In fact, civil society organisations and international cooperation agencies participated in a workshop organised on 11 November 2022 by the National Human Rights Coordinator to review a draft of the directive and

⁸⁹ Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer, Synergía - Iniciativas para los Derechos Humanos y Asociación Líderes en Acción. (2022). Caso Olivera Fuentes Vs. Perú. [Available here.](#)

⁹⁰ Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer - DEMUS (2017) Caso Máxima Acuña. [Available here.](#)

⁹¹ Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer, Synergía - Iniciativas para los Derechos Humanos y Asociación Líderes en Acción. (2022). Caso Olivera Fuentes Vs. Perú. [Available here.](#)

⁹² This strategy pools the efforts and resources of various sectors and institutions responsible for addressing violence against women, domestic violence and sexual violence in rural areas. [Available here.](#)

provide proposals and suggestions. The draft proposal had been socialised by the General Directorate against Gender Violence (*Dirección General contra la Violencia de Género*) (see Annex 2).

AURORA Programme

In general terms, the presence of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations in the Madre de Dios region is materialised mainly through the AURORA Programme. This programme works to prevent violence and provides care and protection services to people affected by violence against women and members of the family and sexual violence. This programme adapted the National Programme Against Family and Sexual Violence (PNCVFS), its predecessor, so that it could cover more forms of violence against women as suggested by the Ombudsman's Office in its monitoring report on the Women's Emergency Centres (CEM) in 2018 and 2019.

Under the umbrella of the AURORA Programme, various services operate in the Madre de Dios region, including the Women's Emergency Centres and the Rural Attention Service (SAR). The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations runs five Women's Emergency Centres in Madre de Dios – with one location being operational 24 hours a day inside a police station. These services play a crucial role in the care and protection of women affected by violence in the region.



Figure 6. Territorial Unit AURORA in Madre de Dios. © FENEMAD⁹³

4.1.10. Policy implementation challenges

The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and AURORA Programme officials interviewed for this study mentioned that the Multisectoral Rural Strategy and the Rural Care Service⁹⁴ are the main tools for the implementation of services for women defenders of environmental rights and territory. This is particularly the case in Indigenous and local communities, which are often characterised as rural environments. However, Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP, published after the recent regulations on the Multisectoral Rural Strategy and the Rural Care Service, makes no mention of these regulations in its legal basis. The Directive also mentions that the Aurora Programme offers multiple advantages to women defenders, which are outlined in Annex 6.

Although the regulation sets out a series of activities under the responsibility of the General Directorates of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (General Directorate for Gender

⁹³ Retrieved from a presentation during an online seminary of FENEMAD in 2021.

⁹⁴ Servicio de atención rural. (2023). Servicio de atención frente a la violencia contra las mujeres e integrantes del grupo familiar y personas afectadas por violencia sexual en zonas rurales. [Available here](#).

Equality and Non-Discrimination; General Directorate for Gender Mainstreaming and General Directorate against Gender Violence), all of them are under the umbrella of the Vice-Ministry for Women. However, the Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP does not specifically mention coordination channels with the Vice-Ministry of Vulnerable Populations, nor with the National Integral Programme for Family Welfare (INABIF) or the National Council for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities (CONADIS).



'If you review the mechanism, you will realise that the MIMP's protection measures are designed only for women defenders, within the framework of Law No. 30364, leaving aside other vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities.'

Representative of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights

This is relevant because, as has been observed, violence against human rights defenders and women human rights defenders in Madre de Dios has a critical impact on their children and family members. Hence, it is especially important to articulate with public policies on vulnerable populations. In addition, it is INABIF who manages economic assistance for orphans (within the framework of Law No. 31405) — which promotes the protection and comprehensive development of children and adolescents who are left in this situation.

Conclusions on Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP

Within the framework of this study, interviews and a request for information on the progress of the implementation of the Intersectoral Mechanism and Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP revealed the following:

- Incipient inter-institutional coordination between the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Population on women human rights defenders, even though the MIMP directive establishes its commitment to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (and vice versa, in the case of the Intersectoral Mechanism).
- As reported by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights on 14 August 2023, almost a month after the publication of the MIMP directive, the General Director against Gender Violence of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations requested technical assistance from the General Directorate of Human Rights on the procedure for granting protection measures and/or urgent protection measures for women human rights defenders, as well as the application of the Intersectoral Mechanism.
- The first technical assistance session was held on 6 September 2023. A joint technical assistance session with the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations was also held at the end of October 2023 for the AURORA Programme's Territorial Coordinators, due to the responsibilities assigned under the MIMP directive. As of 23 November 2023 — five months after the publication of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations regulations, AURORA service professionals in Madre de Dios had not yet been trained. However, the Coordinator of the AURORA Territorial Unit in Madre de Dios reported that the organisation was aware of the relevant regulations.

Another aspect that became evident is that collaboration in the transmission of information from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations to the Registry in charge of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights — as established in the MIMP directive — did not take place yet⁹⁵. This lack of collaboration could possibly be explained. At the time of the fieldwork for this study, the new *Ficha del Centro de Emergencia Mujer* — which now includes a specific section on women human rights defenders, had not yet been implemented.

⁹⁵ This information was retrieved through exchange with representatives of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, the AURORA Programme and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights.

Initial deployment of Intersectoral Gender Mechanism

At the regional level, the AURORA Programme has managed to carry out dissemination and training actions in collaboration with the Anti-Corruption Forest Network (RFA) through an event held in October 2023. Although inter-institutional meetings have been held between the AURORA Programme in Madre de Dios and FENAMAD to discuss the importance of these spaces for dissemination and training on the Intersectoral Mechanism and the competencies of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and the AURORA Programme, it has not yet been possible to implement them. A similar situation has been experienced with the Special Prosecutor's Office for Human Rights and Interculturality, with which there were plans to visit the Indigenous communities of the Manu National Park to disseminate the regulations. In addition, the AURORA Programme reported on advocacy actions that were already underway more broadly, such as the dissemination of the Order of Merit for Women award, which now incorporates the category of women human rights defenders. The impact of these actions is unknown.

Incorporation in Case Record Cards of Women's Emergency Centres

Through the Resolution of the Executive Directorate N°230-2023-MIMPAURORA-DE, of 8 September 2023, the Case Registration Form of the Women's Emergency Centre and the Instructions for the Case Registration Form of the Women's Emergency Centre were approved. The implementation of these forms began on 10 October and November 2023 with the aim of collecting information on the pattern of violence against women human rights defenders. This step was carried out as part of the actions to implement Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP, although the details of what has been incorporated as human rights categories are unknown. These were not shared in detail in the response to the request for access to public information.

The information collected through the updated form was implemented between October and November 2023. This update allows the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations to identify whether the reports of gender-based violence registered correspond to cases of women human rights defenders. In situations where the violence is linked to advocacy actions, without constituting gender-based violence, the case should be referred to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights for appropriate attention.

Deploying the regulation at regional level

In summary, the AURORA Programme already faces difficulties in accessing communities and will have to effectively assume the new responsibilities granted by the Intersectoral Mechanism and the Sectoral Directive 'without demanding additional resources from the Public Treasury' as established by Supreme Decree No. 004-2021-JUS. It is suggested that this new responsibility may put additional pressure on the AURORA team in the region, but at the same time it could represent an opportunity. Effectiveness will depend on the team's ability to coordinate with the various actors already working on the care and protection of women defenders in the region, especially with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and actors from civil society and international cooperation.

As shown, there is a fundamental technical requirement for the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and the AURORA Programme to become involved in the cases of women defenders: if the violence suffered by these women is gender-based.⁹⁶ This may create challenges for intersectoral collaboration in situations involving women human rights defenders in the territory, as the aggression or threat they face does not necessarily fit into the category of 'gender-based violence'. At times, attacks and threats to women human rights defenders can be complex and will not easily fit into this nomenclature, highlighting the need to consider broader and more collaborative inter-sectoral approaches to address these specific situations of Indigenous and local women in the territory of Madre de Dios.

Although the regulation establishes that the Line Directorates of the Vice-Ministerial Office for Women will provide technical assistance to public entities for the incorporation of the gender perspective in the implementation of the measures established in the Intersectoral Mechanism, it does not assign specific responsibilities to the Regional Governments. Furthermore, it is important to note that the

⁹⁶ Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations. (2024). Informe de implementación Aurora 2021-2023. [Available here](#).

Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations is present the department of Madre de Dios, meaning that these directorates do not have a direct presence in Madre de Dios but are channelled through the AURORA Programme. It is precisely around the protection of women human rights defenders that budget allocations are lacking, as well as greater capacity building for justice operators and services to deal with violence against women in relation to the Intersectoral Mechanism.

4.1.11. Balance of inter-institutional coordination spaces

One of the main limitations of the Intersectoral Mechanism is the lack of involvement of state entities outside the executive branch, such as regional governments. Thus, one strategy promoted by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights at the national level is the Regional Roundtables for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, which seek to facilitate the adoption of measures and coordination between the national and regional governments, civil society organisations and Indigenous organisations in order to address situations of risk for human rights defenders who face the development of illegal activities such as illegal logging, illegal drug trafficking, land trafficking or illegal and/or informal mining, among others.

The Madre de Dios Regional Roundtable for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders was established on 5 July 2022 during an inter-sectoral working session convened by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights in Puerto Maldonado.⁹⁷⁹⁸

Roundtable activities and results in Madre de Dios

In Madre de Dios, the Regional Roundtable is composed of several public sector actors and two grassroots organisations: CDG and FENAMAD. However, it is striking that neither the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations nor the AURORA Programme are official representatives of the Roundtable.

During the short time since its implementation, the Roundtable has managed to involve various stakeholders. In this sense, it is interesting to note that this roundtable is the meeting point for different non-governmental organisations working in the promotion of human rights from different angles. However, this roundtable may be insufficient as a space for articulation between them, since, in the opinion of some civil society representatives, some organisations continue to implement actions without coordinating among themselves. On the other hand, the Roundtable has served to coordinate some initial actions between governmental entities, for example, between the Peruvian National Police and GOREMAD, so that the former can make use of the latter's means of river transport.



'The PNP has made commitments to the regional government. The PNP did not have boats available to visit the defenders on the banks of the river and without mobility there was not much to do, so GOREMAD set up a boat exclusively for them. This means that it is not a lack of attention, but rather a lack of resources, which also creates a difficulty for us.'

Representative of the Ombudsman's Office

According to representatives of civil society organisations, the results of the Roundtable are still incipient. Although there have been three sessions: one for the installation and two ordinary sessions,

⁹⁷ This roundtable was officially recognised through Regional Ordinance N° 016-2022-RMDD/CR and approved on 22 November 2022 by the Regional Council of Madre de Dios. The ordinance was published on 29 December 2022.

⁹⁸ According to the act of constitution of the Regional Roundtable of Madre de Dios, the co-presidency oversees the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (Vice-Ministry of Human Rights and Access to Justice) and the Regional Government of Madre de Dios. The technical secretariat is provided by the Regional Management of Social Development of Madre de Dios and the Ministry of Environment. Although the co-management of these roundtables with the respective regional governments is encouraged, in practice it is the Directorate of Human Rights Policies and Management of the General Directorate of Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights that is responsible for following up on the commitments undertaken.

they are still protocol spaces where the participation of women defenders, and in some cases women defenders, is still limited. In this sense, the participation of women defenders in these spaces of the Roundtable has yet to be consolidated.



'I think it is a step forward that it has been set up in Madre de Dios, but the strategy of action of the guidelines needs to be clarified. Beyond being just an important roundtable, it should always have clear objectives and established deadlines. The roundtable has just held three meetings. I think that as the roundtable is just being set up, it should consider the participation of women and the Indigenous women's quota.'

Civil society organisation representative

Registry on risk situations of human rights defenders

The registry⁹⁹ on risk situations of human rights defenders was created by Peru's Ministry of Justice and Human Rights in 2021 by Supreme Decree No. 4-2021-JUS and has three purposes:

- Identify the areas of greatest risk for defenders at a local, regional and national level, as well as the structural problems that generate these situations of risk.
- Determine those groups of human rights defenders who are in a state of greater vulnerability and identify and make visible the most frequent patterns of aggression, incorporating the ethnic variable.
- Obtain information for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of prevention, protection and access to justice measures, in the medium and long term, where appropriate.

Since 2022, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights has incorporated other modalities of attention through its 'risk monitoring' that allows to identify risk situations in a faster way - using text messages, WhatsApp, calls and email. According to this register, three situations of risk against two women human rights defenders and one family member of a human rights defender have been attended to in the department of Madre de Dios between June 2019 and September 2023. However, the Ombudsman's Office has registered four cases. It has not been possible to obtain information on whether these cases coincide with, or differ from, each other.

The Ministry recognises that the information required to register risk situations on the platform is complex — and certain aspects need to be further optimised. At the time of research for this report, efforts on a new platform were underway to provide information and statistics on situations of risk, risk areas and the number of defenders at risk, among other elements.¹⁰⁰ The aim is for this platform to be able to inform the same people who report these situations about the coordination to be carried out. This platform would also allow for a more automatic response to the high number of requests for public information that reach the Directorate.

The Ministry has been working on an agreement with AIDSEP to address risk situations in Indigenous communities. In addition, it has been training territorial governmental entities such as the Judiciary, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Peruvian National Police, and recognises the urgent need to raise awareness among regional authorities such as judges, prosecutors and prefectures, among others. The priority reported by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights is to disseminate the Intersectoral Mechanism and train regional and national actors, as well as to have direct contact with the entities to address risk situations.

⁹⁹ The registry is managed by the Directorate of Human Rights Policies and Management, an organic unit of the General Directorate of Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. The risk situation can be reported through the virtual platform SIRIDEH. The situation is analysed by the ministry and the task of corroborating the information provided is carried out to include the situation in the register and activate the early attention mechanism.

¹⁰⁰ DAI. Peru – Prevent activity. [Available here.](#)

4.2. Colombian Amazon

Colombia has a rich history of agriculture, with high commodity production shaping its entire socio-economic system. The country also is also a top performer in terms of social inequality related to access and use of land, as some people have great wealth while others live in extreme poverty. The unjust regulation and distribution of land generated struggles and much violence that consequently shaped Colombia's socio-political situation. What followed is one of the longest and most violent civil wars between the government and guerrilla, including *La Violencia* (1948-1958) and more recently the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP).

During the armed conflict, some areas were under government control and others under the control of FARC (now FARC-EP). This resulted in the displacement of peasants, an increase in illicit activities such as coca production and general insecurity and violence. In 2016, the war between the government and FARC was suspended with the signing of the Peace Agreement,¹⁰¹ which included the Comprehensive Rural Reform. One of its main proposals was the redistribution of land for landless and land-scarce peasants. The Peace Agreement contributed to a significant decrease in the number of internally displaced people per year in the five-year post-agreement period, with an annual average of 100,000 people (2017 - 2021) — compared to approximately 500,000 internally displaced people per year in the first decade of the 21st century.¹⁰²

4.2.1. Land grabbing

Land grabbing can be defined as a systematic phenomenon of massive purchase or lease of large areas of land in southern countries that guarantees control and power over the territory. The act of land grabbing involves both nature and those who inhabit it and the social dynamics that occur and shape it.¹⁰³¹⁰⁴

Colombia is one of the most unequal countries in the world.¹⁰⁵ The high concentration of rural property that characterises the country's agrarian structure largely explains the historical expulsion of the population to the agricultural frontier, especially to the lowlands of the Amazon rainforest. This phenomenon has worsened in recent years, post-peace agreement, evidenced in the size of plots in the hands of a few economic agents with the purpose of establishing forms of unsustainable land use and management at low cost, losing natural forests.¹⁰⁶

Territorial processes (such as the process of forming and establishing a territory) entail different situations, as such processes are defined by their socio-spatial practices, social relations of power and exclusion. Therefore, spaces overlap and intersect, while their boundaries are varied and mobile.¹⁰⁷ Hence, we can conclude that territories emerge from power relations that establish norms and thus define boundaries.

Actors involved in land grabbing

According to the Centre for Development Alternatives (CEALDES), four types of actors are involved in the process of land grabbing in the northern Amazon:

- Large accumulations associated with elite sectors.
- Large accumulations coming from other departments.
- Medium-sized farmers who buy large tracts of land because of their displacement by violence elsewhere.
- Medium-sized farmers who, because of the income from illicit crops, buy large tracts of land to lease or speculate with it.

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2016). ABC del Acuerdo Final - Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera. [Available here](#).

¹⁰² Institute for Development and Peace Studies - INDEPAZ. (2023). Cifras de la violencia en Colombia. [Available here](#)

¹⁰³ Roa, P. (2015). Acaparamiento de tierras, fenómeno mundial con presencia en Colombia (1). [Available here](#).

¹⁰⁴ CEALDES. (2022). Políticas ambientales por un lado y la distribución de la tierra por otro, el camino hacia la destrucción de la amazonia Colombiana. [Available here](#).

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Development Programme (2011). Rural Colombia, reasons for hope. [Available here](#).

¹⁰⁶ FCDS. (2022). Monitoreo de pérdida de cobertura vegetal – 15 de febrero a 31 de marzo 2022. [Available here](#).

¹⁰⁷ Doreen Massey. (1994). A Global Sense of Place. [Available here](#).

At the same time, different investigations have identified that deforestation processes associated with land grabbing are linked to illegal usurpation by armed actors and outsiders, as detailed by Mongabay in a special report published in 2018. This recurring argument must be put into perspective according to the particularities of each case, since in most of the departments of the northern Colombian Amazon region, it is the economic inequalities that exist between land grabbers and peasants that lead to the sale of these peasants' land to outsiders without these processes of dispossession being accompanied by any explicit violence, which causes possible displacement and, therefore, an increase in land grabbing.

In these processes of dispossession, women landowners are more exposed because of the situation of poverty in which most of them live. With land grabbing and the loss of territories, rural women's access to common goods is affected and they lose access to spaces of common use, such as the *veredas*, local spaces, schools and vital resources for their social reproduction and life, putting their way of life as peasant, Indigenous or black women at risk.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, since women in Colombia have in general suffered from unequal access to land compared to men, and in line with the fact that the process of securing rights to property has been historically very complex and obscure, women experienced economic insecurity as well as discrimination as landholders.

In San José del Guaviare, Calamar and El Retorno, a growth in large landholding is noticeable¹⁰⁹. This could indicate processes of land grabbing happening in areas with old deforestation¹¹⁰ and, thus, that the process of land concentration continues to be in the hands of only a few.

Rise in land grabbing after the Peace Agreement

The process of land grabbing experienced a growth after the signing of the Peace Agreement. This issue has received constant attention, but not with the detail it requires, given that spatial-geographical particularities have determined a series of activities that have taken on greater force in some places than others. Deforestation linked to land grabbing responds to a series of economic and expansionary dynamics that seek to homogenise production within the framework of the economy of scale and others within the framework of illegality. Thus, those who monopolise land set the rules on it and make decisions on how to work it to produce monetary wealth.

One of the main proposals of the Comprehensive Rural Reform was the construction of a Free Land Distribution Fund for landless peasants or peasants with insufficient land, prioritising women heads of household and the displaced population.¹¹¹ This proposal left the rest of the women, who were not heads of household, to other dynamics that depended on the historical configuration of the family, making it difficult for women to access and expand the distribution of land.

On the other hand, the formalisation of small and medium property was also proposed for those who owned land, but did not have formal deeds that accredited them as owners. The objective of this proposal was to promote integral access to land, so that land would be accompanied by irrigation, credit, technical assistance, marketing support and other assets needed by rural producers to live off the land¹¹² and thus diversify the economy. This scenario of formalisation was mainly benefiting men since they were the ones that mainly owned land titles. As a result, this limited the possibility for women to have comprehensive access to credit and technical assistance as they did not own land where they could implement this on.

¹⁰⁸ International Land Coalition (2020). XI LAC 2020 Land Forum. Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean: impact and proposals for land governance. [Available here](#).

¹⁰⁹ Global Forest Watch. Colombia. [Available here](#).

¹¹⁰ Centre for Development Alternatives - CEALDES. (2021). Forests for the Future. Productive experiences for the care of the Amazon.

¹¹¹ Botero-García, R.; López, F.; Ospino, H.; Ponce de León-Chaux, E.; Riveros, C. (2019). Amazonian protected areas and their servants as victims of the armed conflict. Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development.

¹¹² Botero-García, R.; López, F.; Ospino, H.; Ponce de León-Chaux, E.; Riveros, C. (2019). Amazonian protected areas and their servants as victims of the armed conflict. Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development.



Like bees we will pollinate the forest and make it grow¹¹³

In 2019, almost 100 ex-combatants who signed the Peace Agreement created a cooperative with funds granted to them by the government for productive enterprises. They started their actions with a fish farming project with the intention of raising fish in natural or artificial ponds, but it was delayed due to difficulties in obtaining land. Eventually they settled in a new location where they have been working on ten hectares of land for four years, both for conservation and forest restoration with fruit and timber trees. In 2021, they created a licensed green business nursery capable of holding 10,000 plants. The nursery is managed by men, while women take care of specific tasks such as transplanting and plant maintenance. In addition, they established a National Network of Nurseries in various regions, composed of twelve organisations, to support the restoration and protection of the Amazon, create biological corridors, implement schools on peasant reserve zones and recover Amazonian seeds.

The cooperative also became involved in meliponiculture, the raising of melipona bees or stingless bees, an activity seen as essential for the conservation of the ecosystem as bees play a crucial role in the pollination of food. Meliponiculture is led exclusively by women. They started with twelve hives and later expanded to 31, producing honey and exploring by-products such as lip moisturisers, shampoo and hand cream. Despite all these activities, the cooperative faces several obstacles. The meliponiculture project faces challenges in terms of regulation and marketing, and there are difficulties related to land ownership. The work the ex-combatants have done is threatened by the difficulty of operating in an area where there is a high presence of armed groups that extort money.

In 2022, a partnership with a departmental association was established to provide resources for the women in the cooperative. Women farmers play a crucial role in ecosystem conservation because of their nature-friendly practices and their protection of life and the rights of land and people. They often face violence and war, but their defence of nature is essential to community prosperity. Women leaders who also manage the household often face long working days, which makes it difficult for them to participate in training. To overcome these challenges, 'new masculinities' projects aim to involve men in household responsibilities and a childcare service has been set up for women with children.

One of these women, Marta (not her real name for security reasons), a former FARC-EP combatant in the process of reincorporation, faces significant challenges. Although the cooperative and the association provide economic support, they do not constitute a full income. Marta has observed increasing deforestation and environmental degradation in her region, exacerbated by mining, logging and coca cultivation, which is transforming the ecosystem and causing rivers to disappear.

'Human beings are tenants of the Earth that we were born, but that tomorrow we will no longer be there. So the biggest fights are over the land when it doesn't even belong to us and we need to understand that the land also has life,' Marta says.

She stresses that mass consumption and the waste of water in the constant production of short-lived goods contribute to environmental damage. According to her, the lack of sustainability in these products and the pressure to buy unnecessary things exacerbate the degradation of nature. Marta advocates for environmental education in schools to encourage sustainable practices and dreams of a future where families produce their own food, reducing dependence on external purchases.

Women's involvement in land ownership

Women's participation in territorial redistribution processes was relegated to cases in which they were heads of households, making it difficult to differentiate interventions with a gender perspective in the territories. If historically the processes of accumulation, speculation, illicit crops and the purchase of large extensions of land for livestock and agro-industrial processes are linked to male tasks, there is a need for territorial recognition of women's work, without this being based on pre-established gender roles, but rather on the involvement and participation of a population that is not a minority.

¹¹³ Retrieved through field study.



'Women farmers' access to land has been summed up in one sentence: land ownership only through a man.'

D. Meertens¹¹⁴

There are three main causes of women's difficulties in gaining access to land ownership:

- Historically, women left land titling and formalisation in the hands of men.
- Customary laws and practices promote patrilineage and thus maintain a consecutive process of inheritance between generations of men. These practices increase the lack of adequate provisions for women to have land rights independent of their husbands or male relatives.
- Due to the same exercise of speculation and the difficulty of women's own economic development in their households, access to payment for land is becoming increasingly distant.

These causes result in a low percentage of women landowners. According to the analysis of the DANE in Colombia, 48.2% of the rural population are women, but about 64% of the sole owners of rural land are men.¹¹⁵¹¹⁶ Therefore, the likelihood of land grabbing by rural women and its environmental implications is lower. This low concentration rate is reflected in three main effects on women:

- Higher levels of poverty among women compared to men, because of the purchasing and trading power of men.
- Women's inability to access credit or loans — thus their low possibility of participating in commercial scenarios, as well as their low probability of economic autonomy due to women's inability to strengthen their own economic dynamics.
- Gender-based violence due to its normalisation in historically patriarchal and sexist contexts.

Changing the situation for women

Access to land is considered as a pillar of territorial and environmental distribution and transformation. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) proposes to recognise three key areas to ensure women's access to land and housing:¹¹⁷

- At the legislative level, women's independent rights must be provided for and mechanisms to enforce them must be guaranteed.
- In traditional societies women's access to land through purchase or inheritance is often limited, but with management tools they can have greater access and use rights.
- As household food producers, they are generally allowed customary access to land in terms of use rights, but these are usually acquired through kinship relationships and as wives, mothers, sisters or daughters. Securing access to land includes taking them out of the purely reproductive and productive role.

With all these considerations, territorial redistribution is not exclusive to a policy that gives women access to the formalisation of property. Attempts at local distribution are linked to a problem of land conflict, lack of formalisation in their legal relations and even challenges in declaring and protecting areas of environmental relevance. Consequently, distributive remedies must be adapted to the needs of a society in which land relations are heterogeneous and linked to the claims of cultural identities such as ethnic groups, Indigenous peoples and peasant women.¹¹⁸

Through the adequate provision of public services, such as more formal land dynamics, it is possible to start recognising the damage generated — and the inequality accentuated over time — by failed

¹¹⁴ Meertens, D. (2017). Colombia: Gender and Land Restitution. [Available here](#).

¹¹⁵ DANE. (2022). Nota estadística propiedad rural. [Available here](#).

¹¹⁶ El País. (2022). Rural land ownership, another mirror of inequality between men and women in Colombia. [Available here](#).

¹¹⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - FAO (2002). FAO land tenure studies 4. FAO and agriculture organization of the United Nations. Chapter 3. Why is gender an issue in access to land. [Available here](#).

¹¹⁸ Quintana, V. (2022). Nancy Fraser's search for economic and cultural justice. Access to land for rural women in Colombia since the 1980s. Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz - INDEPAZ. [Available here](#).

attempts at agrarian reform, sexual division of labour in the countryside and tensions between ethnic territories and extractive projects, amongst other factors.¹¹⁹

4.2.2. Cattle ranching

Cattle ranching in the northern Colombian Amazon is one of the oldest exercises of the peasantry in the area, especially in the departments of Guaviare and southern Meta. Nowadays, both areas make up the Amazon biome, although previously they were understood as an extension of the eastern plains of Colombia — which allowed for the arrival and expansion of cattle ranching in the area. The various colonisations, directed by the Colombian state, armed forces and *bonanzas*, increased and dispersed these areas.¹²⁰

Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, two parallel situations have arisen in Colombia. On the one hand, the departure of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) from the territory, an actor that controlled territorial dynamics in the northern Amazon. On the other hand, the partial implementation of some points of the Peace Agreement itself, such as the Comprehensive Rural Reform (point 1 of the AP) or the National Programme for the Substitution of Illicitly Used Crops (PNIS) (point 4 of the AP). Both actions led to the entry of new actors into the territory and the consolidation of regional elites who, through livestock production systems, began land grabbing processes — mainly in the departments of Guaviare and Caquetá. Specifically, the failed implementation of point 4 of the PA (non-compliance of the PNIS) resulted in widely questioned processes of illicit crop substitution in National Parks and areas of Ecological Importance. This encouraged the entry of cattle into areas where there was previously no presence.¹²¹

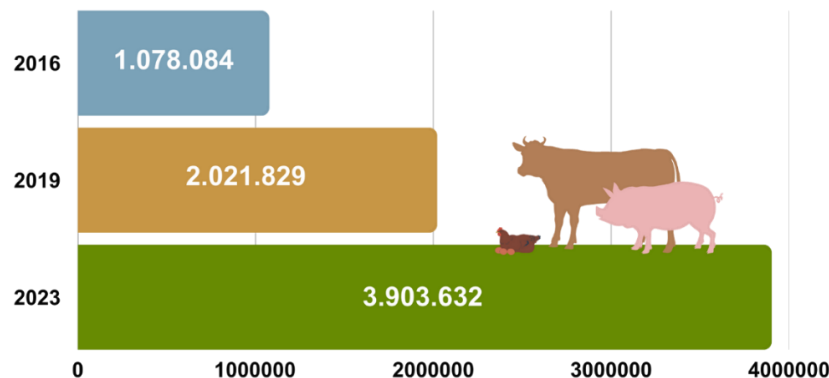


Figure 7. Heads of livestock in Colombia. © IUCN NL based on data from the Colombian Agricultural Institute¹²²

Expansion mechanisms

Two mechanisms for increasing livestock herd exist. The first is related to the expansion of pastures and the construction of new farms or the expansion of existing farms in forested areas. The second is related to the eradication of coca leaf crops, as farmers who used to live off the coca economy eradicate their crops and move towards a livestock economy. This second mechanism triggered deforestation processes in the traditionally coca-growing regions of the northern Amazon, as the substitution of crops that usually occupied one to three hectares¹²³ shifted to between 50 and 80

¹¹⁹ Quintana, V. (2022). Nancy Fraser's search for economic and cultural justice. Access to land for rural women in Colombia since the 1980s. Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz - INDEPAZ. [Available here](#)

¹²⁰ Molano, A. (1987). Selva adentro, una historia oral de la colonización del Guaviare. Bogotá: La Ancora Editores.

¹²¹ Centre for Development Alternatives - CEALDES. (2021). Defending the forest. Dynamics of forest transformation and community alternatives in the northwestern Amazon. // Murillo, P.; Tellman, E.; Kilbride, J.; Wrathall, D.; Van Den Hoek, J.; Kennedy, R. (2023). The post-conflict expansion of coca farming and illicit cattle ranching in Colombia. Nature. [Available here](#) // Agudelo, W.; Castillo, N.; Murcia, U. (2023). Scenarios of land use and land cover change in the Colombian Amazon to evaluate alternative post-conflict pathways. Nature. [Available here](#).

¹²² Colombian Agricultural Institute - ICA. (2023). National Livestock Census. [Available here](#).

¹²³ CEALDES. (2021). Defending the forest. Dynamics of forest transformation and community alternatives in the northwestern Amazon.

hectares of pasture for cattle.¹²⁴ Hence, the relationship between the eradication of illicit crops and the growth of the livestock herd is evident in the field.¹²⁵

Livestock production chains as a driver of deforestation have been widely described by different authors. However, there are gaps in the analysis of these chains from a gender perspective that would allow us to understand the role that women play in these production processes and their possible effects. Of the few data that are known, only 30% of the workforce is female in livestock farming in the Colombian Amazon.¹²⁶

Phase 1: access to land and landscape transformation

In the first stage, land is obtained. In the case of small producers, access to land can occur through two processes. The first process involves the acquisition of a farm that has already been built and where the primary forest has already been cut down and burnt — which entails a change in land use. The second process is the possibility of being awarded a vacant plot of land if the corresponding conditions are met. Most of the vacant plots (*baldíos*) in the northern Amazon are located within the Forest Reserve Zone of the Second Law of 1959, which means that they cannot be assigned by the state.

The women interviewed during this research agreed that most of the time these negotiations are led by men, whether they have families. This argument is confirmed by reviewing the statistics on access to land, whether through formal titling (by means of a letter of possession¹²⁷) or informal (buying and selling), differentiated by sex. In Colombia, land is mostly in the hands of men. Only 36.3% of the Colombian women have access to land titles.

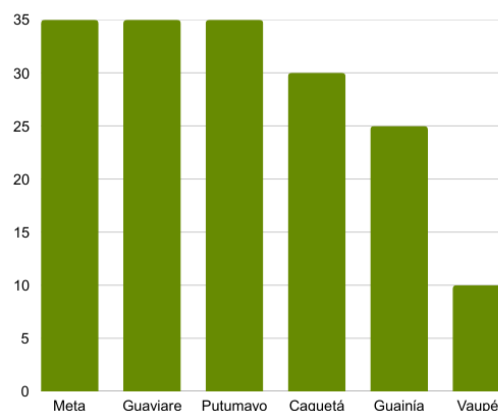


Figure 8. Percentage of women with access to a land title in the Colombian Amazon © IUCN NL¹²⁸

After acquiring the land, the process of clearing, felling and burning must begin. During this stage, the standing forest is felled and transformed into pasture for livestock. This activity is mostly carried out when there is access to a vacant piece of land, although it can also occur in the forest of a farm that is already occupied. When the land is obtained by a family, this process of land-cover change is usually carried out by the man and his older sons. During the interviews, it became clear that there are a few cases where women who live alone or have children managed to build their own farms.

The picture changes when it comes to medium and large producers. Cattle farmers owning between up to 100 hectares are perceived as small livestock farmers, while farms with more than 100 hectares are medium or large producers, according to the Livestock Census.¹²⁹ In the case of medium or large cattle owners, workers are hired to clear the land. They can be hired either via a contract, or on a daily rate. In the latter case, the daily payment for an employee without machinery is approximately \$16.22 USD (\$65,000 COP) plus daily food. If the worker has the machinery to do the tomb work, the payment increases to \$24.95 USD (\$100,000 COP). The working day lasts from 7AM to 4PM. The total working hours are 7AM to 4PM. This means a total of nine hours of work, with two hours devoted to lunch and hydration. After the forest is cut down and burned, pastures are sown. This task in family livestock farming is undertaken by men and their young sons in 75% of the cases. Only 25% of the time, the task shared between men and women. These jobs are mostly carried out by men.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Murillo, P.; Tellman, E.; Kilbride, J.; Wrathall, D.; Van Den Hoek, J.; Kennedy, R. (2023). The post-conflict expansion of coca farming and illicit cattle ranching in Colombia. *Nature*. [Available here](#).

¹²⁵ Using satellite images to compare the transformation of illicit crops to cattle ranching, the findings of this research disprove the widespread idea that this was a 'strategy of legitimising coca plots by turning them into cattle ranching'. Likewise, in different conversations with farmers in Caquetá during 2023, villagers argue that, in the places where coca was planted, agrochemicals such as glyphosate were used — which can affect pasture production and cause illnesses in livestock.

¹²⁶ Contexto Ganadero. (2025). El 30 por ciento de la ganadería es liderada por mujeres. [Available here](#).

¹²⁷ Informal document issued by Juntas de Acción Comunal.

¹²⁸ Based on a document issued by Juntas de Acción Comunal.

¹²⁹ DANE. Statistics by theme: agriculture and livestock. [Available here](#).

¹³⁰ Based on interviews conducted during this study.

Phase 2: land development and infrastructure construction

This second stage of livestock establishment consists of two main activities, namely land preparation and infrastructure and livestock acquisition. Land preparation and infrastructure refers to the construction of fences, stables, drinking troughs and cleaning of paddocks, activities — mostly carried out by men.

In the northern Amazon, not all people who keep livestock own them. Some are pasture holders or tenants. All three forms of livestock acquisition are negotiation activities mostly carried out by men. However, it was identified that, in recent years, there has been an increase in the participation of women and young people in the negotiations, especially when it comes to small producers.

In addition, in conversations with various women leaders, it was identified that the easiest way for women to access income from livestock farming is by leasing pastures, as this activity does not require any manual labour, only when the pastures are established and improved, an activity that is carried out once a year. In the year 2021, \$5 USD (\$20,000 COP) per cow per month was paid for pasture leasing. It is estimated that up to three cows can be kept on one hectare, or \$15 USD (\$60,000 COP) per hectare per month. This number can be increased if there is cattle technification.¹³¹

First productive stage

This stage groups together mainly dairy production and health management activities, including milking management, animal and health management, paddock rotation, mineral supplementation and weed control. These activities are related to good farming practices.

During the first stage of production, livestock farming activities are shared among the whole family nuclei. Adult women and men, young people and even children participate in these activities, mainly by accompanying their mothers in specific tasks. However, there are tasks that are mainly undertaken by women, such as milking cows and producing cheese. The sale of this cheese becomes a livelihood for those women. Likewise, around the production of cheese, women from different families have created collective brands whose sales are mainly made at farmers' markets. Paddock rotation and weed control are also commonly carried out by women and their children, while animal health activities are mostly carried out by men.

Cattle breeding work such as vaccination, branding and castration of bulls is a family activity. About five persons — family members or external workers — work on 40 cattle. The women and young people involved in the work are usually from the family and not external workers — who are always men. During the day, the woman oversees helping to move the cattle to the chute¹³² in the corral and then vaccinating, branding and sterilising the bulls. Finally, the castration of the bulls is mainly done by the men of the family.

When it comes to livestock farming by a medium or large producer, generally three roles are involved:

- Administrator, who oversees organising and paying the farm workers and works under a verbal contract.
- Steward, who oversees milking, rotating the cattle through the paddocks and supplementing feed, as well as some cattle health actions. He works under a verbal contract with a payment of approximately \$381 USD (\$1,500,000 COP).
- Day labourers, who carry out activities on a daily contract basis at a rate of approximately \$20 USD (\$80,000 COP). Most of the people hired for this work are men.

On medium and large livestock farms, women are hired to do domestic work such as feeding and cleaning the workers' common areas. The women's working day in the kitchen starts at 5 am and lasts until 7 pm. The daily wage is approximately \$4 USD (\$15,000 COP) and is a fixed payment, it does not vary depending on the number of people they have to cook for. In addition, these are tasks that are contracted at all stages of production in the dairy chain.

¹³¹ Centre for Development Alternatives. (2021). Forests for the Future. Productive experiences for the care of the Amazon.

¹³² A long, narrow corridor through which the animal moves until it reaches a dead end with a door that opens and closes at the operator's will.

Another role within the general management of the farm is that of the butler. When the butler has a family, usually all members of the family move to the farm and the women begin to do the housework and even, in some cases, contribute to the milking and cleaning of pastures or corrals. However, only the butler, who is usually the man, receives the only monthly payment, which is approximately \$381 USD (\$1,500,000 COP). While women work approximately fourteen hours in a daily wage, men work nine hours. However, the wage gap can be as high as 85% depending on the stage of the chain.

Marketing and distribution

Marketing focuses on the sale of milk and dairy products, as well as live cattle. Within the process of marketing milk and dairy products, different aspects can be identified. The process of transporting the products is mostly carried out by men or people from outside the family. They are the ones in charge of the monetary transactions of the farm. A relatively high number of young people also participate with the commercialisation process of milk. The process around live cattle is also identified as a male domain, although the participation of young women has increased in recent years. The sale of salted cheese is considered a domain that allows women to generate income.



A day in the life of Esperanza, a peasant woman's story

Many Colombian women in rural areas work approximately fourteen hours a day between farm and care work, of which only five hours are paid. Their other activities, which take about nine hours per day, are domestic work and caretaking. Because this type of work is normalised and less visible, it is recognised as such.

Let's take the example of Esperanza (not her real name to protect her identity). She gets up at 5:30 in the morning to work almost non-stop, both outside and within and around her house. Her activities vary from preparing meals and helping her children with their homework, from herding, branding and vaccinating cattle. Of her fourteen-hour work day, only a few hours are paid work. Usually, her husband receives the money for the cattle she looks after. However, by producing cheese she makes some income herself. In addition, she brands her own cattle. 'The cows marked with an E are mine', she says.

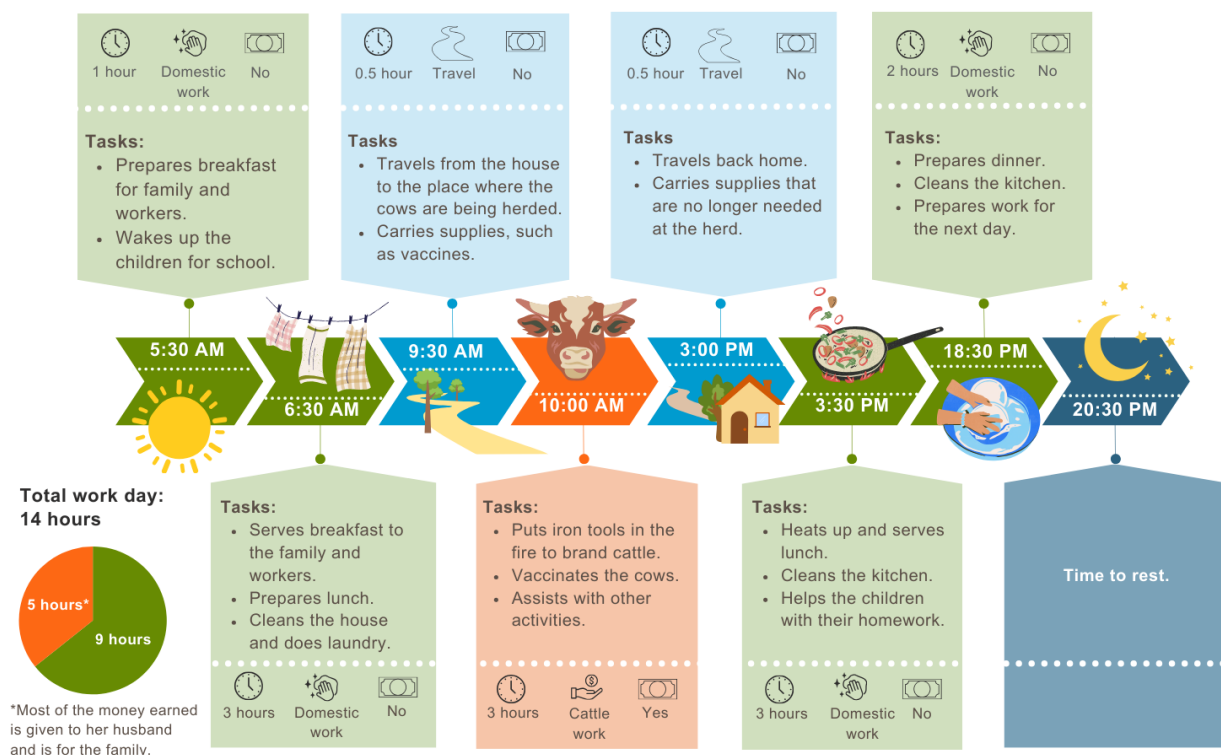


Figure 9. An average day in the life of Esperanza in the Colombia Amazon. © IUCN NL based on study findings.

The normalisation of sexual division of labour is one of the main causes of the double or triple working days of women in the countryside. In this respect, academic and activist Silvia Federici noted that ‘women carry out a great deal of work that benefits all employers, for which they still receive no remuneration, no recognition. It is work that has been completely naturalised and made invisible, even though employers have accumulated great wealth from this work. We can imagine, for example, what employers would have done if there were not millions of women who every day clean, cook, do all that work that is called domestic work – which should really be called work that reproduces the workforce? It is important to recognise what this work produces [...]. It makes us understand that reproductive work is the pillar of all other kinds of work. It is the pillar of the whole organisation of labour in this society’.¹³³

4.2.3. Illicit crops

According to the monitoring report on territories affected by illicit crops published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2022,¹³⁴ a total of 230,000 cultivated hectares were registered for that year. These 49% hectares are in special management areas (distributed as followed — 21.5% in National Natural Parks, 18% in Indigenous Reserves, 5% in Forest Reserve Zones under the Second Law and 4.5% in collective territories of black communities) and 51% outside special management areas.

Of this total, 31,874 hectares correspond to the research area of this report, distributed between the departments of Putumayo and Caquetá, 6,075 hectares in the Meta and Guaviare region and 151 hectares in the Amazon. In other words, 19% of the total area under coca cultivation in the country is in Amazonia, below the Pacific region and Catatumbo.¹³⁵

In 2016, the Colombian government signed the Peace Agreement with the FARC (now FARC-EP).¹³⁶ Illegal economies were one of the key points in the negotiation, mainly illicit crops. By virtue of this, point 4 of the Peace Agreement focused on the Solution to the Problem of Illicit Drugs and contemplated, in point 4.1, the Integral Programme for the Substitution of Illicitly Used Crops (PNIS for its abbreviation in Spanish).

Integral development plans with the participation of communities, men and women, in the design, execution and evaluation of substitution and environmental recovery programmes for areas affected by such crops. This programme allowed the Colombian state to address coca growers as the weakest link in the drug trafficking chain from a focus on protection and non-criminalisation.

According to the UNODC, of the 99,097 families that were linked to the PNIS, 35,834 women were registered as heads of the household.¹³⁷ These women have different roles, as can be seen in figure 10. The numbers of families in the Colombian Amazon headed by women whose main economic activity is coca production are distributed in figure 11, which shows that Putumayo is the department with the highest number of women as heads of household involved in illicit crops. This number correlates with Putumayo possesses the highest number of hectares of coca cultivation in the Colombian Amazon, followed by Caquetá, Meta, Guaviare and Guainía.

¹³³ Silvia Federici. (1975). Wages Against Housework. [Available here](#).

¹³⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2022). Colombia. Monitoring of territories with presence of coca cultivation 2022. [Available here](#).

¹³⁵ World Food Programme. (2023). Food security assessment of the coca leaf marketing crisis.

¹³⁶ The Guardian. (2016). Colombia signs historic peace deal with Farc. [Available here](#).

¹³⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2022). Colombia. Monitoring of territories with presence of coca cultivation 2022. [Available here](#).

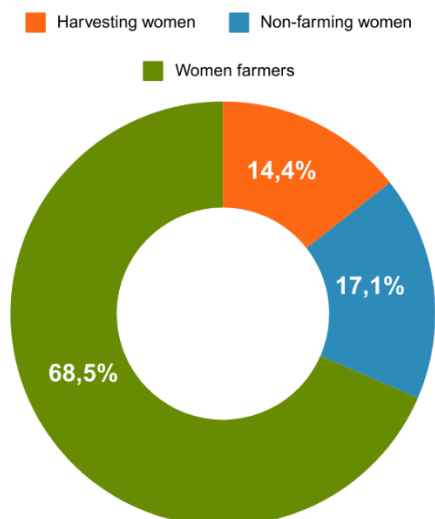


Figure 10. Roles of women in households led by women linked to PNIS. © IUCN NL¹³⁸

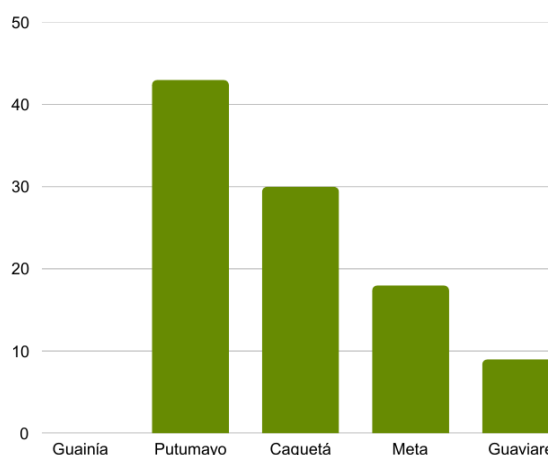


Figure 11. Households led by women with coca production as a main economic activity. © IUCN NL¹³⁹



National Programme for the Integral Substitution of Illicitly Used Crops

The National Programme for the Integral Substitution of Illicitly Used Crops (PNIS) classified the roles within coca cultivation into three, based on coca cultivation as part of the peasant family economy and excluding the stages related to the dynamics of drug trafficking. The first role are the cultivating families, defined as: 'those family nuclei that are linked to the drug production chain in the sowing and harvesting stage and that directly cultivate the crop on plots of land they own or to which they are linked as tenants.' The second role is played by non-cultivating families, 'family nuclei that are linked to the drug production chain at different stages of the production chain, such as the purchase of inputs or the transformation of coca leaf. They may own land in the area, but there is no presence of illicit crops.' And finally, the third role is played by the pickers, 'adult men and women who derive their income from participating as coca leaf pickers and scrapers; they are available and permanent labourers who lack job stability and social security. They constitute a weak link in the chain of coca leaf production.'¹⁴⁰

The participation of women and their families is related to three activities. The predominant activity is cultivation, meaning family nuclei linked to coca leaf production in the sowing and harvesting stages on their land, on which there is some type of ownership link — letter of sale, title of settler or as tenants, among others. The second activity with the highest representation of women in the Amazonian departments, except for Caquetá, is the link to other stages of the production chain. These are families who do not cultivate coca, but who carry out tasks associated with the purchase of inputs, the transformation of coca leaf or the transport of coca paste, among others. In this type of activity, women are frequently present, for example, in the preparation of food for the workers, an activity linked to the reproductive role. And finally, the third related activity is harvesting. As collectors, women earn their income from collecting and scraping coca leaves, which implies job instability and very low and variable salaries linked to the volume of work achieved. In all departments, women are involved in crop cultivation, yet differences are observed in terms of harvesting and the performance of other associated tasks.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2022). Colombia. Monitoring of territories with presence of coca cultivation 2022. [Available here.](#)

¹³⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2022). Colombia. Monitoring of territories with presence of coca cultivation 2022. [Available here.](#)

¹⁴⁰ Presidential Advisory Office for Stabilisation and Consolidation (2019). Guidelines. Estrategia de atención a familias cultivadoras y no cultivadoras de ilícitos en el marco del plan de atención inmediata y desarrollo productivo del Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito. [Available here.](#)

¹⁴¹ From the cross-checking of information between the reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the information available from the Directorate for the Substitution of Crops for Illicit Use and based on the roles defined in the framework of the Peace Agreement, it was possible to identify that women are mainly involved in the cultivation of coca leaf as growers.

Women's participation in each stage of the production process

According to the interviews carried out in the field as part of this research, women's participation in cultivation varies according to the stage of production:¹⁴²

- In the crop preparation stage, the forest or stubble is cut down and the felled plant material is burned. In this phase, the role of women is mainly linked to the preparation of food for the men who work in the preparation of the land. However, women also accompany the burning — helping to control the fire so to not exceed the defined area.
- The sowing stage shows that coca cultivation corresponds to a family economic model — as both the construction of seedbeds and the sowing of cuttings is a shared task and a family responsibility. This model is further reinforced when considering that these crops are combined with other crops, such as banana, cassava, rice, cocoa, *chontaduro* or varieties of fruit trees. The maintenance of crops is also carried out by several members of the family — with women playing an important role. This stage can take six to seven months from the time of planting to the harvesting of the first crop. After that, leaf harvest takes place approximately every two months.¹⁴³
- Harvesting is the second activity most frequently mentioned by women. Both men and women participate in the task of collecting and 'scraping' the leaves, either as part of the family nucleus or as part of a daily wage. This activity has significant physical implications, given the long working days spent in the sun — producing different affectations on the skin and particularly the hands of those who carry out the task. It is estimated that for one hectare cultivated, there can be 1,000 bushes that at the maximum production stage can generate 200 arrobas of leaf, which are obtained in four days of work by approximately 5 *raspachines*.¹⁴⁴ In addition to the productive task of *raspa*, women also contribute to this activity by preparing food for other workers.
- Not all grower families are necessarily involved in the coca leaf processing stage. In the cases in which they are involved, among the activities carried out is the purchase and procurement of inputs — in which women may participate. Men, on the other hand, are more commonly involved with the transport of coca leaves. Another common activity for women is cooking, while men carry out other activities.
- According to the women interviewed, it is often easier for women to evade the controls and checkpoints on waterways and on the roads between the farms and the towns where the coca paste is taken ready for sale. Although it may be the women who make the transaction of delivering the product and collecting the money in exchange, these amounts are not administered by them, but in most cases by their husbands, and correspond to a family income that does not necessarily result in economic autonomy for the women.

Consequences of glyphosate on women and children

Within the framework of the war on drugs, Colombia activated the spraying of glyphosate as one of the weapons that could contribute to the reduction of illicit crops in the country. This is how the spraying began, under the basis of Law No. 30 of 1986, article 77, which allows the destruction of illicit plantations under the most appropriate scientific method, which includes this method. Guaviare was one of the departments where this pilot strategy began in 1994 and continued until 2005, nine years of spraying.

During these years, approximately 251 lawsuits were filed over the spraying of glyphosate. Most of them were mainly based on the environmental effects caused by this agrochemical, but none on health.¹⁴⁵ However, there have been a few approaches to the consequences on human health because of exposure to glyphosate. According to Camacho and Mejía published in 2013, by 2006 an annual average of 128,000 hectares had been sprayed with glyphosate in different areas of the country. However, the hectares sprayed were not only illicit crops, but also houses, food crops, animals, forests and rivers.

¹⁴² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2020). Informe de avance en la incorporación del enfoque de género – programa nacional integral de sustitución de cultivos ilícitos. [Available here](#).

¹⁴³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2021). Informe No. 23 - Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos Ilícitos – PNIS. [Available here](#).

¹⁴⁴ Person who collects coca leaf at harvest time.

¹⁴⁵ Ortiz, M. I. (2020). The country has 231 pending lawsuits for glyphosate spraying. El Tiempo. [Available here](#).

These spraying methods had all kinds of effects on the lives of the people living in these regions. Several studies have identified exclusive or differentiated consequences on women, mainly for pregnant women. Effects on abortion rates and foetal malformations, related to the regulation of the embryonic cycle, have been documented. Exposure to glyphosate in the first trimester has been linked as a cause of miscarriage. Mental health consequences such as anxiety, depression and neurological disorders have also been documented.¹⁴⁶

Effects of illicit crop cultivation

Illicit crops have biological and cultural impacts on the territories, ranging from soil degradation, through the threat of the disappearance of plant and animal species, the contamination of water sources and the threat to the food security of communities and the economic instability of families.

In this regard, according to an interview with CEALDES, ‘only two of all those surveyed considered that their household income was sufficient to cover basic needs. [...] Crops of illicit use are mentioned as a temporary alternative that does not constitute the exclusive sustenance for the family, or they are not even mentioned openly, but appear later in informal conversations, even though they continue to be part of the family economy in the region’.

The signing of the Peace Agreement and the subsequent implementation of the PNIS has implied changes in the dynamics of the crops and. Hence, women refer to the coca economy not as the central axis or the main income for their families but as an alternative to complement and improve the economic situation — or as an alternative in case the crops are damaged, prices drop a lot, inputs rise or, ultimately, something unforeseen happens. The importance of crop diversification and, in general, of productive activities is recognised as the best alternative for economic subsistence.

Faced with the fluctuation and instability of the coca economy, added to the uncertainty due to the worsening of armed conflicts and the reordering of actors, ‘women highlight the negative impact of violence generated by non-state and state armed groups in the communities, showing fear and insecurity’.¹⁴⁷ They also mention fear of checkpoints and uncertainty about the arrival of legal supplies. These opinions reveal the complexity of the reality in these areas, where economic, social and security difficulties are intertwined and affect men and women differently.

Alternative livelihoods

According to the Centre for Development Alternatives in 2021, it is mainly women who implement alternatives on their farms — like the construction of vegetable gardens — to cope with changing economic situations. In addition, women say they are concerned about including other productive alternatives on their plots — ‘agroforestry and silvopastoral systems stand out, followed by the transformation of products and the use of Amazonian fruit trees’.¹⁴⁸ The women interviewed participate in different productive stages of cultivation while taking on reproductive tasks in their homes. Also, they seek alternative means of employment in urban centres — such as hairdressing, restaurant cooking, bar tending and hotel or house cleaning. On many occasions, the coca *bonanza* also brought along the offer of paid sexual services to women.

Alternatives for economic stability intersect with several drivers of deforestation analysed in this report. For example, the production of dairy products related to livestock farming is also an alternative, as well as work in mining as a profitable and even more stable source of income — in some territories, and at certain periods throughout the year. ‘In places such as San José de Fragua, the production of milk, cheese and sugar cane is becoming the main source of income. Meanwhile, alternative projects have been implemented to grow bananas and cocoa as an alternative to coca crops. In other regions, such as Policarpa-Altamira, Puerto Asís and Balboa, income is generated through various crops and temporary jobs. And in Guapi, agriculture — especially coconut cultivation — and mining are becoming more profitable and less demanding in terms of work.’¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Ortiz, M. I. (2020). The country has 231 pending lawsuits for glyphosate spraying. *El Tiempo*. [Available here](#).

¹⁴⁷ World Food Programme (2023). 2023 - Food Security Assessment of Colombian Population - Executive Summary. [Available here](#).

¹⁴⁸ Centro de Alternativas al Desarrollo. (2021). Defendiendo al bosque: Dinámicas de transformación del bosque y alternativas comunitarias en el noroccidente amazónico colombiano. [Available here](#).

¹⁴⁹ World Food Programme (2024). Annual Review 2023. [Available here](#).



Life gains meaning from forest defence

Lena (name changed for security reasons) has lived a story of resistance marked by living in a zone of armed conflict and being a woman. Her life reflects how social and environmental struggles impact both body and mind. She was born in Tolima and moved to the Colombian Amazon at the age of six. At the age of fifteen, Lena's family was displaced by violence following the murder of a close family member. In 2002, she had to leave her home again. Still, she was able to build support networks and complete her political education to become a leader defending the rights of her people and nature.

In the area where Lena grew up, the construction of tertiary roads connecting communities and the non-compliance with PNIS agreements led to deforestation for new crops. In recent years, around one hectare of forest per year has been lost due to erosion caused by increased river flows, which has also forced families to cut down trees to rebuild their houses affected by flooding. Timber extraction has exacerbated deforestation. In response, environmental protection strategies such as ten-year conservation agreements with payments for environmental services have been implemented to further protect and connect the biological corridors. These agreements have been in place for five years now.

FARC-EP left a vacuum in the protection of the Amazon after its demobilisation in 2016 as it previously imposed environmental regulations to protect the forest. This allowed the exploitation of the territory by large corporations and brought new challenges, such as drug trafficking and loss of control, negatively affecting the community that expected benefits from the peace process. In this context, 'invisible' women participated in events such as the 1996 *cocalero* marches and the 2013 agrarian strike, as well as by historical figures such as Mariana Páez and the libertarian women who accompanied former Peruvian president Simón Bolívar. These women have faced restrictions in the struggle for their freedoms, in which qualities like coherence and dedication were essential.

Lena's work emphasises the role of women in forest management and organisational processes, highlighting their qualities, which often remain unseen, and the importance of gender collaboration. Things are changing in the area. Women's participation varies from area to area, women are actively involved in decision-making and in equity workshops now. Gender equality is being promoted, stereotypes have been broken and some men, also called *solinos*, have taken on household chores and take care of their children.

The woman leader deeply values her grandmother for the principles and values she passed on to her, along with the protection of God and Mother Earth. Lena is aware of the sacrifices she makes and her work's impact on her family. She and her family have been facing years of intimidation, threats and violence. Even though she cannot return to the territory she is fighting for, she continues her fight for territorial and environmental rights.

4.2.4. Role of women in mining

Mining as a driver of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest can be associated with three dynamics:

- Deforestation due to ecosystem degradation. It occurs especially along riverbanks, affecting their hydrological and biological cycles using metals such as mercury or using methods such as dredging that increase sedimentation.¹⁵⁰
- Deforestation by settlements. Produced by the construction of small and large sites for the work equipment that the extractive process requires. This is generated according to the discoveries that are made, producing two types of settlements — floating settlements (where the settlement moves according to the discoveries and explorations) and permanent settlements (which occur due to mining *bonanzas* or because the dynamics of trade generated by mining allows for population growth).
- Deforestation for the use of timber and other forest resources. Deforestation for habitation and the use of timber for housing construction, among others, is generated.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ López Vega, J. (2014). False bonanza, territorial restructuring and interethnic mobilisation in the Inírida River, Guainía, Colombia. Department of Geography. Faculty of Human Sciences. National University of Colombia.

¹⁵¹ Rubiano M. J.; Vélez, M. A.; Rueda, X. (2020). Artisanal and small-scale gold mining: Strategies for its formalization and differentiation from illegal mining. Faculty of Economics. Universidad de los Andes.

In general, large-scale extractive processes emerge with a logic of colonialism and dispossession of territory, homogenising extractive zones under a similar landscape and transforming areas with significant and visible environmental impacts. Beyond the primarily observable transformation of ecosystems and landscape change, these extractive processes transform livelihoods, cultural traditions, social and gender relations and the identity of each population or community. In many cases, extractive processes reaffirm imaginaries in the discourse of gender and the sexual division of labour.



‘The advance of extractive industries is an invasion of territories and bodies, a plundering of cultural traditions and the destruction of ways of life that affect women in a differentiated way, who, as the majority are the main managers of the household, are forced to change their logics of life in order to survive and protect their families and their villages.’

A. Ulloa (2016)¹⁵²

Traditional division of gender-based roles

In mining, the discourse of gender and the sexual division of labour is related to what has been established daily as appropriate for the 'feminine' and the 'masculine'. This reinforces the ideas that women are obliged to look after the welfare of the family, are delicate, fragile, sensitive and weak. While men's role is related to brute strength and freedom in accessing the public world and recreation.¹⁵³

Gender inequalities in extractive processes arise from the analysis of historical elements that have constructed such inequalities plus the resolution of these elements with processes of integration or inclusion, without questioning the causes of the reproduction of these inequalities.¹⁵⁴ Historical elements of gender inequalities include the difficulty or absence of access to education, property and/or paid work the use of essential elements such as those for the development of work; labour, economic and reproductive rights; and differentiated participation in decision-making processes. Generating, among others, inclusions and exclusions associated with subjectivities already existing in gender roles, giving continuity to unequal gender relations.

Astrid Ulloa considers these identities and subjectivities from the imaginaries of masculine identities related to mining, considering the relationship between the male miner and progress and, with this, the stigmatisation of women in mining, associating the feminine subjectivity with pollution that generates a decrease in production, with danger and with the generation of conflicts, especially in large-scale mining.¹⁵⁵

These subjectivities include the popular belief that women bring bad luck to mining production, the commonly accepted consubstantial condition of women as responsible for domestic and child-rearing tasks, and the idea of the weakness of the female gender.¹⁵⁶ Myths and beliefs that have permeated female labour insertion and recognition in mining.

Acts of violence in relation to mining

This insertion and recognition of women in mining is only one of the factors to be considered. Normally, if this insertion takes place, it occurs under conditions of aggression, violence or unequal social and labour relations. Therefore, it must be understood in terms of its implications for use, access, control, decision-making and rights. Historically, mining has been a job carried out by men.

¹⁵² Ulloa, A. (2016). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. *Nomads*, (45) 123-139. [Available here.](#)

¹⁵³ Cifuentes, J.A. & Güiza, L. (2021). El rostro de la mujer minera en Colombia: un análisis a partir del enfoque de género. [Available here.](#)

¹⁵⁴ Ulloa, A. (2016). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. *Nómaditas*, (45) 123-139.

¹⁵⁵ Ulloa, A. (2016). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. *Nomads*, (45) 123-139.

¹⁵⁶ Soto, Z. (2011). Chile: women in mining and mining conflict prevention. In International workshop: Inclusion of the gender approach in mining conflict prevention (pp. 43-50). CYTED Science and Technology for Development Programme. [Available here.](#)

However, in recent years, women have had a greater participation in mineral extraction, mainly for social and cultural reasons; highlighting the lack of job opportunities that drives them to mining as a means of livelihood.¹⁵⁷

Currently, female or male identities are spatially differentiated by the assignment of specific locations in a mine, surrounding spaces or distant locations.¹⁵⁸ Surrounding places of strength and exposure are assigned to men, while distant places, those related to care, are assigned to women with certain specific tasks related to administration or labour welfare and less to extraction activities or, especially in illegal mining, in scenarios related to cooking and eating according to the publication 'Mining, social impacts in the Amazon' by the Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research. The spaces of socialisation, non-labour, the insertion of women is crossed by gender-based violence.¹⁵⁹

This masculinisation of space in the work associated with mining and the close relationship between processes of extraction and violence leads to deterritorialisation and displacement. Mining considers women as a body-territory of appropriation and dispossession, which means that both men and women are linked to processes of exploitation, reproducing colonial relations and imposing gender inequalities 'by locating both women and men under inequalities of power who are feminised, as in the case of Indigenous people, by considering them close to nature and without capacity for action, under unequal gender notions and relations, and who become part of processes of exploitation.'¹⁶⁰ As inequalities are constructed, women continue to be placed in the domestic sphere — both real and symbolic, or as sexual objects. These constructed inequalities establish enclaves of prostitution through deceit and violence. In the domestic sphere, mining processes imply more work for women. They are responsible for the care of the household and, in most cases, for the care and feeding of the male figures who make up their nuclear family and work in the mine.¹⁶¹

Reconfiguration of mining-related roles

In Indigenous territories, the domestic sphere is being reconfigured as women's insertion into mining is a recent development.¹⁶² Traditionally, in Indigenous communities, the roles of men and women have been assigned according to the stories of the origin of the world in which women are responsible for agrobiodiversity and food security. Despite this, in departments such as Caquetá, Putumayo and Guainía, factors such as the loss of the livelihood economy, the destruction of traditional forms of community life and the presence of illegal mining are driving Indigenous women to become involved in the mining value chain.¹⁶³ Because of these traditions, Indigenous women in the mining value chain are also farmers. However, mining can transform this activity and affect the food security of the population by deteriorating the quality of the soil used for agriculture, causing 'land sterility and the generational devastation of peoples-land-rivers and territories'.¹⁶⁵ Likewise, the contamination of water resources and the monopolisation of its use by mining can affect the availability of water for agriculture. Thus, mining generates deforestation, contamination and degradation of water, air and soil, and with it the alteration of livelihoods.

Prostitution as dignified income

For some Indigenous women, prostitution is seen as one of the few sources of 'dignified' income.¹⁶⁶ Anecdotal evidence indicates that criminal networks use women, in some cases minors, for prostitution near mining sites.¹⁶⁷ In a 2019 publication, the Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research

¹⁵⁷ Cifuentes Guerrero, J. A.; Güiza Suárez, L. (2021). El rostro de la mujer minera en Colombia: un análisis a partir del enfoque de género. Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural, 18. [Available here.](#)

¹⁵⁸ Ulloa, A. (2016). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. Nómadas, (45) 123-139. [Available here.](#)

¹⁵⁹ Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research. (2019). Minería: Impactos sociales en la Amazonia. [Available here.](#)

¹⁶⁰ Ulloa, A. (2016). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. Nómadas, (45) 123-139.

¹⁶¹ Ulloa, A. (2016). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. Nómadas, (45) 123-139.

¹⁶² Cifuentes Guerrero, J. A.; Güiza Suárez, L. (2021). El rostro de la mujer minera en Colombia: un análisis a partir del enfoque de género. Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural, 18. [Available here.](#)

¹⁶³ Rodríguez and Rubiano (2016) and Moncada (2017) in Cifuentes Guerrero, J. A.; Güiza Suárez, L. (2021). The face of women miners in Colombia: a gender-based analysis. Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural, 18. [Available here.](#)

¹⁶⁴ Rubiano M. J.; Vélez, M. A.; Rueda, X. (2020). Artisanal and small-scale gold mining: Strategies for its formalisation and differentiation from illegal mining. Faculty of Economics. Universidad de los Andes.

¹⁶⁵ Cifuentes Guerrero, J. A.; Güiza Suárez, L. (2021). El rostro de la mujer minera en Colombia: un análisis a partir del enfoque de género. Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural, 18. [Available here.](#)

¹⁶⁶ Cifuentes Guerrero, J. A.; Güiza Suárez, L. (2021). El rostro de la mujer minera en Colombia: un análisis a partir del enfoque de género. Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural, 18. [Available here.](#)

¹⁶⁷ El Tiempo (2013). Girls' exploitation camps in mining areas. [Available here.](#)

contextualises the differential and disproportionate impact that mining has on Indigenous women. This impact is especially noticeable among young women who redefine the role of women in Amazonian communities.

The irruption of actors such as members of armed groups, miners and traders from other regions of the country, mostly men, introduces new dynamics in relations with women that alter the way in which femininity is experienced in these regions. The practice of prostitution is not limited to white women — some Indigenous women also engage in prostitution in mining areas. This has led to serious changes in the roles of women and the household, as well as illness and divorce, which were not frequent in past years.¹⁶⁸ There are no statistics on cases of sexual violence and physical abuse against women, but there are testimonies of their recurrence. According to leaders of the Cabildo Indígena Mayor de Tarapacá (CIMTAR), the growing mining activities have increased prostitution among both the mestizo population and Indigenous women. The leaders point out cases in which the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) has prevented miners from having sex with minors.¹⁶⁹



'A miner takes an Indigenous girl, tricks her, tells her he is going to pay her in gold and then gives her a stone, which she later discovers is not gold. Sometimes, the miner pays the father to encourage the girl to go with the miner.'

CIMTAR leader

Quick cash

According to Ulloa, mining responds to the economic aspirations of both men and women to increase their income and to produce quick cash to leave. This response is not only generated by participation in the extractive process, but also by the male miner who 'attracts some women because he can provide them with money that they cannot otherwise obtain. Whether through cases of buying minors, sexual abuse, or consensual relationships and daily cohabitation, the truth is that, according to several interviewees, cases of Indigenous and mestizo women getting pregnant by miners have increased'.¹⁷⁰ As a consequence, there is an increase in single mothers and school dropouts by young women who have husbands, take care of them, live with them and, in essence, become more attractive because of their status as miners.

Brazilian, Peruvian and Venezuelan miners also became involved in illegal mining in the Colombian Amazon and used the strategy of marrying local women to circumvent deportation orders. They have registered free unions and have registered themselves as legitimate fathers of unrecognised children, again considering women from a utilitarian and appropriations point of view.¹⁷¹ In those cases where women are directly part of the mining economic scheme, their percentage of insertion is very low compared to men. Out of the 102,742 mining workers registered in the 2012 census by the Ministry of Mines and Energy, 95% were men and only 5% were women.¹⁷² However, according to the Mining Statistical Bulletin 2020-2021 of the same Ministry, the jobs generated by mining activity in the country by gender for the year 2021 was 84% for men and 16% for women.

In general terms, the work team in an illegal coltan mine varies between four and ten people per shift — in addition to the person in charge of the kitchen, who is generally a woman.¹⁷³ According to SINCHI, this *colona* 'is in charge of preparing the food and, on occasions, may have a cubicle separate from the rest of the personnel to rest and sleep. She is only dedicated to this work and to washing clothes'.¹⁷⁴ This activity is sufficient to be prosecuted in case people linked to illegal mining are captured.

¹⁶⁸ Tropenbos International Colombia. (2013). Local contributions to a history of mining in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

¹⁶⁹ Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research. (2019). Mining. Social impacts in the Amazon.

¹⁷⁰ Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research. (2019). Mining. Social impacts in the Amazon.

¹⁷¹ Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research. (2019). Mining. Social impacts in the Amazon.

¹⁷² Ministry of Energy and Mining. (2013). Perú 2012 anuario minero – reporte estadístico. [Available here](#).

¹⁷³ López Vega, J. (2014). False bonanza, territorial restructuring and interethnic mobilisation in the Inírida River, Guainía, Colombia. Department of Geography. Faculty of Human Sciences. National University of Colombia.

¹⁷⁴ Amazonian Institute for Scientific Research. (2019). Mining. Social impacts in the Amazon.

Informal employment for women

In some parts of the country, women work in mining informally — motivated by the high level of unemployment. They prefer to work as miners rather than in formal jobs because, despite the instability of the activity, it provides them with freedom of schedules and rules, which allows them to take care of their children, given that most of them are mothers who are heads of household.¹⁷⁵ This situation is highly reinforced by the involvement and deception that male miners exert on women. However, there are also other situations that cause women to become involved in mining. For example, many women have lost their partners to armed conflict or because of war situations — and have had to take over the role formerly played by their husbands as breadwinners. There is also a culture of spending the wages of male miners, which could be categorised as 'bad spending', as they often spend their economic resources on leisure and neglect the family.¹⁷⁶ This commonly occurs in rural women's households and in non-minority groups.

Political and participatory spaces often favour men, creating elites in mining that centralise decision-making and develop male labour policies. This results in a mismatch between mining and the responsibilities of women, especially those who are mothers or caregivers, pushing them into informal and casual work in the mining sector. Given this situation, women miners do not have a fixed salary and do not have access to labour guarantees such as social security, maternity leave or breastfeeding or child-rearing schedules, generating double workdays: work and care, the latter recognised in the framework of the care economy of Law No. 1413 of 2010 where it is referred to as 'unpaid work carried out in the home'.

According to Women often work in repetitive and demanding jobs that are not paid the same as men and are usually forced to work for extremely low wages.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, rural women do not have land or productive capital and are therefore more disadvantaged.¹⁷⁸ Although the mining sector, both large-scale and artisanal, has been archetypically represented as a hypermasculine space, it is beginning to go through a process that Lahiri-Dutt calls feminisation. More women are directly linked to the mining sector but considering the existence of the marked and historical gender dispute, according to Cifuentes and Güiza, women are forced to conform to stereotypes and earn the respect of men to operate in the mines. As a result of the dominant discourses and meanings of the gender hierarchy imposed by society and culture, women need to overcome the disadvantaged position in which they are placed.

Usually, the unequal distribution of rights, properties and responsibilities place the recognition and insertion of women in mining from historical and profoundly inequitable positions, which is why considering alternatives in mining contexts requires exercises of true recognition as participatory actors in these contexts, local autonomies that generate territorial alternatives, a high level of governance and environmental justice.¹⁷⁹

4.2.5. Role of women in agribusiness

Oil palm is the largest crop in Colombia. The beginning of oil palm cultivation in Colombia dates to the 1950s and has continued over time — expanding and consolidating in different regions of the country, with the support of different governments and institutions. Even though the Choco and Amazon rainforests are not suitable areas for oil palm cultivation, both regions are currently major oil palm production enclaves — especially in the departments of Meta and Vichada.

Despite the large economic revenues of oil palm, various municipalities with oil palm plantations struggle to meet basic needs of inhabitants. These indicators show that the revenues of oil palm

¹⁷⁵ Cifuentes Guerrero, J. A.; Güiza Suárez, L. (2021). El rostro de la mujer minera en Colombia: un análisis a partir del enfoque de género. Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural, 18. [Available here](#).

¹⁷⁶ Rodríguez and Rubiano (2016) in Cifuentes Guerrero, J. A.; Güiza Suárez, L. (2021). The face of women miners in Colombia: a gender-based analysis. Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural, 18. [Available here](#).

¹⁷⁷ Lahiri-Dutt, K. (2015). The Feminisation of Mining. Geography Compass, 9(9), 523-541. [Available here](#).

¹⁷⁸ Rubiano M. J.; Vélez, M. A.; Rueda, X. (2020). Artisanal and small-scale gold mining: Strategies for its formalization and differentiation from illegal mining. Faculty of Economics. Universidad de los Andes.

¹⁷⁹ Among them, Ulloa mentions those territorial initiatives, such as 'an alter-geopolitics that demands the recognition of the power of decision over their territories, including the subsoil; of a territoriality and vertical control of the territory; and of the right to be, inhabit and feel in the places, in which relations with the non-human have been established,' which is intersected by inclusion, rather than exclusion that reinforces imaginaries of violence and prostitution of women in mining landscapes and negotiation arenas as a part of the direct and indirect workforce of the sector. Source: Ulloa, A. (2016). Feminismos territoriales en América Latina: defensas de la vida frente a los extractivismos. *Nómadas*, (45) 123-139. [Available here](#)

growers do not necessarily guarantee an equal distribution of regional income and, therefore, does not necessarily contribute to the reduction of rural poverty.¹⁸⁰

Monoculture and deforestation

The cultivation of only a single crop or organism on a specific piece of land, such as oil palm, is defined as monoculture — and is closely linked to deforestation. According to Agronet,¹⁸¹ there is no link between this crop and deforestation, as the palm oil sector has among its priorities to contribute to food production, productive inclusion, energy transition using biofuels, cogeneration of energy from biomass, decarbonisation and diversification of the export basket.¹⁸² The same portal states that 31% of those involved in palm oil production are women and more than 14% of direct employment is female.

Despite all the above, when the information from official sources is investigated and compared with what happens in the daily lives of the women who live in territories where this crop is present, some divergences emerge. The first of these is that oil palm production appears repeatedly in association with categories such as illegal land occupation, displacement, paramilitarism, and even authors such as Ojeda use the expression 'green desert' to refer to these plantations given their implications and effects.¹⁸³

Effects of the agro-industrial model

In large-scale agro-industrial processes, as is the case with oil palm, agricultural production is hyper-specialised and concentrated on one product under the premise of obtaining high profitability. This situation has similarities with other products such as cocoa and rubber in departments such as Guaviare. These models affect both the ecosystem and the livelihoods and economies of the communities. On the one hand, regarding the economy, the concentration of investments and financial movements in a single product leads communities to discard other activities that allow for the diversification of family incomes and generates an economic dependence on monoculture.

In terms of social implications, a transformation in the links and relationship with territories necessarily arises. In this respect, La Rotta affirms that when these crops are introduced, 'the relationship that workers establish with their place of residence is an urban relationship rather than a rural one, which translates into a modification of lifestyles that would lead one to wonder about psychosocial effects such as the way in which traditional lifestyles have been affected'.¹⁸⁴ Likewise, those who resist selling their labour force or transforming their plots of land into oil palm plantations are judged with suspicion, which is the starting point of displacement and dispossession processes.

This last category is fundamental to understanding this phenomenon, as it leads to the impossibility of deciding on one's own work, the use of the land on one's own farm or the farm on which one lives. In Ojeda's terms,¹⁸⁵ it is a loss of autonomy, since dispossession, according to the author's own definition, is 'a violent process of socio-spatial and socio-environmental reconfiguration, which limits the capacity of communities to decide on their means of sustenance and their ways of life [...]. What is being dispossessed is undoubtedly not just an asset, but the web of socio-environmental relations of which it is a part.' The disposition of land concentrated in a single highly profitable production legitimises dispossession in the name of development and the technification of the countryside. In return, the processes of privatisation of the commons are deepened, resulting 'in the confinement of local communities who find themselves literally besieged by green deserts of palm, teak and, more recently, pineapple'.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ Quiroga, D. Z. (2019). Pesquisa Javeriana. Oil palm and sustainability: media enemies. [Available here](#).

¹⁸¹ Agronet is the Colombian government agriculture website. [Available here](#).

¹⁸² Agronet (2023). Colombian oil palm in figures, balance 2022 and challenges 2023. [Available here](#).

¹⁸³ Ojeda, D. (2016). Landscapes of dispossession: proposals for an analysis from socio-spatial reconfigurations. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 52, 19-43.

¹⁸⁴ La Rotta Amaya, G. (2010). Labour Conditions, Social Security and Education among Palm Tree Workers in Cumaral. Degree thesis for the master's degree in social policy of the Master's programme in Social Policy of the Faculty of Political Studies and International Relations of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá.

¹⁸⁵ Ojeda, D. (2016). Landscapes of dispossession: proposals for an analysis from socio-spatial reconfigurations. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 52, 19-43.

¹⁸⁶ Ojeda, D. (2016). Landscapes of dispossession: proposals for an analysis from socio-spatial reconfigurations. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 52, 19-43.



‘The processes of dispossession that have been taking place in the region have had particularly problematic effects for women, who have seen their daily spaces most restricted. Many of them used to work on the plot of land, but for fear of being victims of sexual violence again and due to threats from paramilitaries, they are confined to domestic spaces’.

Ojeda, D. (2016)¹⁸⁷

Scarcity of water and food

The privatisation of common goods such as water has implications. On the one hand, water sources may be contaminated because of herbicides used for oil palm. On the other hand, privatisation limits or restricts access to water sources. Access to water is therefore no longer a right, but a privilege. These effects also appear in the body and are manifested in gastric or skin diseases — resulting from the ingestion of contaminated water. Although these implications have consequences for the communities, it is also possible to see how women and children are mostly affected.

Oil palm cultivation also affects food security, food sovereignty and ancestral knowledge, as traditional cultivation is being abandoned in favour of the exclusive use of the land for palm cultivation. This means, on the one hand, the abandonment of health care practices using plants, for example. As ancestral knowledge is neither transmitted nor put into practice, it is often lost — as such knowledge is passed on to next generations through oral tradition. In interviews conducted in the department of Meta, when women were asked about some of the plant species, they said they did not know them or did not know that they could grow them. However, once they identified these plants and knew their uses, they paid more attention, took care of them and even shared cuttings with others to plant on their land. And when the women found plants with recognised benefits, their knowledge would be shared.

The presence of large extensions of monocultures makes the survival of ancestral knowledge impossible and transforms people’s relationship with the territory. Especially rural women tend to be highly related to the connection with their surroundings. In addition, women noted that the abandonment of other crops directly affects the family economy, as they now must spend more money to buy food that used to be grown by the communities themselves.

Women's roles in the agro-industrial model

In the case of oil palm production, women generally have three types of employment. In all cases, women do not have any type of formal employment relationship. For example, families do not have employment contracts, protection or social security payments. These conditions are precarious and invisible.

The first — and most common — activity for women is to fully concentrate on reproducing life. This means that women are often assigned the domestic space as the only place where they should be. Women can also be hired as *peperas* — for example to collect the kernels¹⁸⁸ that will later be harvested by men. Also, during the harvesting season, women can be hired as cooks to provide the necessary food for the men. Another alternative is related to family work. In this case, the man is hired to harvest fruits or to oversee crops. He moves to a farm with his entire family, who receive a single income that is given to the man, although the woman also takes in domestic tasks as well as the maintenance and care of crops. Families only participate in the first part of the production process (the extraction of raw material) and not in the transformation process — a stage that could generate greater profitability.

¹⁸⁷ Ojeda, D. (2016). Landscapes of dispossession: proposals for an analysis from socio-spatial reconfigurations. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 52, 19-43.

¹⁸⁸ Large, hard seed of some fruits.

Body-territory transformation

With the insertion of agro-industrial models, territories change their configuration and become fragmented according to the arrangement of crops. This transformation manifests itself in three ways. Firstly, the emergence of new tasks or changes that involve increasing workloads or having to travel greater distances. Secondly, there's an increase in sexual violence against women. Thirdly, the isolation of the family nuclei makes it difficult to live in a community, which is fundamental for upbringing and to share life with the extended family. As a result, various locations are no longer accessible (for example because of fences or roads) or safe for women to walk alone.

Why is the body-territory perspective important?

1. Pain materialises in women's bodies because of conflicts in their territories. Mines, oil wells, roads and polluted waters are damaged territories where violence takes shape — feminicide, harassment, aggression towards bodies that need to be cared for.
2. These impacts imply double shifts for women, in addition to the marks they leave on the body. 'We go to places where the water is clean, we take care of those who get sick, and that tires us and affects us'.
3. There is a link between the effects on bodies in conflict zones and bodies in cities, as it is there that many of the products of these conflicts are consumed.¹⁸⁹



The story of Flor

In the devastating context faced by the Jiw people¹⁹⁰, it is urgent to highlight female voices. Flor (not her real name for security reasons) has experienced pain, violence and uprooting first-hand. Despite these challenges, her leadership has been crucial to the wellbeing of her community, especially for Jiw women. Her testimony reveals how deforestation and war have exacerbated the vulnerability of Indigenous communities, highlighting the state's failure to adequately address the needs of the Jiw people.

Since childhood, Flor has faced significant uprooting. Her mother, due to her socio-economic situation, gave her to another family, where she learned Spanish and distanced from the rights of her community. At the age of eleven, she was forcibly recruited by the FARC-EP, who inflicted violence on her people. The guerrilla threatened traditional doctors and murdered health promoters, which were mechanisms to displace hundreds of Jiw families. After escaping from the guerrilla, Flor was treated as a criminal in prison by others, despite the fact that she was forcedly recruited. In Bogotá, she started her struggle to regain her freedom and support her community.

Flor stresses the urgent need to preserve the forest. 'We need the forest to take care of and live from nature. If there is no territory, the material and cultural loss of my people will be imminent. [...] The cultural loss that my people are going through means that now we only think individually, the collective is being lost, we have internal corruption because of the war'. She also talks about the current serious situation of the J people: 'The land gives us everything: water, health, medicine, food and handicrafts. But to get what the forest offers, there is violence. They have shot at us to prevent us from entering forests that are on private property. And when we go out to the city, they rape us, because they hate us.'

Despite the violence and a lack of resources, Flor leads a women's organisation that seeks to preserve the Jiw language, art and culture. Although the legalisation of the organisation has not yet been completed due to lack of resources, the women leader continues to work tirelessly to defend her community and territory. Her commitment and resilience are fundamental in the struggle for survival and justice for her people in a context marked by pain and uncertainty.

¹⁸⁹ Based on: Colectivo Miradas Críticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo (2017). Mapeando El Cuerpo-Territorio Guía Metodológica Para Mujeres Que Defienden Sus Territorios. [Available here](#).

¹⁹⁰ The Jiw people were originally a nomadic people living in Meta and Guaviare. They were forced to leave their territories due to violent conflicts, and continue their struggle to return to their ancestral lands. [Read more here](#).

4.2.6. Alternative livelihoods

In the Department of Putumayo, the main drivers of deforestation are related to mining, coca and timber. Initiatives such as the Cooperativa Multiactiva Comunitaria del Común (Comucon), the Asociación de Desarrollo Integral Sostenible de La Perla Amazónica (ADISPA), the Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas Chagra de la Vida (ASOMI) supported alternative income sources, including activities related to community support, agroecology and ecological restoration.

In the department of Caquetá, the degradation of forest areas for the creation of pasture lands (associated with cattle ranching and land-grabbing) were identified as the main drivers of deforestation. Organisations such as Asintracampic, the Association of Rural Women of Colombia and Caquetá (ASMUCOCA) and the Association of Women Producers of Essences of Peace (Asmupropaz) are tackling this by promoting family agriculture, where they rely on the forests' biodiversity and existing resources to develop Amazonian products, like essential oils.

In the department of Meta, the main drivers of deforestation are associated with land grabbing, coca and palm oil. In response to these drivers, the organisations Asociación Ambiental de Mujeres Trabajadores por el Desarrollo del Yari (AAMPY), Asociación De Mujeres Campesinas Ambientalistas De La Cristalina Del Lozada Por Sus Derechos (Asmucacd) and Asociación de Mujeres Gestoras de Paz y de la Soberanía Sierra de la Macarena (Asomacarena) have proposed alternative sources of income for families — such as involvement with beekeeping, tourism, and the transformation of Amazonian forest products and peasant reserve zones.

In the department of Guaviare, the main drivers of deforestation are land accumulation, coca production and land grabbing. The organisations Asociación de Campesinos y Trabajadores de la Región de los Ríos Unilla e Itilla (ASCATRUJ), Asociación Agropecuaria del Retorno (ARG), Salsas Pikantes and Asociación Interveredal de Mujeres Víctimas del Retorno Guaviare (ASIMVREG) provided alternatives through the processing of Amazonian fruit trees, and the establishment of community nurseries, peasant reserve zones and the community monitoring of forests and Chagras.

4.2.7. Gender approach in public policies related to deforestation

This section analyses the presence and absence of a gender perspective in the provisions of the Colombian legal system associated with deforestation, its drivers and strategies to halt it. In addition, it includes a general analysis of the public policy instruments related to this issue, with particular emphasis on Visión Amazonia, the Colombian government's most important strategy in recent years to halt deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.

The programme presents a general overview of the Colombian legal system on deforestation and the international commitments related to the fight against climate change. Next, the main findings of the normative and public policy analysis are presented. Subsequently, it focuses on the analysis of Visión Amazonia in the light of the gender approach. In addition, brief reflections are presented in relation to Ruling 4360 of 2018 issued by the Supreme Court of Justice, which recognises the Colombian Amazon as a subject of law.

Colombia is recognised as one of the countries with the greatest natural wealth due to the diversity of ecosystems and species found in the national territory and their importance in the regulation of the planetary system. However, the increase in deforestation in recent years has generated a risk for the permanence of species, the lives of those who inhabit the territory and even climate stability. This is why many national and international regulatory and public policy efforts have made the fight against deforestation a priority in Colombia.

This struggle is based on the State's duty, according to Article 80 of the Political Constitution, to prevent and control the factors of environmental deterioration, in addition to the obligation to plan the management and use of natural resources to guarantee their sustainable development, conservation, restoration or substitution.¹⁹¹ Likewise, Article 8 of the Constitution indicates that the protection of natural wealth is an obligation of both the State and the citizens.

¹⁹¹ Constitución Colombia. Artículo 80. [Available here](#).

According to the Constitution, the configuration of the Colombian State is based on the notion of the Social State of Law, which, according to the Constitutional Court, means that the defence of a healthy environment is a central principle in the current structure of the State. In line with the above, constitutional jurisprudence has established that the right to a healthy environment, enshrined in Article 79 of the Constitution, is a fundamental right that is the basis for guaranteeing the right to life and health. Because the Colombian Constitution places the protection of the environment at the centre of the legal system, it has been called the Ecological Constitution. Since its adoption in 1991, the Colombian Congress and government began to incorporate a variety of provisions aimed at protecting natural resources and promoting sustainable development. This normative transformation was also inspired by the principles agreed at the Rio de Janeiro Summit in 1992, the first of many international instruments adopted by Colombia in environmental matters. According to Ruling T-411 of 1992, although the environmental instruments ratified by Colombia are part of the legal system, they do not take precedence over other national norms.

Regarding provisions on deforestation, forest management in Colombia has focused on forest economy, productive development, the consolidation of protected or special management areas, climate change and, recently, environmental crimes. Hence, the environmental sector has generally been responsible for leading efforts and actions in the fight against deforestation.¹⁹² However, the continuous increase of deforestation over the years has led to the need to understand deforestation as a multidimensional problem in which aspects such as territorial organisation, access to land, economic barriers and low institutional presence, among others, converge.¹⁹³ One of the aspects that has been neglected in understanding deforestation is the perspective of those who live in these territories, as well the effects that deforestation has on their livelihood. In particular, the perspective of women has been left out of this discussion, despite women having a great influence on the management and care of the territory, while being victims of various types of violence.

Another relevant aspect for understanding the legal landscape of deforestation in Colombia is the differential treatment given to the presence of ethnically differentiated groups in protected or special management areas. Decree Law No. 2811 of 1974, by which the Renewable Natural Resources Code was issued, provides that Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities can access the right to collective property in National Natural Parks and in the Forest Reserve Zones created through the Second Law of 1959. In line with the above, there is an express prohibition to adjudicate *baldíos* in these types of areas, which implies a differentiated position regarding access to rights for the peasantry and, in general, for people who are part of an ethnically differentiated community. This shows that women's vulnerability in accessing rights will depend not only on their gender, but also on their social class and ethnicity¹⁹⁴(see Annex 8).

Findings from the normative policy analysis

Considering that the Integrated Control of Deforestation and Forest Management Strategy (EICDGB for its abbreviation in Spanish)¹⁹⁵ understands deforestation as the direct and/or induced conversion of forest cover to another type of land cover in a given period, the analysis carried out in the framework of this research focused on all regulatory provisions and public policy programmes that had an impact on land cover transformation, regardless of the authority that issued them or their regulatory hierarchy.

For this report, 80 national provisions were analysed, as well as 27 public policy instruments and twelve international instruments adopted by Colombia. The information from each of the sources was included in a matrix, distinguishing year of creation, content, issuing authority, subject matter and whether a gender perspective was included. The normative review included norms referring to the competencies or organisational structures of state institutions. It is important to point out that this study was finalised in the beginning of 2024, and that provisions and instruments introduced after that were not included in the analysis.

¹⁹² Mebarak, J. Y.; Torres, P.C. (2023). Amazon Vision, REM Programme. [Available here](#).

¹⁹³ Rodríguez, C.; Rodríguez, D.; Duran, H. (2017). Environmental Peace. Challenges and proposals for the post-agreement. Documentos 30 - Ideas para construir la paz. Dejusticia.

¹⁹⁴ Montaña, V.; Robledo, N.; Yie Garzón, S. (2022). The peasant category and its representations in Colombia: historical and regional polysemy. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 58(1), 9-24. Epub December 31, 2021.

¹⁹⁵ The EICDGB the Colombian REDD+ national strategy. [Read more here](#).

The findings show that the far majority of the regulations and policy instruments do not include a gender perspective. Because of the different numbers of total regulations and instruments, it is not possible to make a fair comparison, but it is clear that gender perspective in Colombian authorities should be improved.

It is important to point out that the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, in charge of leading the fight against deforestation, has not issued regulations incorporating the gender perspective, it has promoted public policies with guidelines for the protection of women's rights. The greatest number of provisions with a gender lens were incorporated at the legislative level. Yet, some institutions do not include provisions at the regulatory level but do include it in public policies related to deforestation, as in the case of the National Natural Parks Units.

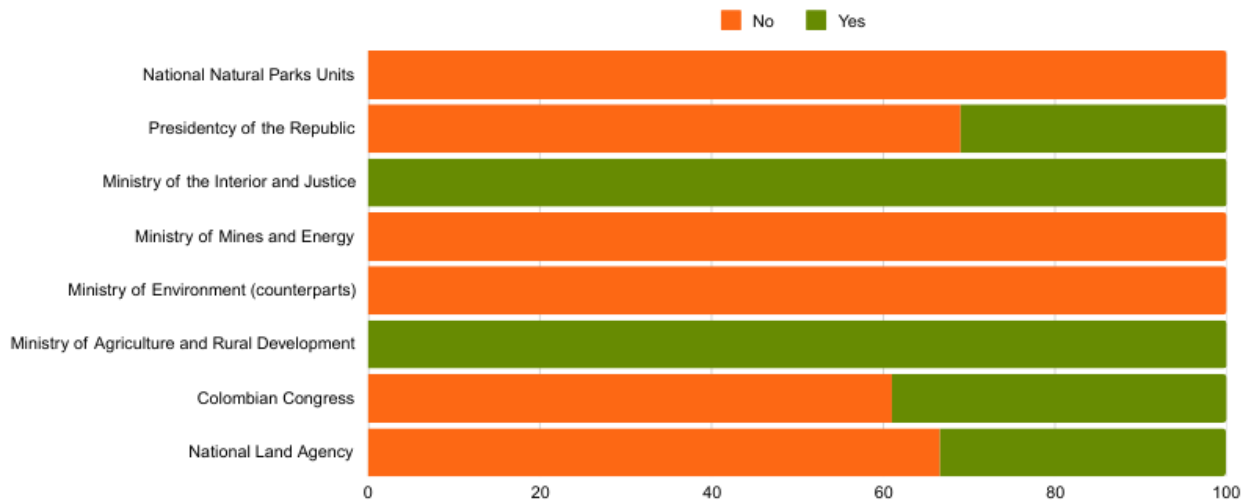


Figure 12. Number of provisions per government institution incorporating a gender lens, in percentages. The number of provisions per authority ranges from one to 38, making it difficult to make comparisons. © IUCN NL¹⁹⁶

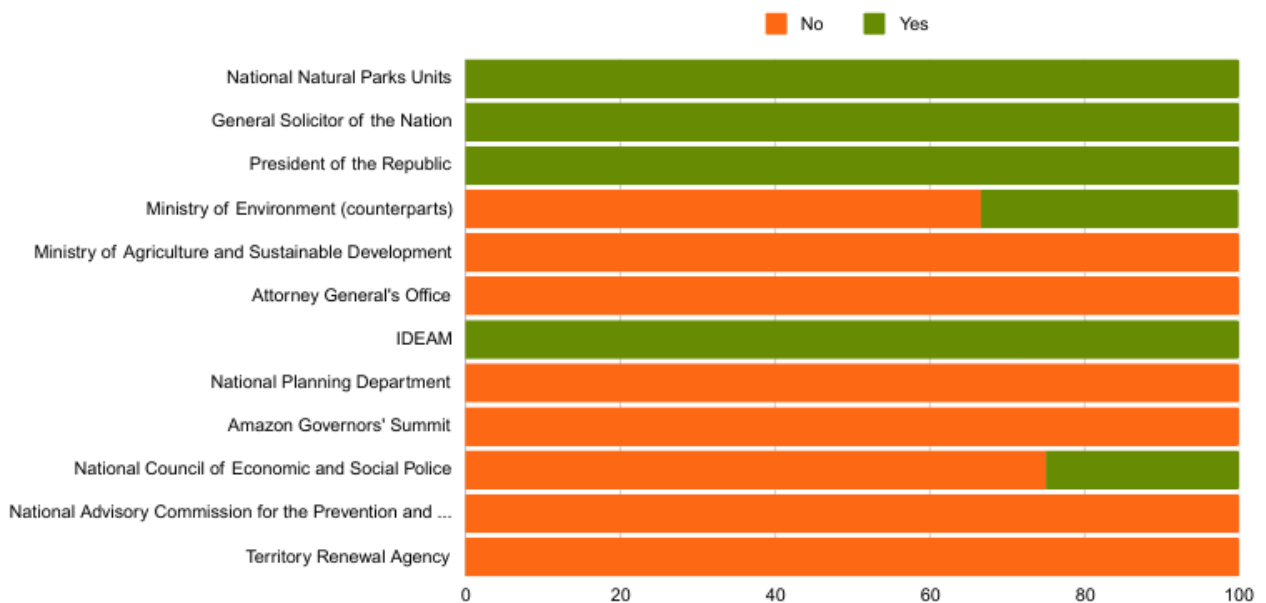


Figure 13. Public policy instruments per institution incorporating a gender lens, in percentages. The number of instruments per institution ranges from one to nine, making it difficult to make comparisons. © IUCN NL¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Because the ministry responsible for environmental issues in Colombia has changed names several times, the provisions issued by this authority and its counterparts are grouped together.

¹⁹⁷ Because the ministry responsible for environmental issues in Colombia has changed names several times, the provisions issued by this authority and its counterparts are grouped together.

Traditionally, the Colombian legal system has dealt with the problem of deforestation in a unidimensional manner. Hence, state actions have been directed to the following activities:

- Delimit protected areas or areas with special environmental management so that no anthropic activities that deteriorate vegetation cover are carried out there.
- Limiting uses and access to property in certain areas.
- Criminally and administratively prosecute those who remove forest cover without the corresponding authorisation from the environmental authorities.

These lines of action are based on the premise that territories with strategic ecosystems should be pristine spaces in which no economic activities take place, and it is considered that activities that involve the removal of vegetation cover, such as agriculture or cattle ranching, are one of the main drivers of deforestation. This position has led environmental regulation on forest management and the control of deforestation to exclude the human factor from the relationships that make up a given ecosystem.¹⁹⁸ This, in turn, excludes the analysis of the gender dynamics that take place in the territories.

Because the agricultural sector contemplates the anthropic and productive dynamics that take place in the territories, its normative issuance delves more deeply into the relationship that people have with the areas of environmental interest. This has allowed debates on gender to be introduced in a territorial dimension and the role and identity of those who live in the countryside and in the vicinity of protected areas to be questioned. In the same sense, the norms of the agricultural sector are the first to include provisions aimed at safeguarding the rights of women in rural territories in a differential manner and at guaranteeing their participation and access to state plans and programmes.

The environmental sanctioning regime, Law No. 1333 of 2009,¹⁹⁹ and the new regulation on environmental crimes, Law No. 2111 of 2021,²⁰⁰ do not include provisions aimed at considering the gender asymmetries that exist in the use and exploitation of natural resources. This is evidence of the environment sector's restrictive stance on the impact of gender discussions on forest management and deforestation. The absence of discussions on gender and the use of natural resources is also identified in the regulations applicable to forest harvesting permits, timber safe-conducts and forest economy projects.

Gender approach in public policy on deforestation

To understand the trends in gender discussions in regulation related to deforestation, we sought to categorise the orientation of the regulation and public policy analysed using as a basis the classification proposed by the National Planning Department in the Public Policy on Gender.²⁰¹ Table 3 on the next page lists different types of actions for gender equality identified by the planning department.

The findings reveal that gender-sensitive deforestation-related policies have focused on promoting women's economic autonomy in rural areas vulnerable to increased deforestation, recognising that women are key allies in forest protection, and providing them with sustainable economic alternatives is an effective strategy to curb deforestation. The third most frequent category in these regulations is women's participation in power and decision-making arenas, especially through affirmative action and quota policies in local or regional decision-making spaces, which is the most prominent category in public policy. Institutional development measures, focused on strengthening the capacity of the state to incorporate a gender perspective and position women as central agents in public life, are the second most common in the regulations and the most prevalent in public policy. However, few if any regulations or public policy instruments were identified that address other categories, indicating a great opportunity to advance in the integration of the gender approach in provisions, plans and programmes related to forest management and the fight against deforestation.

¹⁹⁸ Gutiérrez Sanín, F.; García, P. (2016). Access to land and peasant property rights: traversing labyrinths. *Revista colombiana de antropología*, 52(2), pp. 91-116.

¹⁹⁹ Civil Service. Ley 1333 de 2009. [Available here.](#)

²⁰⁰ Civil Service. Ley 1333 de 2009. [Available here.](#)

²⁰¹ Departamento Nacional de Planeación. (2017). Guía para el uso del clasificador de políticas públicas de equidad de género en el sistema unificado de inversión y finanzas públicas. [Available here.](#)

| Type of action | Definition |
|--|---|
| Economic autonomy. | Promote equal opportunities for women in paid work, promoting sustainable businesses, bridge employment gaps, access to resources and land, facilitate work-life balance and highlight the contribution of women to the economy. |
| Participation in power arenas and decision-making on land. | Strengthen the political and social participation of women and women associations, promoting their leadership and decision-making, promoting their leadership and decision-making, as well as partnerships with civil society and political actors, through gender quotas and affirmative action. |
| Health and sexual and reproductive rights. | Improve the attention, access and quality of health care with a gender lens and differentiate in all levels of the system, addressing health issues and promoting sexual and reproductive rights. |
| Education and access to new technologies. | Reduce gender barriers in education, bridge gaps in access to new technology, promote coexistence at school, women's citizenship and human rights and promote sports and recreations with a gender lens. |
| Women free of violence. | Prevent and address violence against women in a comprehensive and differentiated manner, guaranteeing access to justice, health care and the protection of rights, including gender-based violence. |
| Institutional development and cultural transformation. | Strengthen institutional capacities to improve the response to and knowledge of women's rights and the gender lens. This includes the sustainability of the National Public Policy on Gender Equality through technical, financial, administrative, institutional and human resources. |
| Food sovereignty. | Sustainable strategies for healthy and nutritious food that respect cultural diversity and guarantees the right to food for all. |

Table 3. Actions for gender equity based on a guide on gender equity by the National Planning Department.²⁰² © IUCN NL

Affirmative action and quota policies incorporated into different local or regional decision-making spaces have been subject to multiple criticisms. While these measures in participation are a key tool to address structural barriers that have historically hindered women, they can have counterproductive effects. One of the main risks associated with these measures is the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the lack of attention to other intersections. An example of this is that the affirmative actions incorporated in Latin America to promote women's participation in political arenas have not considered the specific asymmetries experienced by rural, Indigenous and Afro-descendant women.²⁰³

Affirmative actions aimed at promoting women's participation must be designed from a systemic perspective that allows women to effectively overcome material barriers to accessing decision-making spaces, considering assigned gender roles and the tendency for women to simultaneously suffer from economic, cultural and/or physical violence, among others.²⁰⁴

Women in land formalisation

The expansion of the agricultural frontier is one of the main reasons behind deforestation and is intrinsically linked to the regulations that facilitate or restrict access to land. Although there have been advances towards gender equality in regulation and access to land titles, there are still material obstacles that hinder women's access to their land rights.

The first norms associated with land adjudication encouraged the transformation of areas with vegetation cover in favour of agricultural and livestock activities. For example, Law No. 85 of 1920 established that the adjudication of *baldíos* would be null and void if at least one-fifth of the land was

²⁰² Departamento Nacional de Planeación. (2017). Guía para el uso del clasificador de políticas públicas de equidad de género en el sistema unificado de inversión y finanzas públicas. [Available here](#).

²⁰³ G.A. Durango Álvarez. (2016). Las acciones afirmativas como mecanismos reivindicadores de la paridad de género en la participación política inclusiva: Ecuador, Bolivia, Costa Rica y Colombia. [Available here](#).

²⁰⁴ Olsen, F. (2000). The sex of law. Female identity and legal discourse.

not used for crops, or two-third for livestock within the next ten years. Furthermore, these rules gave preference to men in accessing land rights, a bias that is reflected in Law No. 74 of 1926 by granting government assistance exclusively to European men.

This trend continued with the issuing of Law No. 135 of 1961 on Agrarian Social Reform, which established that 'married men over 18 years of age' would have preferential access to the adjudication of *baldíos* or family agricultural units. It is relevant to note that these regulations did not mention rural women, but did refer to the spouses and children of the holders of land tenure rights, which suggests that the initial regulations on land adjudication positioned women only in conjugal roles. An example of this is Law No. 4 of 1973, which established that in the event of the death of the owner, presumably a man, the 'surviving spouse' or 'permanent companion' would be the beneficiary of the outstanding amount of the plots. The lack of recognition of women as recipients of the benefits of agrarian reform and land adjudication creates a material barrier to access and protection of their rights.

This panorama changed with the issuance of Law No. 731 of 2002, which establishes norms to favour rural women (see Annex 7), a category that is conditional on productive activities being carried out in the rural sphere, which according to Article 3 of the law includes 'agricultural, forestry, fishing, mining, agro-industry, micro-enterprises, rural and ecological tourism, handicrafts, transformation of precious stones, transformation of products and provision of services'. This law sought to promote rural women's access to land, eliminating obstacles to access to financing funds, establishing direct lines of financing and promoting training programmes. It also incorporated provisions to encourage women's participation in decision-making bodies at the community and institutional levels.

This same law marked a turning point in the gender approach within the regulation applicable to the agriculture sector. Since its adoption, more than 14 laws have been issued to address gender inequalities in access to rural land and to recognise rural women as key actors in agriculture and rural reform. More recent laws, such as Law No. 2294 of 2023, have tried to integrate gender issues in the environmental regulation of land allocation and the agrarian sector by amending the normative provisions of Law No. 160 of 1994.

However, recent regulations such as Agreement No. 058 of 2018 related to Use Agreements or Contracts on non-allocable vacant land have not incorporated any provisions aimed at addressing the challenges faced by rural women in the regularisation of land tenure and, in general, in the protection of their land rights in ecologically relevant areas.

The care economy

Law No. 1413 of 2010 includes the care economy as an aspect in which women contribute to the economic and social development of the country under the assumption that the activities carried out by women regarding the care of children, family, animals and territory are essential. This recognition generated an opening so that, through Decree Law No. 902 of 2017 and Law No. 1900 of 2018, it was established that, within the framework of the processes of land formalisation, the activities carried out by women were included under the denomination of the care economy as activities of exploitation of the respective lands.

Economically valuing the processes of formalisation of rural property in the care economy activities carried out by women is a measure that promotes economic autonomy and counteracts the barriers that women have had to face to access land. This opening is generated because the notion of the care economy puts at the centre of the discussion all those unpaid but essential actions that women carry out in favour of the members of the family nucleus and, in many cases, of the territory. This structurally transforms the procedures for accessing territorial rights. A double workload is no longer imposed on women, but rather all the activities they have already been carrying out are valued.

In addition, the recognition of the care economy generates an opening to understand and value different ways of relating to the territory. It is no longer necessary to demonstrate the transformation of the vegetation cover; it is enough to demonstrate the practices of inhabiting and relating to the territory.

4.2.8. Visión Amazonia

Visión Amazonia is a Colombian government initiative led by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development that focuses on the Amazon biome. The implementation of this programme brings with it a multiplicity of challenges associated with the complexity surrounding the drivers of deforestation and the ethnic diversity of the populations that inhabit the region. For this reason, it is pertinent to analyse in detail the gender approach of the programme, identifying possible shortcomings and opportunities to promote gender equity in strategies to combat deforestation.

Colombia is a State Party to the Paris Agreement which was signed in 2015. In September 2015, prior to the historic Paris Climate Summit (COP21), the Colombian government submitted its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) committing to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below projected levels by 2030. Subsequently, in 2020 Colombia submitted an update of its commitments indicating that it will aim for carbon neutrality by 2050.

Visión Amazonia is part of the Integrated Strategy for Deforestation Control and Forest Management (EICDGB) adopted in 2019, which integrates the Colombian government's repertoire of actions aimed at complying with the NDCs. This strategy marks an important step for the REDD+ Initiative (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) in the country.²⁰⁵

Visión Amazonia, which is part of the REDD+ initiatives in Colombia, is being developed in several departments of the Amazon region, including Putumayo, Sur del Meta, Guainía, Caquetá, Guaviare, Vichada, Vaupés and Amazonas. This programme is funded by the UK, Germany and Norway under the mechanism of payment for verified emission reductions, which means that these countries provide funds to Colombia as verified reductions in greenhouse gas emissions linked to deforestation are achieved.

This programme aims to create a new development model for the Colombian Amazon, based on low deforestation and low carbon activities through the following pillars:

- **Pillar 1 - Forest Governance.** Strengthen the institutional framework for forest conservation by improving the capacity of government and environmental agencies to regulate and control deforestation.
- **Pillar 2 - Sustainable Sectoral Development.** Manage intersectoral agreements and public-private partnerships that promote economic and productive development in the Colombian Amazon region, but in a sustainable manner and with low deforestation rates.
- **Pillar 3 - Agri-environmental Development:** Promote sustainable production practices by encouraging agricultural and livestock farming methods that minimise negative impacts on forests and the environment.
- **Pillar 4 - Environmental Governance with Indigenous Peoples.** Promote environmental governance in partnership with Indigenous communities, while recognising the importance of respecting the practices and cultural diversity of these groups and working with them to protect forests.
- **Pillar 5 - Enabling Conditions.** Generate monitoring information on forest area and deforestation — which is essential for effective tracking and evaluation of conservation and emission reduction efforts.

Gender focus of the programme

Within the programme's overall work plan, four of the five pillars integrated a gender perspective. The approaches used as published by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development in 2016 are detailed below.

- **Pillar 1 - Forest Governance.** The gender approach in this pillar sought to ensure the equal participation of men and women in the training and socialisation of actions, as well as to guarantee equal conditions in the programme's contracting processes, thus promoting the inclusion of both genders in forest governance.

²⁰⁵ REDD+ is a global approach to address climate change and forest conservation in which countries hosting tropical forests receive financial incentives for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions related to deforestation and forest degradation. In this context, Colombia is seeking to implement nature-based strategies to reduce deforestation and promote sustainable management of its forests.

- **Pillar 2 - Sustainable Sector Development.** The gender focus of this pillar was oriented towards monitoring the differentiated impacts caused by sector activities.
- **Pillar 3 - Agri-environmental Development.** The gender approach in this pillar aimed to promote and strengthen the participation of women, youth and older people in all stages of agri-environmental activities. Specific actions were formulated to ensure their inclusion, with a particular emphasis on supporting women through access to publicity, markets and marketing channels. The goal was to reduce the economic and communication gaps between men and women, and to promote greater gender equality in the development of the sector.
- **Pillar 4 - Environmental Governance with Indigenous Peoples.** The gender approach of this pillar focuses on developing a differential approach that considers the specific needs of women and men in the management and conservation of ecosystems in Indigenous culture. It highlights the fundamental role of Indigenous women in the protection of the environment and in family care tasks, and seeks to strengthen these women's own spaces, recognising them as key to the conservation of ecosystems. This pillar addresses forest governance in Indigenous peoples through projects and grants in five key areas. It focuses on legal security over land and support for Indigenous REDD+ at the territorial level, promotes self-governance through life planning and training in consultation and informed consent, and supports food security and sustainable economic activities in economy and production. It also promotes the empowerment of Indigenous women and supports projects to strengthen Indigenous languages and knowledge as cross-cutting elements.

This analysis of the gender focus of Visión Amazonia was based on the provisions of the Global Work Plan of Visión Amazonia REM-Colombia, the annual reports of the programme produced by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia from 2016 to 2022, as well as the mid-term report of the REM-Colombia programme. From this, the objectives outlined within the programme corresponding to the gender approach, the type of approach and its progress from year to year were identified.

Categories of analysis were also used to review the type of action and the direction in which the gender policy was oriented. These categories were 1) economic autonomy; 2) participation in scenarios of power and territorial decision-making, sexual and reproductive health and rights; 3) education and access to new technologies; 4) women free from violence; 5) institutional development and transformation; 6) and food sovereignty. An analysis is provided of the impact of each pillar from a gender perspective below.

Pillar 1 - Forest Governance. Equality was promoted in participation in inter-sectoral pacts and forest roundtables, as well as in the recruitment of men and women for professional, technological and technical roles. However, annual reports highlighted progress only in recruitment, with 54% of women extensionists between 2016 and 2019. Although the gender approach covered several programme areas, the reports indicated a particular emphasis on the recruitment of women in technical roles, without detailing other aspects of the approach.²⁰⁶

Pillar 2 - Sustainable Sector Development. The gender approach sought to highlight the impact of mining and hydrocarbons on the health of women and children due to water and food contamination. The pillar foresaw the monitoring of actions differentiated according to the types of beneficiaries to mitigate specific impacts, incorporating a gender approach in the evaluation of projects. However, the reports did not report progress on this aspect.

Pillar 3 - Agri-environmental Development. This pillar focuses on sustainable agri-environmental activities and applied a gender approach that considered variables such as age and ethnicity. The approach promoted women's participation in value chains, strengthening their economic autonomy and access to assets through financial tools such as the Instrument for the Transformation of Sustainable Production (ITPS) and conservation agreements with Payments for Environmental Services (PES) called the Amazon Forest Incentive (IFA). Between 2018 and 2022, significant progress was seen, with an increase in the signing of conservation agreements with women, reaching

²⁰⁶ Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (2017). Visión Amazonía Annual Report 2016-2017. [Available here](#) // Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (2019). Amazon Vision Annual Report 2018-2019. [Available here](#).

30% in 2019-2020 before dropping to 27% in 2020-2021. By June 2022, 36% of Amazon Forest Incentive (IFA) beneficiaries were female heads of household.²⁰⁷

However, gaps in economic access between men and women were identified, attributed to the concentration of land in male hands and the perception that forest dwellers are predominantly men. This is questioned, as women represent a significant proportion of the population in these areas²⁰⁸ and play crucial roles in acquiring land and stabilising productive systems. It underlines the need to address the land access gap as a factor influencing access to conservation incentives and economic autonomy for rural women, highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive public policies to address historical debts, such as access to land for women.²⁰⁹

Pillar 4 - Environmental Governance with Indigenous Peoples. In this pillar, an approach was adopted that deeply valued the cosmovision of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon, recognising the crucial role of Indigenous women in the conservation and protection of the environment. This role is fundamental to their family survival strategy, socialisation, cultural maintenance and food provision. Since 2016, twelve activities related to the gender approach have been reported, covering areas such as participation in territorial decision-making, food sovereignty and economic autonomy. This comprehensive approach sought to promote the rights and protagonism of Indigenous women in environmental and cultural management.²¹⁰

In addition, 10% of the funds under this pillar were allocated to specific projects to strengthen Indigenous women. These projects included the incorporation of women into life plans related to environmental governance and management, as well as the creation of women's policies within the National Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC). These efforts benefited approximately 208 women, although the report identified challenges in administering funds and building effective leadership. The need to articulate with male-dominated authorities and strengthen women's leadership capacities proved to be a priority to advance the management of their territories.

Intersectional approach

Whereas pillar 3 focused mainly on economic autonomy and access to assets for peasant women (88% of activities), pillar 4 addressed a wider variety of actions concerning Indigenous women, including the participation in power arenas and decision-making (33%), economic autonomy and access to assets (25%), food sovereignty (16%) and combinations of these dimensions.

These differences in approaches to action between Indigenous and peasant women indicate that, despite the inclusion of the gender approach, it is not considered an intersectional approach. This can lead to essentialist public policies that exclude and erase certain dimensions of conservation in the Amazon, which simplifies the diversity of roles and perspectives of these two groups. While Indigenous women accessed programmes that considered their political and cultural dimension, such as the women's policy of the National Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC), peasant women mainly accessed financial incentives to stop deforestation, which negates the political dimensions of peasantry and the economic autonomy of Indigenous women.²¹¹ Public policies based on the essentialisation of subjects cause the exclusion and erasure of the peasant subject, which in Colombia was declared a subject of rights in 2023. This ignores the possibilities and contributions of the peasantry to the conservation of the Amazon, especially in the case of peasant women who play a crucial role in the conservation of genetic diversity and water²¹²(see Annex 7).

²⁰⁷ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonía: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

²⁰⁸ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonía: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

²⁰⁹ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonía: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

²¹⁰ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonía: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

²¹¹ Diana, B.; Diana, O. (2016). Violence and conservation: Beyond unintended consequences and unfortunate coincidences. *Geoforum*, 69(1), 176-183. [Available here](#).

²¹² Diana, B.; Diana, O. (2016). Violence and conservation: Beyond unintended consequences and unfortunate coincidences. *Geoforum*, 69(1), 176-183. [Available here](#).

Critical notes

Since 2017, the Indigenous communities of the lower and middle Caquetá River have declared constant disagreements about the differences that exist between the visions of the formulators of Visión Amazonia and the Indigenous cosmovision. They have also pointed out the existing gaps regarding the possible effects that the programme could have on Indigenous life by virtue of its objective of transforming the development model of the Colombian Amazon. This is in addition to the countless voices of complaint that have reached the Conference of the Parties in Glasgow 2021 about the absence of safeguards in Article 6 of the Paris Agreement or the failure to incorporate existing safeguards for REDD+ programmes, such as the Cancun safeguards.²¹³

In particular, the Andoque Indigenous community filed complaints in 2017 about poor practices in Indigenous participation during the formulation phase of Visión Amazonia. These complaints arose after some community leaders had informal conversations with participants in programme formulation workshops. In response to these concerns, in 2017 the community approached the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. The Ministry explained that the construction of pillar 4, focused on Indigenous people, had been carried out in a participatory manner through seventeen workshops supported by the Indigenous Amazon Roundtable and the National Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC). However, the Indigenous community expressed that the participatory workshops did not adequately replace the prior consultation process and did not guarantee effective participation of the Indigenous people, which led to challenges and later legal action before the Constitutional Court.

On 12 October 2017, the Andoque community, residents of the Andoque Indigenous Resguardo and the inhabitants of the Predio Putumayo Resguardo, filed a tutela action with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.²¹⁴ Their objective was to secure the protection of several fundamental rights during the construction and formulation of Visión Amazonia. The rights they sought to protect included effective participation, prior consultation, autonomy and self-determination, ethnic and cultural diversity, food sovereignty, traditional knowledge systems and their relationship with the environment, as well as the constitutional guarantee to decide on their own development model.

Although the tutela was initially denied, the situation changed in 2019 when the Colombian Constitutional Court issued Ruling T-063 of 2019. This judgment ruled that the fundamental right to prior consultation in Pillar 4 of Visión Amazonia on Environmental Governance with Indigenous Peoples should be protected. Prior consultation was denied for the other pillars of the programme. The Court also granted protection of the fundamental right to effective participation of the plaintiff population in the pillars related to Forestry, Sectoral, Agro-environmental and Enabling Conditions. Finally, the judgment ordered the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and other competent institutions to carry out, two months after the issuance of the judgment, the prior consultation process for the Indigenous pillar of Visión Amazonia.

Despite ongoing legal proceedings, the first phase of Visión Amazonia continues to operate. However, criticisms of the programme continue to be levelled against it. Criticism focuses on the following aspects:

- Fairness in the recognition of property rights and ownership of rights.
- Procedural justice in recognition.
- The implementation of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation and endorsed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Environmental and distributive justice on burdens and responsibilities, benefits and liabilities of conservation under such programmes.²¹⁵

²¹³ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonia: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

²¹⁴ Procuraduría General de la Nación. (2019). [Retrieved from here](#).

²¹⁵ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonia: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).



56% of the biomass of the Colombian Amazon is located within 194 Indigenous reserves of 63 peoples. All this biomass represents more than half of the budget of Visión Amazonia. However, only 22% is equivalent to the Indigenous pillar.

Andoke Andoke, L. et al.²¹⁶

During the development of Visión Amazonia, budget allocations were allocated to projects and grants of short duration and with difficult conditions for participation. This led to a dependence on the support of external professionals to facilitate the formulation and caused explicit tensions in Indigenous conceptions of knowledge, and priority began to be given to mainly Western and colonising forms and knowledge.²¹⁷

The effectiveness of the programme has not yet been demonstrated. While it is recognised that halting deforestation is a long-term process, there is concern that the drivers of deforestation are increasingly close to Indigenous territories. This suggests the need for constant evaluation and ongoing attention to ensure the effectiveness of the programme in protecting forests and the rights of Indigenous communities in the region.²¹⁸

The Colombian Amazon as a subject of rights

Ruling 4360 of 2018 of the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice stems from a tutela action brought by 25 children, adolescents and young adults from different regions of Colombia who asked the judge to protect their right to enjoy a healthy environment arguing that this right was being affected due to increased deforestation in the Amazon and its impact on climate change. The plaintiffs identified themselves as part of the future generations that will suffer the severe consequences of climate change and indicated that they would be the most affected by the increase in greenhouse gas emissions related to deforestation in the Amazon. They argued that the degradation of the Amazon has an impact on the ecological stability of the entire country — particularly on water availability and the balance of biogeochemical cycles.

The legal problem identified by the Supreme Court was to establish a causal link between climate change and the violation of fundamental rights alleged by the plaintiffs. The Supreme Court considered that the serious effects of climate change are a well-known fact as higher temperatures and unusual weather events have been recorded. Based on extensive jurisprudence recognising the relationship between the right to a healthy environment and individual rights, the Court found that there is a causal link between climate change and the applicants' rights.

It is important to note that, in the analysis of the legal problem, the Court completely omitted the ethnic and peasant communities that inhabit the Colombian Amazon, which meant that the analysis of the phenomenon of deforestation left aside the close interdependence that these communities have with the territory they inhabit and the economic and social pressures that have an impact on the transformation of the forest. By not considering the human component in the understanding of deforestation, the Supreme Court of Justice did not address the differential impacts suffered by women in these territories, much less the possibility of incorporating a gender perspective in the ruling.

The essence of Ruling 4360 of 2018 was the recognition of the Colombian Amazon as a subject of rights. This decision was based on the premise that humanity has been responsible for creating a catastrophic scenario of climate change due to the promotion of an anthropocentric and selfish economic and development model that is detrimental to the environmental balance. Therefore, the Court affirmed that it is urgent for all human beings to stop focusing on their own interests and consider how their actions affect society and nature. Furthermore, the Court decided to protect the environmental rights of future generations, based on the ethical duty of solidarity and the intrinsic

²¹⁶ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonía: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

²¹⁷ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonía: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

²¹⁸ Andoke Andoke, L. et al. (2023). Amazonian visions of Visión Amazonía: Indigenous Peoples' perspectives on a forest conservation and climate programme in the Colombian Amazon. [Available here](#).

value of nature. With this decision, the Court sought to transcend the anthropocentric perspective and move towards an eco-centric approach, recognising that human beings are part of nature.

Based on the above, the ruling reverses an earlier decision and grants safeguards to address deforestation in the Colombian Amazon. Several government entities are ordered, in coordination with affected communities and other stakeholders, to formulate a short, medium and long-term action plan to counteract deforestation and the effects of climate change in the Amazon. In addition, it mandates the construction of an Intergenerational Pact for the Life of the Colombian Amazon (PIVAC) to reduce deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions to zero, with measures at national, regional and local levels. Amazonian municipalities should update and implement similar action plans. Corporations in charge of the sustainable management of the Amazon should also take action to address deforestation.

Ruling 4360 of 2018 has been subject to criticism. One particularly contested aspect is the exclusion of vulnerable groups and subjects of special protection. This omission in the ruling has had significant repercussions, as it has given rise to dissimilar applications by state institutions. The ruling has left women in particular unprotected. Women are known to face asymmetrical living conditions compared to men in these areas. Ignoring this reality only perpetuates state omission and inequality, increasing women's vulnerability.

In summary, criticism of Ruling 4360 of 2018 focus on its lack of attention to the social and human aspects of deforestation, as well as its exclusion of vulnerable groups, which has led to controversial implementations and, ultimately, increased vulnerability and inequality in affected regions. This ruling is clearly flawed by designing instruments to combat deforestation without considering the people residing in those areas. This leads to a lack of effectiveness in the fight against deforestation and highlights the disconnect between environmental protection and the protection of women living in these territories.



Photo: Deforestation in Colombia. © Mariel Cabero / IUCN NL

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Amazon regions of Peru and Colombia, while differing in their sociopolitical and environmental context, face similar challenges that highlight the deep interconnections between gender and environmental issues. These parallel studies show how extractive economies, such as mining and cattle ranching, intensify violence with wide-reaching social, economic and ecological impacts. This chapter aims to reflect how the challenges faced in Peru and Colombia mirror broader regional dynamics and to conclude on the context specific challenges of each country.

Shared challenges

The challenges faced by Peruvian and Colombian women are rooted in extractive economies, leading to environmental degradation, gender-based violence and historic as well as systemic inequalities. These issues reflect broader trends across Latin America, where women disproportionately bear the impacts of environmental degradation and struggle for recognition and resources in their fight to protect ecosystems and communities.

- **Extractives economies.** Illegal mining and land use change in both countries have led to environmental impacts, related to water pollution, biodiversity loss and deforestation. These activities often result in land conflicts and directly affect women's livelihoods and their communities.
- **Gender-based violence.** Women defenders in both contexts face intersecting forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. This violence is exacerbated by their role as environmental advocates, often placing them and their families at risk.
- **Systemic governance failures.** Weak enforcement of land rights and environmental protection policies, coupled with the possibility of corruption and inadequate institutional responses, leave women defenders vulnerable. Limited access to justice and mistrust in authorities further hinder their efforts. In addition, the legal and institutional frameworks which protect environmental and territorial defenders often lack a gender focus, which fails to address the different and additional challenges women are facing
- **Barriers to leadership and representation.** Despite progress, women still face systemic challenges to participating in decision-making processes and leadership roles. Gender stereotypes and unequal access to resources continue to limit their participation and influence.
- **Health impacts of environmental degradation.** Contamination from mining and agrochemical use disproportionately impacts women and children, leading to severe health issues such as mercury poisoning and reproductive health problems.

Colombia and Peru share, with other Latin American countries, a colonial past and a present where their economies are still based on land and resources appropriation and extractive activities. Furthermore, environmental destruction and the loss of ancestral lands, with the physical and cultural violence that this entails is shared past and present among Latin American countries. The shared socio-economic conditions and violence issues, combined with the shared ecosystem, suggests that the challenges which women face in Peru and Colombia have similarities with the situation of women across the Amazon region. Environmental degradation and the loss of ancestral lands, with the physical and cultural violence that this entails is shared past and present among Latin American countries. It is therefore worth exploring and analysing the situation of women in the region to develop potential solutions to gender inequalities and gender-based violence.

Peruvian Amazon

The main challenges Indigenous populations are facing in Madre de Dios are directly related to the presence of illegal activities, such as mining, which are contributing to safety risks, violence and crime that affects the quality of life of the people and the viability of their cultures. These findings highlight that there is an overlap of land use rights between mining and forestry concessions, protected natural areas and Indigenous territories which generates conflicts and a lack of land rights legal certainty. Combined with the distrust towards actions of national, regional and local authorities, with accusations of corruption, conflict of interest and lack of effective response to threats, it can be concluded that Madre de Dios is lacking the necessary conditions and tools for people to protect their territories. As for example, legal and governmental support towards territorial rights, as well as the mechanisms of accessing justice.

Fundamental role for women defenders

There is a complex intersection between environmental degradation, gender-based violence and environmental and human rights work in Madre de Dios, with women facing multiple types of violence, tightly linked to their gender. The effects extend from themselves to their families. This means that there are additional and/or different pressures which women in the area must face, making them more vulnerable.

The testimonies presented highlight the fundamental role of women defenders of Indigenous peoples in the region who fight against the invasion and exploitation of their territories by mining and other illegal activities. Various factors could facilitate women taking on leadership roles in Madre de Dios communities:

- The implementation of specific quotas for women in community charters and training programmes.
- The existence of a family support network where partners, parents and children participate in the equal sharing of responsibilities and encourage female leadership.
- The support of organisations that promote women's leadership, such as Chirapaq or Caritas Madre de Dios.
- Participation in training programmes on Indigenous rights, human rights and soft skills.
- Proficiency in the Spanish language, including the ability to read and write.
- The perception of women as 'talkative' people, capable of keeping calm and promoting dialogue in conflict situations.

Participation and representation in decision-making

The participation and representation of Indigenous and local women in decision-making in Madre de Dios significantly progressed, although challenges persist that require continued attention and action, such as gender stereotypes and criticisms that question their ability to fulfil care and leadership responsibilities simultaneously. The following was observed:

- The diversity in the representation of women on the boards of directors of native communities reflects varied realities, without following a uniform cultural pattern. Only 20% of native communities in Madre de Dios are chaired by women.
- Increase in the representation of women in the Board of Directors of FENAMAD and its intermediate organisations, as well as in the associated technical units.
- In the context of the CDG in Madre de Dios, the presence and significant contribution of women defenders is evident. Therefore, despite the ongoing level of unequal representation and participation there are initiatives like the implementation of a School of Leaders in the CDG in 2024 which can strengthen the effective participation of women and youth.
- Women's participation in forest, environmental and territorial monitoring and control committees is still limited. Recognition and support for outstanding women leaders, such as those in the roles of *veedoras* and drone pilots, are positive examples to follow.

Access to justice and effective legal protection for environmental defenders

For environmental defenders, the access to justice and the legal protection related to human rights violations exist within constitution, but is often not exercised successfully. Therefore, people do not rely on these frameworks or show trust to the existing authorities for their protection. Grassroots organisations have been the most reliable protection mechanism for environmental defenders, as well as a mechanism for women's protection.

In Madre de Dios, Indigenous women's access to capacity-building spaces is at an initial stage, especially in areas traditionally dominated by men, such as surveillance and the use of technologies. Therefore, the work of FENAMAD has been fundamental in increasing women's representation in these spaces, implementing inclusive methodologies with a gender focus.

Access and trust to justice in environmental matters in Madre de Dios has serious limitations:

- The implementation of national and international regulations that support access to justice is at a developing stage or obstructed, due to delays, lack of resources and/or budget from authorities.
- Corruption and indifference on the part of authorities at different levels.
- Lack of knowledge about Indigenous rights and intercultural and gender approaches.
- Lack of trust in local authorities; difficulties in identifying and accessing resources for defenders when they must initiate judicial and/or administrative proceedings.
- The rapid release of aggressors and the lack of results in the judicial and administrative proceedings initiated.

Grassroots organisations in Madre de Dios have developed self-protection strategies in the face of the ineffective response from the state in terms of environmental justice and protection of environmental and territorial defenders. The intersectoral collaboration between these organisations, government entities such as the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and civil society demonstrates an encouraging approach to addressing challenges in the defence of human and territorial rights.

The Peruvian state has tried to implement measures for the protection of human rights defenders, and particularly women defenders. However, all of them have considerable limitations:

- The Intersectoral Mechanism establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework that links various ministries and entities to safeguard the situation of human rights defenders. However, it is still very incipient and still lacks inter-institutional coordination.
- Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP represents a significant step forward in recognising and specifically addressing violence against women human rights defenders. However, the condition that the violence suffered by these women will be explicitly linked to their gender status, for it to be addressed by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, may limit the capacity to intervene in more complex situations that do not easily fit into the category of 'gender-based violence'. In addition, the lack of human, economic and technical resources for effective implementation, as well as the need for greater inter-sectoral coordination, highlight the importance of allocating adequate budgets and strengthening the capacity of justice operators and services to address gender-based violence in Madre de Dios.
- The implementation of the Madre de Dios Regional Roundtable for the protection of women human rights defenders represents a significant advance in inter-institutional coordination at the regional level. However, some limitations persist — such as the low presence of women defenders in the sessions, the lack of official representation from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and the AURORA Programme, and the need for their actions to be translated into concrete and coordinated actions to address the risks faced by defenders in the region.

Identification with terminology

The women defenders interviewed expressed limited knowledge of the term 'women defenders of the environment and territory'. Identification with the term varies. Some accept it and recognise its relevance in the international arena, while others consider that advocacy work is demonstrated in practice and does not require additional labels. They link it to women protecting their territories, language, culture and traditions, and see it as applicable to those seeking to resolve conflicts through

dialogue. Although some interviewees expressed reservations about the use of the term, noting concerns about threats that may be received, others suggest its more frequent application to make visible the actions of women as defenders and guardians of the ancestral knowledge and culture rooted in their territories.

Colombian Amazon

The general conclusions from the analysis of deforestation drivers in the Colombian Amazon reveal that there are structural issues and issues of poor governance which have created social and structural constructs that assign specific roles to men and women. These constructs assign women the exclusive role of dedication to the domestic sphere. As such, caring for the children and the elderly or disabled people is exclusively their responsibility. In addition, there is a widespread belief among rural women that getting involved in organisational or activities of production implies neglecting their role as mothers and/or wives. As a result, this creates structural obstacles to the involvement of women in other sectors.

Deforestation drivers and their impact on women

In the Colombian Amazon, **land grabbing** is deeply influenced by dynamics of structural inequality that disproportionately affect rural women. Processes of land accumulation and ownership, which have historically shaped Colombia both by elite actors and middle peasants have left women with limited access to property and thus to few economic incentives that promote their autonomy. Despite attempts to address these gaps through public policies, women's access to land remains restricted, perpetuating their economic and social vulnerability in the region. Solutions to this problem require a comprehensive approach that includes not only land redistribution, but also mechanisms that strengthen women's participation in productive processes and territorial governance, allowing them fairer and more equitable access to resources and development.

In the northern part of the Colombian Amazon region, **cattle ranching** has grown significantly since the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, driven by the departure of the FARC-EP and the failed implementation of programmes such as the PNIS. This growth, based on the expansion of pastures and the transition of farmers from coca to cattle ranching, has accelerated deforestation in the region. Gender analysis reveals a marked inequality: women play crucial roles in production, but face barriers in access to land and suffer from a significant wage gap. Although their participation has increased in some areas, double work hours and the invisibility of their work still predominate. More inclusive and sustainable approaches are urgently needed to mitigate environmental impacts and improve rural women's working conditions.

Although women contribute substantially to the different stages of **illicit crop** production, such as coca leaves, they face precarious and unpaid working conditions. The use of glyphosate in cultivation areas has raised concerns about impacts on the health of women and children. Indiscriminate spraying has affected water sources, food crops and livestock, aggravating living conditions in rural areas. Faced with the economic instability of the coca economy and the risks related to the armed conflict, women have sought productive alternatives, such as the implementation of vegetable gardens, agroforestry systems and work in urban or informal sectors. The 2016 Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP addressed the problem of illegal economies through the National Integral Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS). This programme has enabled 99,097 families, of which 36% are led by women, to engage in crop substitution. However, the lack of stability and resources remains a constant challenge in these regions.

In the Amazon rainforest, **mining** disproportionately affects women, who often face a greater burden of domestic and family care work while men take on more visible roles in the extractive sector. Gender inequalities are perpetuated through stereotypes that place women in caring roles and men in positions of strength and leadership. Women's participation in mining, while growing, faces challenges such as gender-based violence, lack of recognition and labour exploitation. Initiatives to address these inequalities include proposals for equal recognition of land rights and greater inclusion in decision-making related to mining and environmental care.

Palm oil production has generated economic and social repercussions. For example, economic dependency in the activity and inequality in income distribution, as well as land dispossession and

privatisation of essential resources such as water. Local communities, especially women and children, face health problems due to herbicide contamination but also cultural violence such as the loss of ancestral knowledge and traditional agricultural practices. Women, often in informal and precarious roles, also suffer from job insecurity, exacerbated by territorial transformation that affects access to services and increases sexual violence.

Local organisations have developed various alternatives to mitigate the impacts of palm oil monopoly. In Putumayo, community nurseries, agroecology, *chagras*, meliponiculture and ecological restoration have been promoted. In Caquetá, processing plants for Amazonian products, family agriculture and essential oils have been promoted. In Meta, community nurseries, ecological restoration, beekeeping, tourism and peasant reserve zones have been implemented. In Guaviare, alternatives include Amazonian fruit processing, community nurseries, farmer reserve zones and community forest monitoring. These initiatives aim to provide sustainable solutions and promote the conservation of the Amazonian environment in the face of deforestation pressures.

The Comprehensive Rural Reform, which created the Free Distribution Land Fund and the formalisation of small and medium-sized landholdings, limited women's participation in land redistribution processes to cases where they were heads of households.

Forest management in Colombia has focused on the forest economy, productive development, the consolidation of protected or special management areas, climate change and recently on environmental crimes, which has led to the understanding of deforestation as a purely environmental problem. Therefore, there is a separation between ecosystems and those who live in them when speaking about the Colombian Amazon, making invisible the relationships of forest dwellers and their role as caretakers of the forest.

Policies related to deforestation with a gender approach

In the analysis of Colombian public policies related to deforestation with a gender approach, various elements become evident:

- The norms and public policies issued by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development do not usually include a gender perspective or consider the essential role of women in the care of the environment and forests.
- In the agriculture sector, there are efforts regarding the inclusion of a gender perspective in the regulations where it is applicable. In this sector, the greatest number of legal regulations has been observed — aimed at safeguarding the rights of rural women and at generating actions to overcome the structural barriers that hinder their access to rights. Law No. 731 of 2002 marks a step forward in the integration of a gender approach in Colombian legislation by defining 'rural women' and promoting gender equality in rural contexts. However, the law has important gaps in that it does not specifically address the contribution of women in forested areas or the needs of ethnic groups. Although some regulations on deforestation incorporate a gender approach, they focus mainly on promoting rural women's economic autonomy to protect forests and ensuring their participation in decision-making processes through affirmative measures and quota policies.
- Law No. 1413 of 2010 marks a significant advance in the inclusion of the gender approach in the Colombian legal system by recognising the 'care economy' as a crucial contribution of women to economic and social development. This law values unpaid activities related to the care of the family, children, animals and territory, assigning women a central role in the construction of the country's rurality. Furthermore, Decree Law No. 902 of 2017 and Law No. 1900 of 2018 consolidated this recognition by integrating these activities into the formalisation of rural property, promoting a broader understanding of the link with the territory and simplifying access to territorial rights. This approach strengthens gender equality and the economic autonomy of rural women, while recognising and valuing their unpaid work as essential for the social and economic transformation of rural areas.
- The Visión Amazonia programme addresses deforestation in the Amazon region and promotes gender equality. However, despite some progress in promoting women's participation and economic autonomy in certain pillars of the programme, there are still

gaps in terms of access to land and notable differences in the gender approach between peasant and Indigenous populations.

- Decision No. 4360 of 2018, which originated in a guardianship action brought by 25 children, adolescents and young adults in Colombia, recognises the Colombian Amazon as a subject of rights and orders measures to address deforestation and climate change in the region. However, this ruling has been criticised for its lack of consideration of the social and human dimension of deforestation, as well as its exclusion of vulnerable groups such as ethnic communities and peasants. This omission has had negative repercussions and has increased the vulnerability of women in these areas as neither the discussion nor the orders given in it consider the role of women in the care of the forest or the asymmetries they face in access to property or the economy.



Photo : Riverside village in Madre de Dios © Tom Laffay

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are developed based on the findings of the studies on gender dynamics in the Colombian and Peruvian Amazon. Since the studies were not designed for direct comparison, the recommendations are defined per country. Part of them, however, may also resonate with the situation in other Amazon countries.

Peruvian Amazon

Situation of women

- Take an integrative approach to gender-based violence, environmental degradation (from activities such as illegal mining) and the criminalisation of women human rights defenders — and considering the interconnection between these problems.
- Promoting solutions to environmental issues with a gender and human rights perspective. Emphasise the role of women and addressing their increased vulnerability.
- Strengthen the provision of mental healthcare services in communities, with a particular focus on Indigenous children. Collaborate with the AURORA Programme for cases of gender-based violence and coordinate with the Ministry of Health to strengthen Community Mental Health Centres, with an emphasis on families and communities affected by violence.
- Continue to research and address physical and sexual violence and human trafficking, given the high number of incidences of femicide and violence in the region.
- Clarify and strengthen the identity of women defenders in Madre de Dios in their struggle for the preservation of their territories and cultures, by addressing structural problems associated with illegal mining. For example, through supporting organisations such as FENAMAD that protect women environmental rights defenders from violence generated by illegal mining.

Participation and representation

- Encourage the active participation of young people and descendants of women leaders in the defence of environmental rights, ensuring their safety and recognition as key agents in environmental protection.
- Ensure equal opportunities for Indigenous and local women in decision-making in Madre de Dios, both within Indigenous organisations and at the community level.
- Address structural barriers that limit women's participation in forestry *veedurías* and promote their inclusion in environmental and territorial decision-making roles.
- Improve the visibility and recognition of women's contributions in the Tambopata National Reserve Management Committee (CDG) and address the lack of gender-specific organisational structures in the Committee.

Capacity building

- Promote exchange and collaboration between women defenders in Madre de Dios, as well as with national Indigenous organisations, such as Fenmucarinap, ONAMIAP, CNA and Chirapaq.
- Collaborate with international protection mechanisms that integrate gender and intercultural approaches, such as Mexico's Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, to exchange international experiences.
- Establish safe environments, consider family responsibilities and promote women's participation in training and decision-making at a territorial level.
- Design and organise workshops that promote equity and inclusivity by ensuring equal participation of women and men in community matters. These workshops should use inclusive language, be accessible in terms of technical knowledge and raise awareness about gender-based violence. Additionally, focus on empowering women environmental defenders by building their capacity to organise and strengthen collective action.
- Ensure the security of women and women defenders in spaces for participation and training.

- Assess training needs and expectations assessment for women defenders, focusing on self-esteem, leadership, food security, gender equity, legislation and use of technology. Also, extend the duration of training processes.
- Continue to map and strengthen collaboration between national and international NGOs to optimise resources and maximise positive impact, ensuring ongoing support tailored to the specific needs of women defenders.

Access to justice and self-protection

- Address limitations of access to justice for women defenders through increased resource allocation, institutional capacity building, effective inter-agency coordination and the creation of mechanisms to build trust in the justice system.
- Implement measures to deter corruption and provide effective protection for environmental and human rights defenders.
- Ensure the active participation of women leaders in self-protection strategies and coordinate with the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations for a comprehensive and gender-sensitive approach.

Public policy

- Link regulations and allocate additional budgets to strengthen the effective and timely response to the protection of women human rights and environmental defenders.
- Strengthen inter-institutional collaboration to guarantee comprehensive protection. For example, by not limiting the attention of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations to cases of gender-based violence and by allocating adequate budgets for justice operators and care services.
- Prioritise and strengthen existing spaces in the fight against violence against women, supporting grassroots organisations in Madre de Dios and strengthening their capacity to access and understand the services of the AURORA Programme.
- Provide technical assistance to the AURORA Programme in terms of human resources, regular reports about violence and the creation of gender-sensitive security protocols.
- Incorporate a gender and intercultural approach in the coordination of the Madre de Dios Regional Roundtable. For example, by updating the resolution of the roundtable to include the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations and the AURORA in the list of official participants.

Colombian Amazon

- Include a gender perspective in forest-related policies and strategies to combat deforestation. Also, the environmental regulation of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development should recognise the essential role of women in the care of the environment and forests — thereby addressing the structural and material violence that women face.
- Reorient the discussion towards forest dwellers by identifying the different characteristics and effects of deforestation on rural, peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant women to better understand the impact on their lives.
- Adapt and improve land distribution schemes by providing public services that consider the diversity of land relations and cultural claims of different ethnic groups. Considering the historical damages and inequalities generated by land reform failures and tensions between ethnic territories and extractive activities — thereby promoting a vision of land based on care and equity.
- Promote participation in the design and implementation of development plans, access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing services and appropriate technologies and ensure equitable access to land and curb deforestation.
- Support the economy of communities and strengthen association groups to ensure equal access to economic opportunities through production, value addition, gainful employment and pluralistic activities.
- Incorporate an intersectional approach in public policymaking to address the diverse realities and needs of women in contexts of deforestation and ensure the protection of forests and community rights.
- To better understand the drivers of deforestation requires to broaden the knowledge on the deforestation in the Colombian Amazon, most notably by including a gender approach that prioritises women as political actors and decision-makers.

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ANNEX

Annex #1: Representation of Indigenous Women in the Board of Directors of FENAMAD and its intermediate and technical organisations in December 2023.

| Organisation | Period | Total charges | Women leaders | % women | Charges |
|--|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------|--|
| FENAMAD | 2023-2026 | 6 | 2 | 33,33% | Secretariat and Board of Directors |
| COINBAMAD (intermediate org.) | 2022-2024 | 5-6 | 3 | 50% | Secretariat, Board and Prosecutor's Office |
| COHARYIMA (org. intermedia) | 2023-2025 | 5 | 2 | 40% | Treasury and secretariat |
| OJEIMAD (technical unit) | Unknown | 6 | 3 | 50% | Presidency, secretariat, treasury |
| AFIMAD (technical unit) | 2021-2024 | 5 | 5 | 100% | Chairmanship, vice-chairmanship, treasury, secretariat and board memberships |
| ECA-Amarakaeri (technical unit) | 2021-2024 | 7 | 3 | 42,86% | Vice-presidency, treasury and board |

Annex #2 : Timeline of the Implementation of Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP

- 2014: Recommendation of the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the combined (seventh and eighth) periodic report of Peru.
- 2015: Implementation of Law No. 30364 to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women and family members.
- 2016: Introduction of National Plan against Gender-Based Violence 2016-2021 (PNCVG)
- 2017: Creation of the Regional Consultation Body based on Law No. 30364.
- 2018: Creation of the Joint Action Plan (JAP).
- 2019: Implementation of National Policy on Gender Equality (PNIG) and Results Oriented Budgeting Programme for the Reduction of Violence against Women (PPoR RVcM).
- 2021: Implementation of Supreme Decree No. 004-2021-JUS, approving the Intersectoral Mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders, as well as the register of risk situations approved in 2020.
- 2023:
 - 1 Implementation of Supreme Decree No. 007-2023-MIMP, Multisectoral Rural Strategy for the prevention, care, protection and recovery from violence against women and members of the family group and sexual violence in rural areas.
 - 2 Introduction of Ministerial Resolution No. 197-2023-MIMP, the creation of the Rural Attention Service - SAR in the face of violence against women and members of the family group and persons affected by sexual violence in rural areas.
 - 3 Implementation of Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP, 'prevention, attention, protection and recognition of women human rights defenders'.

Annex #3: Regulations for the prevention, protection and access to justice of defenders

| Nr. | Sector | Regulation | Date of publication |
|-----|---|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations | Directive № 003-2023-MIMP, 'Prevention, attention, protection and acknowledgement of the human rights of women defenders' | 18 June 2023 |
| 2 | Ministry of Culture | Ministerial Resolution № 000134-2022-DM/MC that approves Directive № 001-2022-VMI/MC, called 'Directive for the adoption of measures for the prevention of situations putting the collective rights of Indigenous, native and Afro-Peruvian people at risk in the in the framework of Supreme Decree № 004-2021-JUS and the competencies of the Ministry of Culture. | 11 May 2022 |
| 3 | Public prosecutor's office | Resolution № 439-2022-MP-FN that approves the protocol 'Fiscal action for the prevention and investigation of offences in aggravation of human rights defenders' | 28 March 2022 |
| 4 | Ministry of Environment | Ministerial Resolution № 134-2021-MINAM that approves the sectoral protocol for the protection of environmental defenders | 23 July 2021 |
| 5 | Public prosecutor's office | Protocol № 001-2021-IN-VOI-DGIN for the attention for the promotion of granting personal guarantees to human rights defenders | 22 June 2021 |
| 6 | Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, in liaison with 8/9 sectors | Supreme Decree № 004-2021-JUS that approves the Intersectoral Mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders (and that repeal the protocol in question, as well as the registration of risk situations, approved in 2020) | 22 April 2022 |
| 7 | Ombudsman's Office | Administrative Resolution № 029-2029DP-PAD that approves the 'Guidelines for ombudsman intervention in cases of human rights defenders' | 15 June 2020 |
| 8 | Ministry of Justice and Human Rights | Ministerial Resolution № 0159-2019-JUS that approves the protocol for guarantee the protection of human rights defenders | 27 April 2019 |
| 9 | Ministry of Justice and Human Rights | Supreme Decree № 002-2018-JUS that approves the National Human Rights plan 2018-2021 | January 2018 |

Annex #4: Story from Peru**No freedom of movement**

An Indigenous community in the province of Manu is currently the native community most affected in the region by deforestation from gold mining according to Finer and Mamani published in 2023, and the second native community with the highest number of overlapping mining rights in its territory according to the Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development (Fundación para la Conservación y el Desarrollo Sostenible).

Community leaders and women have not been exempted from threats and violations of their rights. Reports from FENAMAD indicate that individuals in pick-up trucks arrived in the early hours of the morning causing disturbances. The Peruvian National Police, in coordination with FENAMAD, carried out interdictions, destroying illegal mining material. Threats continue to be made. FENAMAD has filed a complaint and is seeking guarantees for their protection.

In addition, children and youth of the community have been facing threats and physical and sexual aggressions from criminal gangs in the area, which have not been widely publicised for fear of further reprisals and the ineffectiveness of the local authorities.

Annex #5: Chronological progress of addressing gender-based violence in Peru

- 2015 - The Peruvian state implemented various public policies to address violence against women in the country.
- 2016 - The National Plan Against Gender Violence 2016-2021 (PNCVG) was implemented.
- 2017 - Based on Law No. 30364, the Regional Concertation Body was set up in the Madre de Dios region, by Ordinance No. 0024-2017-RMDD/CR and with the participation of various stakeholders.
- 2018 - The Joint Action Plan (PAC) was initiated to prevent violence against women and to provide protection and care for victims of violence, with an emphasis on high-risk cases. The PAC received significant allocations of specific resources for its implementation.²¹⁹
- 2019 - The National Policy on Gender Equality (PNIG) was approved through DS No. M008-2019-MIMP. In December 2019, the Results Oriented Budget Programme for the Reduction of Violence against Women (PPoR RVcM) was approved.

Annex #6: Aurora Programme details

Directive No. 003-2023-MIMP mentions that the Aurora Programme shall:

- Provide psychological, social and legal assistance to women human rights defenders affected by violence and their families (where appropriate), within the framework of Law No. 30364 and its regulations.
- Grant economic assistance to indirect victims of femicide against women human rights defenders, in accordance with current legislation.
- Provide attention to women defenders through the services of the AURORA Programme, as well as to their children and direct family members, when appropriate.
- Carry out actions to prevent violence against women human rights defenders with an intercultural approach.
- Provide training to professionals of the AURORA Programme services that deal with cases of violence against women human rights defenders.
- Promote actions to support and accompany women human rights defenders who are victims of gender-based violence in their diversity.
- Promote with regional governments the implementation of Temporary Shelter Homes for the entry of women human rights defenders in their diversity who are at risk or are victims of gender-based violence.
- Inform the public about the actions and services provided by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations for women human rights defenders.

Annex #7: Definitions on women

Defining rural women

'Rural women are those who live in rural areas and/or carry out productive activities in the agricultural, forestry, fishing or aquaculture sector, without prejudice to their link to the urban sector for work, education or health reasons, and who require specific attention and recognition by the State and society to guarantee the full exercise of their rights'.

The incorporation of the notion of **rural women** into the legal system is one of the main strategies of the Colombian state to materialise gender equality in rural contexts and to explicitly establish that rural women should be treated fairly and equitably in terms of access to land, resources, services and opportunities. Furthermore, recognising the key role that rural women play in food production, natural resource management and the rural economy in general promotes medium and long-term household and local economic development, poverty reduction and improved food security. Finally, it is pertinent to note that naming rural women as central actors in the dynamics of territorial governance facilitates the structuring of mechanisms that guarantee rural women's participation in local and national decision-making.

Defining women in Colombia

²¹⁹ Supreme Decree 192-2018-EF, which authorises the Transfer of Items in the Public Sector Budget for Fiscal Year 2018 in favour of various National and Regional Governments.

At first, agrarian regulation only included women as spouses or permanent partners of those who held the right to land or, failing that, as widows. The way in which women were referred to in the law at that time limited them to an accessory role in the construction of rural Colombia and in the guarantee of rights. Hence, Law 731 of 2002 is of great relevance, as it allows for the recognition of rural women as political subjects with agency and participation in the social and economic transformation of the countryside. However, it is important to highlight that the normative analysis conducted did not identify any provisions aimed at understanding the role of rural women residing in forested areas, which omits their contribution to the care and preservation of vegetation. Furthermore, no norms were found that addressed the agrarian dimension of women belonging to specific ethnic groups, which makes it difficult to create approaches and strategies to guarantee their territorial rights.

Annex #8: Key definitions of legal terms

| Key definitions | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Standard | It is a mandatory rule or provision established by a competent authority. It may include laws, regulations, decrees, resolutions, ordinances, agreements, circulars and directives, and is expressed in formal and legal instruments with a coercive and mandatory character. Its purpose is to regulate behaviour and establish procedures in different areas of social, economic or political life. |
| Public Policy | It is the set of strategies and decisions aimed at solving public problems or improving social welfare. These policies result from the interaction between government and civil society, establishing means, agents and ends to achieve specific objectives. Their implementation seeks to address social needs and improve living conditions through planned and coordinated actions. |
| Provision | A standard, rule or mandate established by a competent authority that forms part of a legal or regulatory framework. These provisions are specific elements within laws, decrees, regulations, or public policies, and are designed to guide, regulate, or establish procedures in particular areas of social, economic, or political life. |
| Law | It is a binding legal norm enacted by the Congress of the Republic, the country's legislative body. Its purpose is to regulate the conduct of citizens, establish rights and duties, and organise the structure and functioning of the State. Laws have a general and permanent character. |
| Decree | It is a legal norm issued by the President of the Republic in exercise of his constitutional and legal powers. Decrees are used to regulate laws, organise public administration, or create regulations with the force of law in special situations. They have a normative character and can address specific aspects of the administration or urgent situations. |
| Resolution | An administrative act issued by a public authority, such as a ministry or mayor's office, to resolve or regulate specific situations within its competence. Resolutions implement or enforce laws, decrees or regulations, and have a normative or administrative character, adjusting to particular contexts. |
| Agreements | These are administrative or regulatory acts issued by a public body, such as a municipal council or board of directors. They are used to establish rules, guidelines or provisions regulating specific aspects within the sphere of competence of the issuing entity. Agreements have a normative function in limited contexts. |
| International instruments | These are agreements, pacts, treaties, protocols, conventions or conventions signed between two or more states or subjects of international law. These instruments create legal obligations for the signatories and regulate relations between countries in various areas of common interest. |
| Public policy instruments | A set of actions, decisions and strategies designed and implemented by the government to address specific social problems or needs. This may include development plans, programmes, projects, CONPES (National Council for Economic and Social Policy), sectoral plans, guidelines and cooperation agreements, all aimed at improving living conditions and solving social problems. |