



# THE BASE of the mountain



Universidad  
del Valle  
Programa  
Institucional de Paz



**PASO COLOMBIA**  
Sustainable Peace for Colombia  
a program of One Earth Future

Rural Alternative School  
of Miranda, Cauca

**THE BASE** of the  
**mountain**



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Rural Alternative School  
of Miranda, Cauca

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Systematization Report



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## PRESENTATION

While travelling across the mountains of Colombia and exploring with *campesinos* (peasant farmers) the new economic opportunities that could be generated by the peace agreement under negotiation between the government and FARC in Havana, we —PASO Colombia’s team members— could already perceive the enthusiasm that this process was arousing among rural inhabitants. We could observe how new paths of hope began to open up among mothers, victims, youths, families, and social organizations that had witnessed the war for half a century.

In the case of Miranda, Cauca, the mountains had been, for years, the natural environment for FARC-EP combatants and the poorest *campesinos*, who were far removed from economic opportunities. Those who lived in the flatlands viewed these mountains with fear, whereas those who lived in the mountains viewed the plain with distrust, a place where public institutions, large agro-industries, infrastructure facilities, and economic opportunities were present. They felt excluded and abandoned by all the public and private actors who had fled the conflict in their region.

Today, we are very pleased to see how people undergoing a reincorporation process came down from the mountains to work side by side with *campesinos* from La Elvira *Campesino* Reserve Zone, in order to build a Rural Alternative School (ERA, for its acronym in Spanish). Teamwork has changed the way we all perceive things. In the process of growing food, *campesinos*, reincorporated ex-combatants, indigenous communities, partner companies, government agencies, and international organizations, have recognized each

other as brothers. We have new friends and we have been able to see how people who used to look at each other with distrust are now building bonds of solidarity.

The ERA of Miranda has become a collaborative platform where the efforts of those who had been separated by war converge. This new environment of solidarity has allowed the ERA to generate opportunities for inclusive development, becoming a national model to build territorial peace. Its collective infrastructure benefits the neighboring populations, and the projects developed are learning and collaboration scenarios for families committed to eradicating coca crops, and for indigenous and *campesinos*, thus helping to transform local agricultural practices and making them more sustainable.

The ERA of Miranda was the seed for a peacebuilding model that is now bearing fruit in 21 municipalities nationwide. Throughout this book, the reader will find a journey through moments, shared knowledge, and wisdom, and an insightful analysis of what has been achieved through the «learn-by-doing» method, in which participants learn “how to be and how to do” by working on collective productive projects. This model is based on the premise that the best way to “make things happen” is through a collaborative effort that leverages the assets of each territory, the most important of which is its people.

We thank the Institutional Peace Program of *Universidad del Valle*, that developed the systematization study presented in this document, whose results are expected to be a contribution to all those who work in peacebuilding.

We honor the memory of Luis Carlos Yunda, a reincorporated ERA student, who was killed and returned to the top of the mountain, this time a higher and peaceful one.

Juan Fernando Lucio, PASO Colombia Director  
Fernando Cruz, ERA Coordinator

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# Introduction





## INTRODUCTION

This document presents the results of a systematization process designed to analyze the development and learning experience in the ERA of Miranda, located in the department of Cauca. This experience is part of the work carried out by One Earth Future's Sustainable Peace for Colombia program, PASO Colombia, which has been present in various parts of the country since 2016, supporting initiatives for the economic reincorporation of ex-combatants, in partnership with other stakeholders.

Currently, there are 22 ERAs nationwide, established near the Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces (ETCR, for its acronym in Spanish), which were created as transition scenarios for ex-combatants, after the disarmament process carried out in the Transitional Normalization Zones (ZVTN, for its acronym in Spanish) and in the Transitional Normalization Points (PTN, for its acronym in Spanish), under the *Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Building of a Stable and Lasting Peace*, signed between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP guerrilla in November 2016. Over time, other living and working spaces for ex-combatants have also been established. These are the so-called New Reincorporation Points (NAR, for its acronym in Spanish). The ERA in Miranda is one of them.

This book collects the reflections on the experience of Miranda's ERA in the following way: the introduction presents the methodological and conceptual aspects of systematization, governance for peace, and territorial peace. The first chapter offers an introduction to the territorial context and the previous history of two of the main actors in the process: organized *campesinos* and



reincorporated ex-combatants. The second chapter introduces the organization that implemented the ERA process, with a general description of its work and the model developed. The third chapter showcases the development of the experience in the farm La Elvira, Miranda. And, finally, the reader will find the conclusions and recommendations presented by the team of the Institutional Peace Program of *Universidad del Valle*.

Colombia has had multiple experiences in peacebuilding processes arising from political negotiations. It is, perhaps, one of the countries in the world that has accumulated the widest experience in negotiation processes and the disarmament of illegal groups. However, the issue of Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR), as it has been labeled in international law, is one of the most challenging aspects in the development of peace accords. Up until now, and despite the fact that the concept integrates a comprehensive view of social and political dimensions—as well as those of physical and psychological rehabilitation, and community work—the entire institutional approach, that is, the reintegration route, had been characterized by an individualized approach (Ugaritza, 2013: 149).

Therefore, during the last two decades, the Colombian state has managed to consolidate the institutional framework needed to carry out disarmament processes. There is a state agency and a designed reintegration route, which was refined along the learning process. Also, new elements were incorporated, such as the collective dimensions of the ex-combatant reintegration process. All this features have assigned a great value to the country's previous experience.

However, in the negotiation process with the FARC-EP guerrilla, it was agreed to make a shift in approach and to refer to the process as Reincorporation, in order to emphasize a substantial difference: that the process should be designed collectively and not just for each individual ex-combatant; in other words, that FARC-EP was aiming to transition to a civilian and unarmed political life, with the organizational model that was at the basis of its insurgent movement. Therein lay the difference, which became a challenge in terms of rethinking the route and design of intervention policies. Even today, four years after the signing of the agreement, not all the answers exist.

The development of ERAs as a model, which to date has served as a foundation for promoting other similar experiences in the country, was structured by PASO Colombia in the course of the experience of Miranda's ERA. It was

an initial exercise that combined the idea of an Alternative School and a Diverse Farm. This made it possible to address, in practice, the challenges of economic reincorporation, understood as a collective aspiration that involves various types of efforts. It is, above all, a work at different levels, which brings together a multiplicity of stakeholders, and which must be understood as part of a broader process of territorial peacebuilding.

Now, after three years of work, this experience has become a reference model, providing some answers on the implications of reincorporation as a bid for economic and political transformation. It invites us to analyze how this particular type of intervention collects some of the lessons learned in the last decades about peacebuilding in the country. For this reason, this document explains how the ERA evolved until becoming an innovative approach that integrates answers to some relevant aspects that determine the sustainability of institutional intervention processes and the development of productive enterprises for small farmers in the Colombian countryside.

One of the aspects of this commitment made by PASO Colombia has been the understanding of the reincorporation process as an associative enterprise that should engage different types of stakeholders and that calls for a coordinated action between different types of institutions and entities, according to specific needs.

The core of the ERA model has been its commitment to the integration — achieved through learning and work— of *campesino* communities and ex-combatants. The case of the ERA in Miranda is an example that underscores some aspects related to the wealth and complexity of the territory and population of Northern Cauca as a sub-region, as well as some day-to-day reflections on the impacts of war and the possibilities that arise from the conviction and will to build peace.

## Systematization: challenges and learning

Systematization is both a work methodology and an objective. It has been frequently used in the social sciences as a study alternative that allows for the collection of results, either total or partial, of intervention processes or collective actions. In general, it is implemented to produce memory of an experience, to make assessments, to discover nuances and transformations, and to gather lessons.

According to the work on experiences in human development conducted by Eizaguirre, Urrutia, and Askunze (2004), systematization is a critical interpretation of an experience whose ordering and reconstruction discovers or reveals the logic of the experienced process, as well as the intervening factors, the relationship between them, and the explanation of why they interact in a particular way.

The purpose of this exercise is to nourish that critical interpretation with the voices of those who participate in the process, in such a way that the diverse outlooks and experiences—which are relevant to achieve a broader understanding—are integrated.

The exercise was also aimed at building an external perspective and making recommendations, so that the lessons learned from this experience can be used to contribute to academic and public policy discussions on the issue of reincorporation and, more broadly, to the political transition faced by the country. In the international sphere, this experience can serve as an example of the particularities of the Colombian case and contribute to its analysis.

More specifically, this case study allows us to understand the diversity of factors, conditions, and circumstances that, in general, surround reincorporation, and that have been the key axes of this particular project.

In addition to being part of the learning and evaluation process—which is desirable in any intervention—the assessment of the transformations produced by this exercise is useful to show how creative alternatives, such as ERAs, are an answer to some of the challenges currently faced by Colombian society. The systematization of this experience allows us to dimension and demonstrate in detail the implications of finding ways to consolidate initiatives of broader scope with respect to reincorporation programs and policies, and also as part of the peacebuilding process. In the field of peace studies, these initiatives are called “peaceful empowerments.”

## Methodology

This text is based on a qualitative research carried out with the tools offered by ethnography. In this process, we built an analytical matrix of the ERA exercise and, through the method of methodological triangulation—which involved the examination of individual narratives, dialogues among actors, observation, and discussions—it was possible to contrast and complement different viewpoints.

The systematization is built on permanent dialogues with the protagonists, in order to understand how they experienced this process, which not only represents their daily lives, but also belongs (although in fragments) to the construction of the country's political history.

The main information sources of this systematization are the dialogues and interviews—which collect direct testimonies from stakeholders—field observations, and bibliographical reviews. An important part of the exercise highlights oral sources to evidence the dialogic relationship between protagonists of the experience and the researchers who convey the meaning of their voices.

We also carried out an economic analysis that gathered quantitative information on different production lines developed in the ERA and its preliminary results. From this exercise, it is possible to measure their contributions, in terms of learning, to entrepreneurship and to the sustainability of economic reincorporation alternatives.

A small part of the data used in this analysis was collected during field work, through interviews and observation, but most of it was provided by PASO Colombia, from its own evaluation, monitoring, and information management processes.

The research was carried out between June 2019 and July 2020, through workshops, documented informal conversations, focus groups, and semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Forty people participated and offered their perceptions, critical analyses, memories, projections, and questions about their experiences during the development of the ERA in Miranda<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> We conducted 7 interviews with reincorporated ex-combatants, 9 interviews with community stakeholders, 7 interviews with institutional stakeholders, 2 interviews with neighbors of La Elvira farm, 5 personal interviews with PASO Colombia team members, 6 focus groups with

In the workshops held with members of CEPRODET and ASPROZONAC, we used social cartography methodologies and addressed the following topics:

- **Workshop 1:** we addressed the historical reconstruction of the moments that make up the ERA experience, in order to establish a timeline with the community. Additionally, we explored the difficulties and lessons of the ERA.
- **Workshop 2:** we conducted a critical analysis of the events that represented achievements and difficulties in the individual, productive, and relational dimensions. Then, we analyzed the conditions that were conducive to these events.
- **Workshop 3:** in this workshop, we presented the findings of the two previous workshops and received feedback from the community. Additionally, we worked in subgroups to learn about future projections of ERA participants and to gather ideas for designing the mural, planned as a community product of the systematization.

We also conducted activities of participant observation, document review, analysis of collected materials, triangulation, and team discussions, in order to synthesize and draft the final version of this document.

As part of the systematization process, we also built a room for community use in the ERA, and we designed and painted a mural as a symbol of the reincorporation process. It was made by ERA participants with the support of plastic arts students from *Universidad del Valle*.

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PASO Colombia team members, 3 workshops with participants from La Elvira *campesino* reserve zone and reincorporated ex-combatants of the ERA. In addition to participant observation and written reports from 9 field visits, we mapped productive projects and conducted an economic study of ERA's productive projects (see Annex 2. List of oral sources).

## Conceptual perspectives of systematization: from peacebuilding to territorial peace and governance for peace

The conceptual and analytical perspective of systematization is closely linked to the temporal, spatial, political, and intellectual context in which it has been developed. Particularly, we need to consider the hypothesis that it is closely related, on the one hand, to the presence and impact of the armed conflict in a particular territory and, on the other hand, to the transitional phase in which the Colombian state, represented by the government of President Juan Manuel Santos, and FARC-EP, are conducting negotiations to put an end to the protracted armed conflict, in order to advance peacebuilding “from below.”

In effect, several generations of Colombians have experienced the illusion of the “advent” of peace, understood as a political agreement that has been relatively successful, but full of expectations and uncertainties about its materialization.

The possibilities of success in negotiating and sustaining peace are linked to a set of conditions and assumptions, one of which is the object of the experience and of its systematization: the reincorporation of formerly FARC-EP active combatants —now members of a concrete experience— developed and accompanied by other stakeholders, such as *campesinos*, community members of Miranda, and OEF’s Sustainable Peace for Colombia program, better known as PASO Colombia.

But the concrete reincorporation experience and process cannot be detached from the progress, materialization, and fulfillment of the Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Building of a Stable and Lasting Peace and from peacebuilding itself. This experience is both a part and an example of this process.

Certainly, the prolonged and complex nature of the Colombian conflict, as well as the diversity of attempts to overcome it, both through military means and negotiated arrangements, explain why it is conceived as a long-term process and why the new peace Accord seems to promote peace as a “overarching idea” —almost an imperative— in this phase of Colombia’s history.

It is, therefore, an effort that has lasted, and in which at least two or three generations have been engaged, with varied achievements (Villarraga, 2016). The result of this process is a broad and rich tradition of “negotiations”

and “peacebuilding experiences” at various scales, that result in processes of empowerment, affirmation, and resistance, as well as in political and institutional transformations<sup>2</sup>, the creation of institutions, and the construction of social and political fabrics, which in some cases have had protective impacts over the population.

In each case, the peacebuilding process has coexisted with various forms of violence and with their devastating social, political, economic, and cultural impacts. It is precisely these impacts that motivated the search for the new Agreement in 2016, which has not eliminated the prolongation of conflict and violence, a strong indicator of the depth and complexity of this phenomenon.

Related to this, a second aspect links the process to the territorial nature of the conflict and to the widely studied fact that the conflict expressed and developed itself in various ways throughout the national territory, not only as a result of the strategy implemented by insurgents, but also of the specific forms of regional state building and the strategies executed by local power groups (González, 2016).

Therefore, we need to remember that peace accords and the peacebuilding process, in general, have a transversal relationship with the different dimensions of regional development and formation. At the same time, its deployment as an agenda for change implies transformations in the territorial level, as well as new forms of action by different stakeholders, which now include ex-combatants undergoing a reincorporation process.

This essential process of territorial transformation introduces challenges, especially for the state and its institutional capacities and willingness to achieve—through policies, plans, and programs—a coherent public management that is able to overcome the root causes of conflict, to open a new phase to address civil unrest, and to search for a more inclusive society.

In this light, the idea of “peacebuilding” is a horizon and a purpose, but it is also a path, like the very notion of peace, and it is only possible to reduce the abstractness of its meaning by linking it to the polysemic concept of peace (Alvarez, 2017), which refers, at least, to the following dimensions or “facets”:

<sup>2</sup> For example, if we consider the failed negotiations held from 1982 to 1985 between President Belisario Betancur and the insurgency, starting with FARC, there was a first political reform that established elections for mayors, decentralization, and several participation mechanisms. In the context of the 1989-90 agreements, the Constitutional Assembly was created and the Constitution of 1991 was enacted, which represented a political and economic change whose effects are still felt today..

- **Negative peace:** understood as the elimination of the recourse to direct violence in all areas (macro-, medium- and micro-levels) as well as in conflicts (political, social, interpersonal), and to conflict resolution through different means (political, legal, negotiated, concerted, and with support from other parties).
- **Structural (positive) peace:** construction of more just and inclusive economic and social relations; reduction of extreme inequalities, which engender resentment and produce forms of “structural violence” that beget—and above all reproduce— various conflicts, or even lead to the “justification” of violence.

**Cultural peace:** as a recognition of plurality, diversity, multi and interculturality, and the construction of the values of respect for difference and the capacity to live together in diversity; therefore, it signals a recognition of the human dignity, the right to the enjoyment of rights, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

From a different perspective, and according to John Paul Lederach (2007), peacebuilding “incorporates axes of analysis and action that cannot be disregarded when working for peace and reconciliation”:

- The first axis to be considered is the articulation between grassroots initiatives and the efforts of social, regional and national leaders, top government officials, representatives of the armed actors, and international diplomacy.
- The second axis is the integration of the different dimensions of conflict, from the personal and immediate realm, passing through interpersonal and community relations and structural and ideological subsystems, up to the systemic background that involves the society as a whole.
- The third axis is the need to think about peacebuilding and reconciliation as an effort that needs to provide a coherent and strategic answer to short-term (escalation of violence, humanitarian crisis), medium-term (structural problems of society, disarmament, governance), and long-term challenges (reconciliation)” (Lederach, 2007).

Nevertheless, it is not a matter of taking stock of what has happened and of the progress and difficulties of peacebuilding as a complex and polysemic challenge, but rather of understanding that the particular exercise presented in this document is immersed in a broader, more demanding, and long-term



dynamic, whose successful achievement or development is opening the way and nourishing with valuable facts and arguments the social, political, institutional, and cultural mobilization that is at the base of the ERA in Miranda. In other words, its uniqueness is not only an example, but also a motivating factor with a demonstrative effect.

### *Territorial Peace*

Given the highly territorial nature of the conflict, its transformation from the polysemic perspective is connected to the also novel —though insufficiently developed in the agreement— idea of “territorial peace” (Álvarez, 2017). In principle, this idea should be understood as a process aimed at building several forms of peace —negative, positive, and cultural— in, with, and from the territories and their key stakeholders.

Although these processes (as is obvious) depend on decisions issued by the central state and national dynamics, they are connected to the implementation, appropriation, and development that take place in the territorial level. It is precisely at this level where the experience studied was carried out. This, like many other experiences that are seen as too specific or even exceptional, probably show “the tip of the iceberg”, that is, of a broader constructive and positive process. At times, conventional views and the notoriety of other negative events, such as the assassinations of social leaders and reincorporated ex-combatants, do not allow us to see these experiences or to measure their importance.

For this reason, it is important to carry out an exercise that reveals the richness of an experience in which a particular reincorporation process feeds “peacebuilding” and “territorial peace” efforts, amidst difficulties and threats, but also of opportunities and multiple mobilizations of diverse wills that strive for its consolidation.

To summarize: the initiative studied contributes to negative peace, by guaranteeing that the reincorporated participants remain in the process, now as agents of peace; it also contributes to positive peace through processes of economic and productive inclusion which, although partial, point to a possible route for their sustainability; and to cultural peace, as it contributes to dynamics of reconciliation, dialogue, and recognition between stakeholders in the territory that were previously confronted in the context of armed conflict.

At this point, it should be noted that although the category of territorial peace emerges in the context of the Peace Agreement and its implementation, it has a predominantly centralist nature, as it essentially involves the two parties to the negotiation: the government and its central institutions, and the insurgent force. The text of the Peace Agreement demonstrates the relevance of engaging agents from decentralized state levels (governorships and mayor's offices) and, to a lesser extent, other social sectors (community, businesses, and civil society).

Nevertheless, as an expression of peacebuilding dynamics, in general, and territorial peace, in particular, during these 4 years there has been a wide political, institutional, and cultural mobilization from the territories (governorships, communities, companies, universities, and international cooperation agencies), to support and bolster some components of the Agreement, such as reincorporation.

### *The Strategies*

Following a positive, or more effective, path to build territorial peace entails a set of strategies that allow for the articulation of the dynamics of territorial and institutional development. In this path, the role of territorial authorities is crucial to incorporate concrete components of the Peace Agreement and peacebuilding within Development Plans.

For instance, it is crucial that local governments coordinate their agendas with ongoing processes and experiences derived from the Agreement, such as Development Plans with a Territorial Focus (PDET, for its acronym in Spanish). However, in terms of reincorporation, everything was limited to the guidelines defined by the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) and to a centralist dynamic that does not take into account the diversity and particularity of territorial processes<sup>3</sup>.

In a certain way, within the general framework of the Peace Accord, the issue was left in the hands of initiatives deployed from the territories by departmental and municipal governments, social peace movements, reincorporated ex-

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<sup>3</sup> An example of this has been the reactivation of Territorial Peace, Coexistence, Reconciliation and Non-Stigmatization Councils and the progressive participation of reincorporated ex-combatants, or the Reincorporation Roundtable, installed in Valle del Cauca to attend to the needs of ex-combatants living in this department, despite the fact that it was not initially planned because no ETCR was established in that department.

combatants themselves, and organizations of the international community, which have a presence in the territories.

The particularities and complexity of this process, its partial progress, and sometimes the obstacles or setbacks, are understood or put into perspective when read from the concept of “imperfect peace,” proposed by Francisco Muñoz (2014). This is an analytic approach that conceives peace as a process that creates multiple, unfinished, and progressive spaces of coexistence, nonviolence, equity, inclusion, solidarity, and respect. This concept is based on the recognition of conflict as the foundation of human and social relations, and of complexity not only in its origin and evolution, but also in its experience and interpretation by various stakeholders (Muñoz and Bolaños, 2011).

Muñoz himself (2014) coined the concept of peaceful empowerment, pointing out that it has a twofold definition: first, understood as an awareness of the capacities that we human beings have for a peaceful transformation of conflicts; and, second, as all those processes in which peace, the peaceful transformation of conflicts, the satisfaction of needs, or the development of capacities, occupy the greatest possible personal, public, and political space.

These experiences, such as the one described in this text, which demonstrate the process of reincorporation and gathering of different stakeholders, are therefore localized and unique. They underscore the unfinished and partial — sometimes contradictory— meaning of a process that moves forward amidst threats, and even in spite of occasional setbacks.

It is important to point out that these experiences reaffirm the constant will to move forward and to follow a path of deconstructing violence and creating small spaces of positive, negative, and cultural peace, whose stakeholders include not only the reincorporated ex-combatants, but also groups of *campesinos*, victims, and community members, as well as others stakeholders linked to institutions, NGOs, business organizations, public servants, and government agents.

## *Governance to build territorial peace in Colombia*

An important category, both as a starting point for PASO Colombia's proposal and for the analytical perspective of the Peace Program of *Universidad del Valle*, is that of governance linked to peacebuilding and to the very idea of territorial peace that gained traction in the negotiation of the 2016 Peace Agreement (Álvarez, 2017).

The issue of governability and governance takes us to consider the context and the process of the Colombian armed conflict, the factors that explained its protraction, and the territorial dynamic itself, which at the same time appear as key assets to overcome conflict and achieve a peaceful transformation.

The territorial nature of the Colombian conflict and the diverse ways in which it has evolved have already been pointed out, in accordance with regional histories. In order to analyze this issue, it is especially important to see how state building has operated and how political and social dynamics of the territory have influenced its configuration, particularly those associated with violence and armed conflict.

To summarize, the hypothesis proposed by the conflict researcher and scholar, Fernán González (2016), seems plausible. Taking up Mann, he affirms that “state centralization does not suppress, but rather articulates in a different way, the previously existing regional and local powers, whose struggles and factions end up shaping the form of the central state.” This idea pinpoints the “hybrid nature of the Colombian state.” Accordingly, other analyses:

Have suggested using the term “governance,” which deviates from the concept of governability, understood as the government's ability to respond effectively to social problems; instead, governance would refer to the interaction between the rulers and the governed and the balance between the state and a functioning civil society (González, 2016).

In effect, governability refers to a set of attributes that pertain, on the one hand, to the actions and leadership displayed by the state and government agents with recognized legitimacy and representativeness in order to guide the public agenda and lead the approval and execution of public policies; and, on the other hand, to the ability of political and social stakeholders to participate and influence in the definition and execution of such policies. These conditions of governance entail an institutional component linked to planning and management capacities that are not only efficient, but also

effective and transparent, and that make it possible —through public and political leadership— to face and overcome challenges and demands related to comprehensive development (Álvarez, 2010).

More specifically, governance for peace implies a peace agenda (partially represented in the Peace Agreement and its development), as well as effective leadership and political will, institutional capacity for its development, and a broad social and institutional participation and mobilization toward peace as a common purpose.

In summary, and beginning with the conclusion, we can affirm that this post-agreement stage has produced contradictory dynamics with respect to the governability and governance for “peacebuilding,” both in governmental political leadership and the institutional framework required to fulfill and develop peacebuilding efforts in and from the territories. Nonetheless, in the time elapsed since the signing of the Peace Agreement, we have been able to observe interesting experiences of political support, both in departmental and municipal development plans, and in National Development Plans.

On the other hand, with the exception of the item of Victims and its components of Justice, Truth, Reparation and Non-Repetition and, partially, of the issue of Comprehensive Rural Reform —in which novel and more or less precise institutional forms were defined— the Peace Agreement did not contemplate the creation of an appropriate institutional framework for its fulfillment. This is particularly apparent in the so-called perspective of “territorial peace,” which in fact required a change in state organization (Rinde, 2016). This is also the case for reincorporation, the purposes and scope of which will be presented later.

This situation raises the question of the place and meaning of governance which, although related to the attributes of governability, implies a broader perspective, both in the understanding of power dynamics and in the forms of regulation and construction of the social order, at different territorial levels.

The governance approach has made its way and gained relevance, given the very limitations of governability as a descriptive and normative category, and it should be noted that the notions and approaches of this concept have been diversifying.

The starting point and mainstream view understands governance as a form of coordination between state powers, civil society, and business organizations.

According to a well-known Latin America scholar, Aguilar (2016: 70-74), the notion has made its way for various reasons:

- First, the acknowledgment of the incapacity of governments to govern current societies and to respond to the challenges and demands that go beyond legitimacy and efficiency, demonstrate “insufficiencies” in the way they respond to and address the transformation of public problems.
- Secondly, because of the complexity and persistence of social problems and demands of the citizenry, for which the action and capacity of the state is insufficient.
- Thirdly, because of an evident decrease of confidence from the citizenry in the capacity of governments to respond to this set of challenges and demands, and (it could be added) because of the proliferation of power sources with the capacity to support, reinforce, or hinder the development of policies and programs.

In this way, governance implies the recognition of non-state-centered forms of power, regulation and influence that participate, either directly or indirectly, in the dynamics of “control” and “social order,” and therefore appear as a key to their own transformation. This is true, especially if the purpose is to respond to challenges in a constructive manner and to overcome violent conflicts, in accordance with democratic values and ideals, and the fulfillment of human rights and inclusion.

The concept of governance has different definitions. For example, Uzata (2014) states that it is “a characteristic of a society or community in terms of presenting a certain type of structures, networks, and institutions that enable horizontal interactions, exchanges, and cooperation between the government and various stakeholders in public policy processes.” Therefore, it is a quality of the political and social system.

Uzata concludes that “the governance system refers to the formal institutional and organizational structure in which the modern state makes binding decisions” (2014: 4). He also takes up the definition of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which conceives governance as “the set of mechanisms, processes, relationships, and institutions through which citizens and groups coordinate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and reconcile their differences.” This concept involves three key instances: “the

state (political and governmental institutions), civil society organizations, and the private sector” (Uzata, 2014: 13).

To summarize, there has been a wide academic development on governance, whose core idea is that of generating scenarios of more horizontal interactions between the government and other stakeholders. However, as Cerrillo (2005) points out in a text that includes part of the discussion, especially in the European Union, diverse approaches to the concept are evident. When referring to the place of the state, Cerrillo introduces several approaches proposed by different authors:

1. The state has lost the power to govern and, therefore, governance is the product of self-organized networks and diverse powers (Rhodes, quoted in Cerrillo, 2005: 15).
2. The power of the state has been reduced and, in the context of a legitimacy vacuum and a multitude of institutions, governance is expressed as co-management, co-direction, and co-guidance (Kooiman, quoted in Cerrillo, 2005: 15).
3. A form of convergence between hierarchical (state) control and social self-regulation emerges (Max Plank Institute, Maintz, Scharp, quoted in Cerrillo, 2005: 15).
4. A governance in which the role of the state in political relations remains dominant or pre-eminent (Pierre and Otole, quoted in Cerrillo, 2005: 16).

These perspectives would respond to different backgrounds and political and cultural traditions, but they are nonetheless connected to the perspective of multilevel governance; that is, with different dynamics and forms of regulation, according to spatial and territorial spheres, which currently go from the global to the continental, national, regional, local, and sectoral spheres. This is also expressed in different dimensions or aspects. For instance, in the economic, environmental, cultural, technological, and political ones.

These conceptual assumptions serve to define governance for peace as a category that applies not only to the national level, but, in this specific case, to local and territorial levels, as it involves the participation of institutional, social, and political stakeholders who operate in that sphere and “enable the horizontal interactions, exchanges, and forms of cooperation” around

the construction of processes, dynamics, policies, and programs that shape peacebuilding perspectives from the local level.

It can be added that governance for peace encompasses the possibility of promoting interactions between diverse stakeholders who stand on very different shores in a concrete political or territorial scenario, without them necessarily having an ideological affinity. This implies cooperation around a “common” or “public” good, such as peace, with its polysemy and complexity.

For this reason, we propose a relevant category to understand the experience of the ERA in Miranda, as an example of the strength and possibilities that this initiative opens up from social organizations. In this case, we start with the capacity for action displayed by PASO Colombia, and its enhancement in the partnership with CEPRODET and ASPROZONAC, around the common purpose of reincorporation and reconciliation.

Secondly, because of the relevance of the initiative, the capacity of its promoters to engage in dialogue, and the construction of agreements regarding issues that are key to advancing on the path of violence deconstruction, through affirmative actions and, in this case, reincorporation and reconciliation, in a territory where conflict has been present and which now is committed to “peacebuilding.” These agreements have been made with the following community and institutional stakeholders:

- National governmental actors: The Colombian Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN); the National Land Agency (ANT, for its acronym in Spanish); the National Learning Service (SENA, for its acronym in Spanish); the National Reincorporation Council (CNR, for its acronym in Spanish); and territorial stakeholders: municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Northern Cauca (AMUNORCA, for its acronym in Spanish), *Empresa Municipal de Miranda* (EMMIR), and the Peace Secretariat of Valle del Cauca.
- With the business sector: Federation of Coffee Growers of Cauca, Hugo Restrepo, Cavasa, and Banco Agrario.
- The academy: *Universidad del Cauca*; Uniconfauca; the Advanced School for Public Administration (ESAP, for its acronym in Spanish); and *Universidad del Valle*.
- With international entities and organizations: UN Verification Mission; CIAT; World Food Programme (WFP); Catalan Agency for



Peace; Peacebuilding Fund (PBF); and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

In the specific process of the farm La Elvira and the ERA of Miranda, this perspective is, at the same time, a strategy and a work approach managed by PASO Colombia, and incorporated and empowered by the collective of reincorporated ex-combatants and by a *campesino* organization which, based on an associative productive experience —through dialogues, agreements, and exchanges— aimed at consolidating a collaborative network around the ERA.

Specifically, this network has enabled associative and collective production dynamics by providing sustainability to the chain that links production with consumption, distribution, and exchange, thus enhancing and strengthening the conditions for the economic reincorporation of ex-combatants and a sustainable development of the ERA.

At its core, this network, along with its dialogues, micro agreements, and actions, contributes to peacebuilding, understood in the three ways previously mentioned: by producing an institutional support that helps “contain” the risk of ex-combatants resorting to arms or being affected by the resurgence of armed violence; of positive peace, as an experience of human development; and of cultural peace, as a scenario for mutual recognition and reconciliation.



# Chapter I

The peace process and economic and social reincorporation in northern Cauca



## CHAPTER I

# THE PEACE PROCESS AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REINCORPORATION IN NORTHERN CAUCA

### Northern Cauca

One of the great paradoxes of the Colombian armed conflict is intensified in the department of Cauca: the general description of the problems that affect the region of Northern Cauca starts with the recognition of its own wealth. First of all, this is a multicultural territory, characterized by the coexistence of indigenous *Nasa* and *Misak* populations, organized around 21 reservations or *resguardos*; Afro-Colombian communities, located in populated areas and territories organized in 43 Community Councils; and mestizo *campesino* populations, whose organizations struggle to earn recognition as political subjects of rights and to access land through mechanisms of territorial autonomy, such as the *Campesino Reserve Zones* (ZRC, for its acronym in Spanish) or the Agro-Food Territories.

These three population groups seek to strengthen their capacities to manage and endure within the territory, despite five decades of internal armed conflict that have produced strong manifestations of violence in the municipalities of the region.

Another component of its wealth is its geographical diversity, the fertility of its soils, and the impact of a complex geography on the living dynamics of its inhabitants. The region is made up of municipalities located between the western and central mountain ranges. The eastern limit is marked by the mountain range of the Natural Park *Nevado del Huila*, which acts as a border between the departments of Huila, Tolima, and Cauca. There, we find the municipalities of Jambaló, Caldono, Toribío, Caloto, and Miranda.

Toward the west, in the flatland surrounding the Cauca River, we find the municipalities of Puerto Tejada, Guachené, Villarrica, Padilla, and Santander de Quilichao. The border is located in the eastern side of the western mountain range, where Suárez and Buenos Aires are located. This point connects with the Natural Park *Los Farallones*, which, through the Naya River, communicates the mountain area of the inter-Andean valley with the Pacific coast and the outlet to the sea.

Another relevant feature is the geographical, social, economic, and political connection of the region to Southern Valle, as well as to conflict-affected municipalities, such as Florida and Pradera, Palmira, Cali, and Jamundí, which have been part of strategic corridors, through the central and western mountain ranges and the outlet to the sea, respectively.





The region is also characterized by a relative dynamism of local economies, forged around the *campesino* economies of mestizo, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities. These communities have developed their own economic forms, linked to local, regional, national, and international markets (Universidad del Valle, 2013).

The expansion of illegal economies based on coca, marijuana, and poppy crops, that occurred since the 1970s, and more recently with illegal mining, has been crucial in the configuration of this region and especially in the development and protraction of the armed conflict.

## Legacy of the armed conflict in northern Cauca

Since the founding of FARC-EP in 1964, which took place on the other side of the mountain range, in Tolima, the department of Cauca has been one of the central stages of armed conflict. At different times, all armed actors, both legal and illegal, have converged on the northern zone of this territory. Its communities have lived and continue to experience directly the impacts of the diverse repertoires of violence that the country has known in its contemporary history.

With certain nuances, as those related to the long history of the constitution of indigenous resguardos (Bonilla, 1977), we can affirm that this is one of those sub-regional scenarios that integrated to the national state *in* and *from* the contemporary armed conflict. This as a result of its population and territorial configuration, and of the types of regulatory orders of local power in different local, township, and sub-township spaces (González, Bolívar, Vásquez, 2003).

Throughout these years, the armed conflict, in general, and the strategies adopted by insurgents in this region, in particular, amalgamated with conflicts associated with land ownership and the exploitation of natural resources, and also with those derived from the consolidation of new forms of agro-industrial development.

Since the 1980s, the importance of illegal economies as a source of funding for insurgency has grown, initially with coca and marijuana crops, and more recently with illegal mining. In this way, the configuration and development of this region and the relationship between communities and the national and regional state have been significantly influenced by actions of the insurgency and the dynamics of armed conflict.



This means, among other things, that for five decades, different illegal armed groups have strengthened their ranks, networks, and military consolidation with the participation of persons or groups from these territories, challenging the state's control and generating one of the most serious crises in terms of victims and impacts of different nature and scope on these populations and their territories.

This includes the protraction of diverse problems (poverty, inequality, environmental deterioration, and institutional backwardness) and conflicts: between communities and the state, between communities and landowners, among communities themselves, and between communities and illegal actors, including the insurgency.

In addition, these conflicts intertwine with the features of a multi-ethnic territory, where each population group maintains or has developed aspirations of territorial autonomy, sovereignty, and self-government, and has productive bids derived from their relationship to the land. This has made Cauca a region with a great diversity of conflicts, which are deeply anchored in the memory and representation of otherness, have a long history, and are partially connected to the dynamics of conflict.

Each of these population groups has been strengthening their identity, the limits of their territories (or their territorial aspirations), their political and self-government practices, their participation in social mobilization processes, and their autonomous practices, such as self-education or use of their native language (in the particular case of the Nasa).

## Peaceful empowerments

One of the key aspects of territorial peacebuilding, paraphrasing De Sousa Santos (2010), is the dynamism and intensity of local democracy, and its integration with broader agendas. In Northern Cauca there are various social actors that have gained organizational capacity, political influence, and citizen participation in multiple scenarios, both through institutional and non-violent de facto means, such as forms of peaceful resistance, taking over public spaces and lands, and protests.

It should be noted that the different stakeholders that make up civil society, through various forms of organization and social mobilization, gained space in the midst of armed conflict, increasing their capacities to manage networks

and shared agendas with other political actors, such as political parties and national organizational platforms. In many cases, they have also received support from third sector agencies.

Among these organizational processes, multiple forms of peaceful empowerments or, as Esperanza Hernández (2009) calls them, socially-based civilian peace initiatives, have stood out. In other words, these are initiatives aimed at: offering resistance to the integration of violence as part of daily life; strengthening identity roots linked to environmental protection; reinforcing political organization to confront armed actors in a non-violent manner and to limit their territorial influence; and opposing resistance to illegal economies (Hernández, 2009).

This production of collective life, that is, of those features that characterize and define the “communal sphere,” has been part of the construction of identities that have been claimed from the enactment of territorial and autonomy rights granted by the 1991 Constitution, specifically for indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations.

An example of this is the Nasa Project, which earned national recognition for having won the National Peace Prize in 2000<sup>5</sup>. For indigenous peoples in general, and for the Nasa population, in particular, the appropriation of their life plans and the incorporation of the concept of *sumak kawsay*, or good living (as it has been translated into Spanish), in their community principles, is a peaceful commitment in itself.

In this same way, the indigenous guard of the 16 cabildos won the same recognition in 2004<sup>6</sup>. Since then, the Nasa population has strengthened its organizational capacity, internal articulation, and political weight on the national landscape, to the point of being recognized as a powerful actor in regional and national social mobilizations, with support from the public opinion, center-left political parties, and human rights entities.

The struggle of Afro-Colombian communities to defend their territories has also been important. Through internal coordination among community

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<sup>5</sup> The award was given for “its contribution to peace based on the defense and construction of processes built upon the exercise of participative democracy, the consolidation of own organizations, and the autonomy and neutrality of their territories vis-à-vis the different armed actors.”

<sup>6</sup> For protecting their territories from the action of armed groups without it being conceived as “a police body, but a humanitarian and civil resistance mechanism” (Fescol, National Peace Prize, N.D.)

councils, peaceful takeovers of public spaces, and participation in negotiation scenarios, they engaged the state in allocating resources for social investment in their territories and expanding their representation in local and departmental deliberative bodies.

The Afro-Colombian communities have also gained political leverage and weight in the overall landscape of social organizations and popular movements in the country. One of their representatives, Francia Elena Márquez, is one of the most recognized Afro-Colombian leaders in Latin America, was awarded with the Goldman Prize in 2018 for her defense of environmental rights over mining, and is the current president of the National Peace Council.

In the case of *campesinos*, there is a large number of municipal associations, organized around the constitution of *Campesino Reserve Zones* (ZRC, for its acronym in Spanish) and Agro-Food Territories. One of them is the protagonist of this history and its work and achievements will be detailed later.

Although these initiatives have been circumscribed to the particular forms of action of each socio/cultural group, there is a relative consensus that the signing of the Peace Agreement produced a substantive change. Despite the ongoing tension produced by the presence of armed groups and their disputes to control illegal economies and territories, social organizations have aimed their sociopolitical advocacy work and their collective action at implementing the Peace Agreement, in terms of peacebuilding from and with local stakeholders.

There have been different expression of this process, namely: the interaction with ex-combatants undergoing a process of reincorporation in the three ETCRs located in three municipalities of the region<sup>7</sup>; the participation in the formulation of PDETs; the commitment to the National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS, for its acronym in Spanish); and the creation of spaces for dialogue and negotiation aimed at building territorial agendas around the demand for the implementation of the Peace Agreement, as a way of gaining political leverage for their broader demands, which have been present for several decades.

Since the beginning of negotiations between the government and FARC-EP and the 2014 ceasefire, civil society initiatives have become particularly dynamic and the scenarios for dialogue on interethnic and intercultural

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<sup>7</sup> Northern Cauca hosts the ETCRs of Monterredondo, in Miranda; La Elvira, in Buenos Aires; and Los Monos, in Caldon

conflicts have started to gain space<sup>8</sup>. Organizations for victims (promoted by Law 1448 of 2011), women, and youth have also gained importance in the last decade.

In summary, the progress in terms of organizational and bargaining capacity among these organizations has given Cauca a nationwide visibility, due to the persistence of the armed conflict, but also to the dynamism and strength of its social organizations, which are of crucial importance in the processes of social mobilization and civil society strengthening in the country.

### ***ASPROZONAC: La Elvira farm and the Campesino Reserve Zone***

The history of Miranda's ERA is associated with the acquisition of the farm La Elvira, in 2016, by *campesinos* who are members of the local organization ASPROZONAC.

Its origin in Corinto and Miranda has a direct relationship with the history that has marked the region, specifically, with the differentiation between the political sphere of *campesinos* and that of indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. The axis of the national political agenda for *campesinos* has been their struggle to earn recognition as subjects of rights as a precondition to achieve an effective access to land and to basic conditions of comprehensive development.

Their demands have gained renewed dynamism from their coordination with national (or third level) organizations, such as the National Association of *Campesino* Reserve Zones (ANZORC, for its acronym in Spanish) and the National Unified Agricultural Trade Union Federation (FENSUAGRO, for its acronym in Spanish). For ASPROZONAC, the participation in national mobilization scenarios that positioned the agrarian agenda in the public debate, such as the National Agrarian Strike of 2013 and the National Strike of 2019, has been important.

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<sup>8</sup> These include: The Interethnic and Intercultural Roundtable and the Intercultural School of Peace Benicio Flor, from the municipality of Suárez, that gathers members of the Association of Community Councils of Suárez in leadership training processes; the Cabildo Cerro Tijeras; the *Campesino* Association Ascordillera; and the Regional Peace Space (ERP, for its acronym in Spanish), which is part of the Network of Initiatives and Communities for Peace, promoted by peace initiatives and social organizations including the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC, for its acronym in Spanish); the Association of Indigenous Cabildos of Northern Cauca (ACIN, for its acronym in Spanish); the Integration Committee of the Colombian Massif (CIMA, for its acronym in Spanish); and Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres.

Regarding the issue of access to land and territorial autonomy, the political stake of organized *campesinos* to advocate for recognition as subjects of political rights has been made, in some cases, through positioning the legal figure of *Campesino Reserve Zones* (ZRCs). This figure, established by Law 160 of 1994, also created the Family Agriculture Unit (UAF, for its acronym in Spanish) as a basic land unit which, according to regional and municipal characteristics, can ensure the subsistence, production, and social reproduction of *campesino* families.

Although only six legally constituted ZRCs existed nationwide as of May 2017, there are 64 in the process of being constituted (with some applications filed in Cauca) and others have been de facto constituted, such as La Elvira farm (Ramírez and Tocancipá, 2018). APROZONAC was created in 1995, in Miranda, and then expanded to Corinto, Caloto, and Florida. Its associative formalization was achieved in 2002.

According to *campesino* leaders in La Elvira farm, due to their position in the territorial context, which is largely defined by the characteristics of family agriculture, they are at a geographic and productive crossroads. In other words, they are in the gap between two “economic machines,” both intimately linked to the development of armed conflict in the region: the sugarcane agro-industry, in the flatland, and illicit crops, in the mountain range:

You have travelled through Cali, Florida, and Santander, and there is a paved road there. At the end, and after many struggles, they have paved it! As you can see, walking down the map you find the sugarcane agroindustry, and up here you have the upper region. Well, how does it strike you that we are in the midst of a conflict? The agro-industry has its military and paramilitary defense, to protect its interests, and up here you have drug trafficking, to defend that interest as well. Here, we are considered as a hindrance to agribusiness, because we have diversified projects, whereas agribusinesses need 700,000 additional hectares to plant sugarcane. And for those who plant coca and marijuana crops, we are yet another obstacle, because we do not plant either coca or marijuana. So, we are right there, just in the middle (Man, FENSUAGRO *campesino* leader, March 5, 2020).

By recognizing these specific conditions, ASPROZONAC, which today has 300 affiliates in the three municipalities of Northern Cauca, is committed to consolidating the organization of small *campesino* farmers through seven work streams, which include topics such as organizational strengthening,

women and youth organization, environmental protection, human rights advocacy, food sovereignty, and access to land.

The description of the process that led to the acquisition of La Elvira farm, as narrated by the *campesinos*, begins with the local mobilizations of the previous decade, which demanded for state investment in rural development, land titling, and respect for the lives of the civilian population in the midst of armed conflict.

This same narrative highlights the mobilizations and civilian “takeovers” of military installations in the Calandaima, Miranda, and Huasanó (Corinto) hills in 2012. According to this account, inhabitants of surrounding villages were in the midst confrontations between FARC-EP and the army. So, after filing requests, that went unheard, they decided to take over these facilities, which generated conflicts and culminated in the withdrawal of public armed forces from the military centers.

In terms of the concrete demand to access land for establishing the ZRC, the mobilizations and blockades around the Pan-American Highway stand out. In 2013, the public order situation in the municipality as well as the eviction of military bases became a point of rupture that led to the creation of a dialogue roundtable between *campesinos* and the national government.

According to one of FENSUAGRO’s *campesino* leaders in Miranda , as a result of this roundtable, the government approved resources to purchase land from *campesinos* for two platforms in Cauca: CIMA-CNA, a process of popular unity in southwestern Colombia, and FENSUAGRO. In total, they disbursed 22 billion pesos, distributed, by consensus, between the two organizations: 35% for CIMA and 65% for FENSUAGRO, in recognition of their role in the direct struggle for land. A part of these funds was used to purchase La Elvira in 2016, sold at \$2.16 billion pesos.

The acquisition of the farm sparked a period of change in the lives of the 25 families of the association who came to live there after being displaced from the upper areas of the municipality, including the village of Monterredondo, where the ETCR was later installed, and from other municipalities, such as Florida and Caloto<sup>9</sup>.

Initially, the land was not suited for agricultural production, but, as will be explained later, the development of the ERA enhanced productive and living

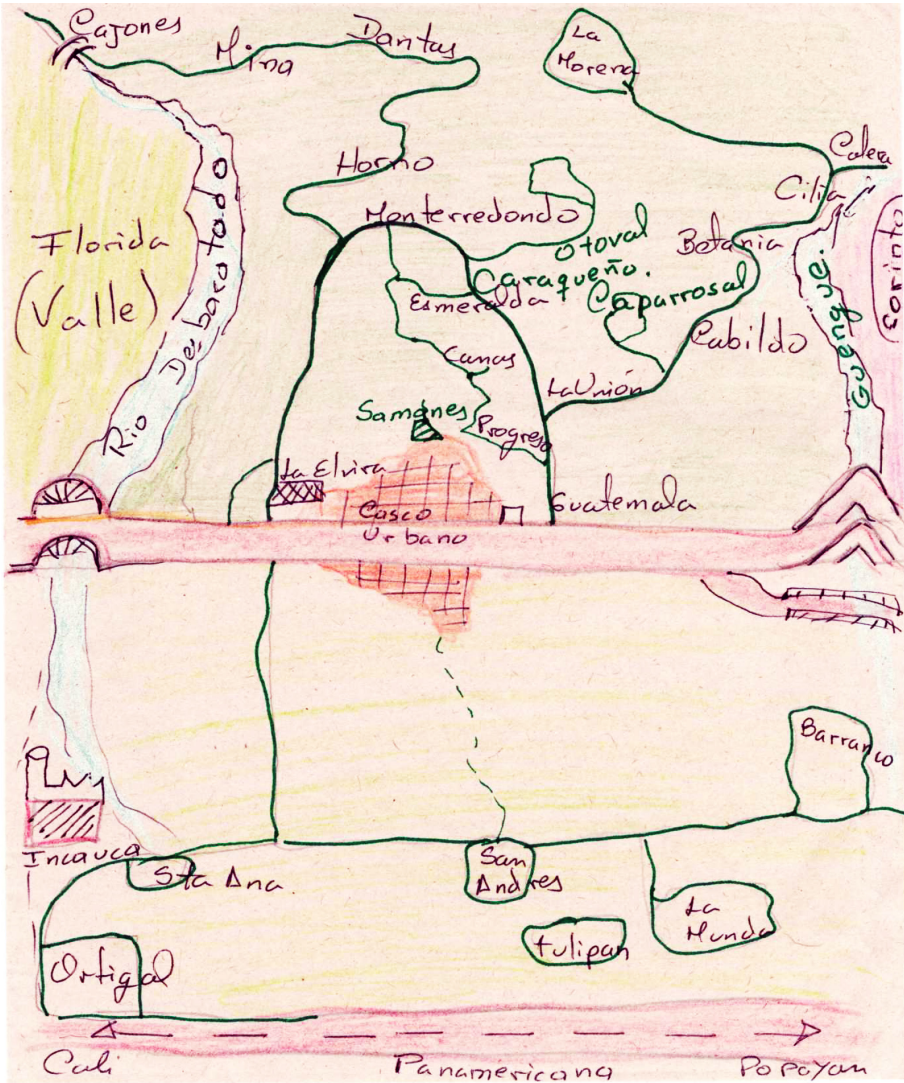
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<sup>9</sup> Visit to the La Elvira, Presentation of Cristóbal Guamanga, March 5, 2020.

conditions. For them, the possibility of living on their plots has represented an improvement of basic, but significant, issues of their livelihood: having a house with access to improved roads; being located near urban areas and market circuits; having land that is suitable for subsistence agriculture and some surplus sales; and achieving greater social recognition.

A portion of La Elvira farm is devoted to reforestation, while 5 hectares, that include a lake, were destined to collective activities. That land was given as commodate in 2017, for the development of the ERA project, welcoming ex-combatants and conducting work with *campesinos* from the farm, who have also joined the initiative.

Plan of Miranda with the location of La Elvira



Courtesy of Ana Rojas Becker, Victims Roundtable (Miranda, February 2020).



## Entrance to La Elvira farm



Photo: Universidad del Valle Team. Entrance to La Elvira Campesino Reserve Zone, July 5, 2019.

### **The post-agreement in Miranda**

According to the municipal Post-Conflict Secretary, Miranda, which has not been a visible municipality on the national landscape, has 7,120 registered victims. Given the diversity of stances and voices, it has not been easy to reach a consensus on how to articulate the organizational processes of the victims and civil society with those of the reincorporated ex-combatants who were concentrated in the village of Monterredondo.

From his perspective, the agenda to implement the Peace Accord through the development of concrete projects is an important dimension of the issue, but there is a scenario in which a long road lies ahead, one that is just beginning: the issue of truth, justice, and the reconciliation process.

For this reason, some reconciliation actions were carried out spontaneously, at the initiative of some members of the municipal victims' roundtable and ex-combatants, who, individually, have begun these processes before the formal commencement of operations by institutions of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repitition (SIVJRNR, for its acronym in

Spanish), as part of the dynamics of integration between ex-combatants and organizations or social leaders of the municipality. One of the female leaders of the victims' roundtable explains how they have approached ex-combatants to promote these spaces:

So that's why my son and I got fully involved in learning about the agreement from the victims' point of view, through the lens of Law 1448. We've also worked to help the community, so that they have a better knowledge of the law, of the agreement, and of how to project it. We hold forums with reincorporated ex-combatants in Monterredondo. For example, the last forum was held in Monterredondo's school, at the Monterredondo Agricultural Institute, and we did it with Mr. M.A. So, the idea is to show the kids how to look at it from a post-conflict perspective, that is, from the viewpoints of reincorporated ex-combatants and victims, thus promoting reconciliation. Also, we present our points of view and explain how to participate in the different spaces, such as oversights, the municipal peace council, and the youth roundtable. Finally, Mr. M. emphasizes on how to prevent recruitment (Women, Victims' Roundtable of Miranda, February 6, 2020).

When consulting civil society representatives in institutional spaces, such as the Municipal Victims' Roundtable or the Municipal Peace, Reconciliation, and Coexistence Council, there seems to be a consensus on two issues: 1. That despite the difficulties of the transition period and the impossibility of reaching a general consensus in the early days of the ETCR, the municipality has experienced a very positive change after the signing of the Peace Agreement. 2. That the presence of reincorporated ex-combatants in Miranda has triggered the arrival of several agencies, projects, programs, and institutions in support to the peace process, that did not have Miranda in their radars before.

The positioning of the peace process on the national agenda has allowed social organizations in these small, marginalized, impoverished, and conflict-affected municipalities, to recover their own voice and find support for their demands, beyond the municipal administration. It has even allowed them to become counterparts with greater resources for advocacy in local governments; receive support from institutional stakeholders, such as international cooperation or UN system agencies; and be perceived with respect and viewed as generators of stability.

The particularity of this process is that it has been framed in a different logic than the one proposed in Havana: it is not the institutional offer that mobilizes

grassroots social actors around its programs; rather, the mobilization of social actors has managed to “pull” institutions to support them and to energize the scenarios created in the post-agreement phase. This has been an opportunity to position a greater diversity of small stakeholders, who previously did not have the capacity for advocacy. For example, regarding the presence of the ETCR in the municipality, a local female leader states the following:

Having the ETCR here has given an added value to the municipality. One thing was speaking about La Elvira, which belonged to the *Campesino* Reserve, and a very different thing is to talk with reincorporated ex-combatants in La Elvira. Why? Because more agencies come with projects and international aid for them and for their environment. This is what the municipality has not been able to harness, from my point of view (Woman, leader, Miranda, February 6, 2020).

In fact, without ignoring the importance of traditional organizational processes, such as indigenous *cabildos*, Afro-Colombian councils, and *campesino* unions, it is important to point out that other types of initiatives have been galvanized. These initiatives are modest and incipient, and they come from less empowered civil society stakeholders, but at the same time, they have important prospects. For example, the foundation *Miranda Tejiendo Paz* has gathered between 50 and 60 women to promote entrepreneurial processes through industrial sewing and doll manufacturing.

In a similar dynamic, a group of craftspeople has been organizing itself with the purpose of promoting and managing spaces to commercialize their products, such as *campesino* markets for peace. These markets started as part of a proposal by the Peace Program of *Universidad del Valle* aimed at generating scenarios to commercialize the products created by *campesinos* and ex-combatants, and the initiative has been substantially strengthened with the support of PASO Colombia.

I helped build CORPOARTE PAZ, which is an acronym for the Craftspeople Corporation for Peace of Miranda. So, in that space, I’ve included reincorporated female and male artisans, who work in manufacturing dolls, necklaces, and backpacks. I also invited victims. So, that space incorporates all populations: LGTBI, disabled, indigenous, Afro-Colombians, and reincorporated ex-combatants; all of them are included. And that’s what I want. I want them to come here, to the *campesino* market that we’re organizing in town, and share with the people who are substituting their crops. And this is how, little by little, we start to connect with each other.

Because you cannot tell to the reincorporated ex-combatant: “Hey, you, ex-combatant! Move over there!” No, the idea now is to be in a macro project (Woman, leader CMPRC, Miranda, February 6, 2020).

Through the support offered by the mayor’s office, the program is currently working to establish the *campesino* market on a regular basis. This is devised to serve as a scenario for opening local markets for the families subscribed to the PNIS program; for *campesino* associations, such as ASPROZONAC; and for the associations between ex-combatants and *campesinos*, such as CEPRODET.

In spite of ongoing denunciations that criticize the lack of dynamism, budget, and will to fully develop the Peace Accord, it is important to highlight that, since its signing, there has been an appropriation, by the citizenry, of the political scenarios opened by the state to expand the exercise of citizen participation.

An example of this is the formulation of Municipal Pacts for Regional Transformation (PMTR, for its acronym in Spanish). As part of PDETs, PMTRs have become a convergence scenario for a platform of women’s organizations from all over the department, which gathers the proposals presented before the PMTR to promote their own Peace Agenda for Women in Cauca.

In each municipality, a delegation was in charge of doing political advocacy work to include these proposals in the Municipal Development Plans. Some of the organizations participating in this process are, in turn, part of the municipal victims’ roundtables and *Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres*, which is a third-level national organizational platform.

In this dynamic scenario there are concrete security threats. But at the same time, the collectives, organizations, and leaderships are determined to defend the Peace Agreement, which they have appropriated, and to position other agendas and bolster dynamics to deactivate the logic of violence exerted by extant armed groups.

For this reason, we can affirm that the dynamization and strengthening of grassroots peace initiatives is mobilizing, to a large extent, the scenarios of governance for peace in different territorial spheres, and has managed to coordinate actions with institutional and private sector stakeholders around their own demands.

## ***Social and armed conflict***

One of the issues that mobilized and generated alerts in various social and political sectors is the defense and protection of social leaders, human rights activists, and ex-combatants who, between 2018 and 2019, have been a target of violence.

Looking back at this initial transition stage in the region, we can observe that, from the ceasefire and disarmament to the arrival of new armed actors, social movements and organizational processes of Afro-Colombians, indigenous, *campesinos*, and women, consolidated and strengthened their capacity for political advocacy and agency in general.

In this context, the great diversity of social leaderships in the region has gained visibility. This occurred due to the empowerment achieved throughout the process of materializing the implementation of the Peace Agreement and of setting boundaries to the actions of armed groups in their territories.

This visibility exposes these organizations and leaderships, but at the same time allows them to obtain support, accompaniment, and protection from organizations that are aware of the issue of human rights in the territory — especially those belonging to the UN system—, the Ombudsman’s Office, and other national human rights advocacy networks.

More than three years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, the department of Cauca has the highest rate of threats and murders of social leaders, which is one of the strongest obstacles to the implementation process. According to a report by Indepaz (2020), from January to June 20, 2020, there were 171 social leaders murdered nationwide, 55 of them in Cauca. This impact has been particularly dire on leaders from Northern Cauca, the great majority of them linked to processes of peacebuilding and resistance to the pressure exerted by violent actors. This year, four leaders have been murdered in Miranda, according to the same source.

In an interview with the radio station W Radio, Camilo González, director of Indepaz, affirmed that, since the declaration of the health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from March 13 to June 30, 2020, 19 (60%) of the 32 leaders murdered nationwide were from Cauca. According to FARC’s political party, as of June 28, 2020, 214 signatories of the Peace Agreement had been murdered in the country. Of these, 36 were killed in Cauca and 3 in Miranda.

All of this demonstrates how this post-agreement stage has been particularly turbulent in the region. This is due to the tension between the organizational, mobilization, and resistance processes championed by its inhabitants—which have gained particular strength with the implementation of the Peace Accord—, on the one hand, and the dispute between various illegal armed actors to control the territory and maintain the illegal economies of drug trafficking and mining in previously FARC-EP dominated areas that state forces have not been able to recover (as was expected after signing the Accord).



## Coming down from the mountain: the challenges of reincorporation

### ***The transitional normalization point (PTN, for its acronym in Spanish) and early reincorporation***

Between January 28 and February 18, 2017, the men and women who made up the troops of the former FARC-EP guerrilla left their encampments to assemble in the Village Zones (ZV, for its acronym in Spanish) and the Transitional Normalization Points (PTN, for its acronym in Spanish), previously defined during the negotiation between the national government and FARC-EP. These locations had already been visited and approved by the United Nations Verification Mission.

In the case of the PTN located in the village of Monterredondo, Miranda, the situation was slightly different from what was initially planned. As a matter of fact, a location had been selected in the municipality of Corinto and an agreement to rent the property had been reached with the owner, but she was murdered. Meanwhile, a group of 224 FARC-EP combatants, belonging to the Sixth Front, the Mobile Column Gabriel Galvis, and some members of the Western Bloc coming from other departments, settled on the farm La Altamira, next to the hamlet on the village Monterredondo.

Faced with this unexpected situation, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, the Mayor's Office of Miranda, and the United Nations delegation considered the option of changing the venue and establishing it in Monterredondo. According to the post-conflict secretary of the Mayor's Office of Miranda, the decision of the municipal administration to host the space needed to be ratified through public consultation.

For this reason, a meeting was held in which the 24 Local Community Boards of the upper region approved the establishment of the PTN in the municipality. This support to the peace process was also apparent in the results of the plebiscite held on October 2, 2016, in which 63.71% of Miranda's citizens voted in favor of its ratification (National Civil Registry).

The National Land Agency (ANT) reached an agreement with the property's owner, so that the PTN could be fixed in the area of the farm La Altamira



where ex-combatants were already stationed, by leasing 5 hectares adjacent to the hamlet.

The other Transitional Normalization Zones (ZVTN) in Northern Cauca were located in Buenos Aires (in the village La Elvira), and Caldoño (in the village Los Monos). The latter was located within the perimeter of the indigenous reservation Pueblo Nuevo.

Later, in 2018, a new ZVTN would be installed in Valle del Patía, to the south of the department. This ZVTN was lifted and transferred from Tumaco, due to security issues affecting ex-combatants in that region.

During approximately six months after the extraction of weapons by the UN Verification Mission, ex-combatants went through the process of prior enlistment, which entailed: the issuance of national IDs; a population census implemented by the National University; the identification of health care needs and early training processes; and the definition, by mutual agreement, of the prospects of social and economic reincorporation.

At that time, the PTNs changed their designation and are now called Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces (ETCR). They also began what the Reincorporation Route labels as early reincorporation, which refers to the access to institutional health services offered by the state, and training and consultancy on the creation of associative processes, among others.

During this period, certified ex-combatants had full legal access to their civil rights and the freedom to move and live wherever they wanted. For this reason, many of those who were born in the region returned to their homes or settled in nearby cities.

### ***Meeting with PASO Colombia and campesinos***

This stage is where the three central stakeholders in the process meet and converge in a common purpose and space: the corporation founded by the ex-combatants; the Promotion Center for Territorial Development (CEPRODET); and OEF's PASO Colombia. ASPROZONAC, in a display of solidarity and generosity, opens the doors of the farm La Elvira, to offer part of this space to the productive and community experience that would become in the ERA of Miranda.

During the period of early reincorporation, ETCR leaders began dialogues with representatives of OEF's PASO Colombia, an entity that arrived in the country to support the implementation of the peace process. This program was consolidated to the extent that its intervention in the territories gained traction by supporting ex-combatants and creating joint work scenarios with different stakeholders.

PASO Colombia's commitment was to identify needs in order to enable the process of economic reincorporation and to help find solutions, through work- and learning-based proposals —especially in the agricultural sector— that resonated with the desire of some ex-combatants to stay in rural areas and maintain their *campesino* identity, which was predominant among members of the armed group.

For this reason, one of PASO Colombia's first actions was to accompany ex-combatants in their search for land, as a first step to promote the productive projects that would be developed later on in the ERA. In this process, the support of the program facilitated a scenario of understanding and trust for the rapprochement with ASPROZONAC.

Access to land has been one of the most difficult issues of the reincorporation process. Although the Peace Accord did not explicitly establish that ex-combatants would receive land titles, this has been a crucial debate within the National Reincorporation Council (CNR), as it is evident that individual or collective reincorporation projects with an agricultural vocation must be given a place and sustainability. Although this body has a technical committee that was exclusively devoted to defining the details of a decree to regulate this subject, such decree was never issued (*Verdad Abierta*, 2018).

Eventually, a legal route was opened to grant land ownership to ex-combatants. This entails the government buying the land and then handing it over as commodate or granting a collective title. The latter mechanism is planned for some of the lands where ETCRs are currently operating, but this has not yet happened (*El Espectador*, May 18, 2020).

In this initial stage, it was also fundamental to establish a legal figure, of an associative nature, to grant access to legal/administrative institutions, cooperation projects, and the financial system. To encourage this formal commencement of their productive life, PASO Colombia's team supported the whole process, starting with the legal registration of the Corporation,

integrated by 43 ex-combatants and 9 *campesinos*. This organization would develop the productive project in the farm La Elvira.

The creation of CEPRODET, in January 2017, responds to the vision of reincorporation defended by ex-combatant leaders and PASO Colombia. This vision is based on the idea that peacebuilding is achieved by strengthening the bonds of the group that was once in arms, around economic and political activities that enable their integration into the social fabric and promote the exercise of their rights as citizens.

At the beginning of 2017, given the uncertainty about the subject, PASO Colombia provided support in solving the issue of access to land, even though ownership and titling did not seem feasible in the short term. The alliance with the *campesino* association ASPROZONAC, who had recently received a tract of land at the base of the mountain, in the farm La Elvira, allowed to access land as a first step in establishing a work plan with productive prospects. In order to speed up the delivery of the initial 5 hectares, PASO Colombia agreed to receive on its behalf the commodate through which the initial agreement was made. In this regard, a *campesino* leader recalls:

That was later. When they were in Monterredondo, they handed over their weapons, so that the government complied with what was agreed ... They asked us if it was possible for them to work the land with us and, as I said, they could not do it elsewhere. They knew each other as brothers in arms, so what we did as an organization was to hold an assembly for that purpose. We explained to our neighbors that it had not been possible to buy land, and we told them that they could come and work here, but that they should take us into account in all the projects that they could carry out. Because, well, it is no secret to anyone that they have to interact with civilians and the population. So we spoke to people and they didn't have any problem with it (Man, *campesino*, ASPROZONAC leader, June 22, 2019).

In that moment, the seed was planted, and the project of ex-combatants in Monterredondo began to take shape. This was the first step toward achieving its establishment in the territory, consolidating its economic sustainability, building and strengthening new social bonds, and creating concrete spaces of reconciliation through work, with the support of the local population and a global foundation.

## ***Difficulties and uncertainty in the start-up***

The initial process of “coming down from the mountain” to establish the project that would eventually become the ERA, was affected by several situations that illustrate the challenges faced by the reincorporation process in this region.

After the disarmament and early reintegration period, it became clear that not all members of the armed group were committed to the project. As in any peace process, there are those who turn away from the beginning. Some of them are now involved in a process of conflict reconfiguration.

In Cauca, there are three mobile columns of dissident factions. To differentiate them from the current FARC political party, the state defines them as “residual groups” or “Organized Armed Groups,” (GAOR, for its acronym in Spanish). These groups act in a differentiated manner and even compete over control of drug production and trafficking routes. One of these new structures, the Mobile Column Dagoberto Ramos, is attempting to fill the space left by the Sixth Front in the area of Corinto, Miranda, Caloto, and Toribío (El Espectador, May 10, 2020).

Moreover, after the withdrawal of FARC-EP from the territory, and while the dissident groups were restructuring themselves, other actors entered the zone to compete over control of illegal economies.

According to the Insight Crime observatory and *Universidad del Rosario*, other armed groups are also present in Cauca, such as EPL dissident factions, Clan del Golfo, and the Sinaloa Cartel (Colombian Observatory of Organized Crime, 2017).

The first situation that generated concerns among ex-combatants and inhabitants of the area occurred in September 30, 2017, with the assassination of three police officers who were part of the patrols in charge of watching and securing the perimeter of the ETCR. From that event, the peace of mind and spirit of optimism that had been experienced in Miranda since the unilateral ceasefire declaration made by FARC-EP in December 2014 was broken, and an atmosphere of uneasiness began to affect the mood of ex-combatants.

In addition to this troubled atmosphere, on October 20, 2014, Henry Meneses, an ex-combatant who lived in the ETCR in Monterredondo, was murdered in the town square. By that time, he would be the 22nd casualty in the country,

according to the official list of murdered ex-combatants, reported by FARC's political party. For these reasons, the group of people interested in being part of the project created in La Elvira lived in uncertainty, as their possibilities of remaining in the territory were being threatened.

By having a space to work on new productive projects, the ex-combatants who had organized themselves in CEPRODET experienced a physical and psychological change, to the extent that new opportunities opened up in the midst of the climate of distrust that was affecting them. The act of moving between the ETCR, located in the upper section of the mountain and La Elvira farm, placed at the foothill, turned into a daily journey marked by a mixture of hope—offered by the possibilities of a new undertaking—, and uncertainty—as the result of a dangerous context.

However, having a new space to build a common horizon with the *campesinos* who opened their doors, and receiving support and accompaniment from an entity like PASO Colombia—committed to guaranteeing their daily sustainability and devising a horizon of learning that valued their work—, allowed them to materialize their incorporation into civilian life and to remain within the territory.

*La Elvira Campesino Reserve Zone, Miranda, Cauca.*



Photo: PASO Colombia's archive. July 2019.

In hindsight, we can affirm that having a portion of land where they were well received for the development of the ERA experience, became a key factor in proposing a project to support their reincorporation process. Likewise, the farm La Elvira served as a device of territorial anchorage required by ex-combatants to replace those years of itinerancy with an individual and collective appropriation of a specific space.





## Chapter II

PASO Colombia's approach





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### PASO COLOMBIA'S APPROACH

#### Acting on the causes of war

One Earth Future Foundation (OEF) is currently working on six programs, aimed at generating convergence scenarios for different stakeholders, collaborative partnerships, and negotiation and lobbying opportunities, to create solutions to the causes of war and promote peace.

Its principles revolve around the empowerment of local stakeholders, the promotion of concrete actions, environmental sustainability, and gender equality.

More than a targeted intervention, its approach is proposed as a cooperation model to help local communities identify innovative ways to address their problems and solve them through coordinated actions among multiple stakeholders. In other words, it is conceived more as a situated intervention or intervention/articulation (Montenegro, 2001). The implications of this way of understanding the relationships between agents of social transformation, in the case of Miranda's ERA, will be explained later.

Besides pointing out the particularities of this approach, it is important to emphasize that the iterative method that characterizes the work developed

by OEF is an unusual way of encouraging social change, which is framed under the principle that relevant actions are discovered by analyzing problems within their context and emerge from assessing the concrete actions carried out among involved stakeholders. This approach, which allows for a better understanding of the way in which social change occurs, is not easy to find in this type of organizations, because it requires flexibility in order to build the proposal from the interaction between agents involved in the projects to be developed.

Consequently, OEF's work teams are constituted in each location. The purpose of this is to reach agreements with local partners on the routes and initiatives to be developed, based on early assessments of initial actions, in coherence with the basic principles previously mentioned.

Through this approach, OEF avoids reproducing the most common intervention model, that is, arriving with a pre-established template, with the expectation of producing changes from external actions. This shift of focus among those who participate in the action itself generates more horizontal interactions that help dismantle the hierarchical structures between intervening agents and beneficiaries.

This way of understanding the development of cooperation programs collects several lessons learned, which can be identified from a critical overview of the failures experienced by cooperation or development aid projects in the last two decades (Montenegro, 2001). Probably, this is one of the main reasons why this entity's understanding of its role as a catalyzing agent of social change can produce an impact like the one achieved through its program in Colombia, as will be described later.

Another aspect in which OEF has been categorical is the need to build information systems of the issues and contexts in which it works, which allow the organization to study solutions based on data analysis.

OEF has programs on Coastal East Africa, particularly in Somalia, aimed at investing in local economies, connecting producers of various materials and services—ranging from fishing and livestock to metallurgy and paper production with international investors—, and promoting local economic stability, employment generation, and access to markets and capital (Suraako, N.D.).

The Stable Seas program is an information, georeferencing, and monitoring system, set up to identify risks of maritime crime and funding of political violence through maritime activities. This system includes information on 70 countries in Africa and Asia (Stable Seas, N.D.).

Another program works on conducting research and dialogues with stakeholders, including former military officers, nuclear technology experts, and security advisors, on the impact of nuclear weapons. It encourages policy dialogues based on data analyzed in an information and risk identification platform that seeks to contain the threat of using nuclear technology in armed conflicts (One Earth Future, N.D.).

They are also carrying out an analysis and exploration work on negotiation practices, conflict de-escalation, and opening of dialogues in contexts of complex political conflicts, such as those in Venezuela and North Korea (One Earth Future, N.D.).

## The program for Colombia

Since 2015, after learning about the negotiations that were taking place in Havana and with the prospects generated by the materialization of the Peace Agreement between the national government and the FARC-EP guerrillas, OEF began to outline a program aimed at supporting the economic reincorporation process of ex-combatants. From that moment on, its Sustainable Peace for Colombia program (PASO Colombia), started operations.

PASO Colombia's team understands peacebuilding as a process that must be sustained collectively. It is a challenge that implies the commitment and participation of all kinds of social stakeholders.

Under the premise that Colombian society, as a whole, has reproduced the causes, and suffered the consequences, of war, its transformation involves everyone. Therefore, PASO's projects convoke all public/private sectors and civil society organizations with territorial influence. Consequently, it is common to hear them say: "Here, not only do we have to reincorporate guerrilla ex-combatants; we all need to reincorporate" (man, PASO Colombia's team, Focus Group, July 24, 2020).

In line with OEF's commitment, its proposal for Colombia is to "seek alternatives to make the reincorporation process sustainable and help transform the causes of armed conflict by establishing partnerships that benefit rural

communities, ex-combatants, public and private entities, and international organizations; promoting the development of agricultural projects supported with training, technical assistance, and monitoring; and leveraging support for commercialization and capital investment” (PASO Colombia).

Based on a broad understanding of the causes of armed conflict, PASO Colombia has structured three types of projects: the first one is Rural Alternative Schools, which are initially aimed at establishing partnerships between ex-combatants and *campesino* communities located near to ETCRs and NARs, defined as “collaborative and educational platforms that articulate the factors of production required to successfully develop agricultural projects” (PASO Colombia).

The Contingency Plan Project is designed to support some of the families committed to coca eradication who signed the Comprehensive Community Plans for Substitution and Alternative Development (PISDA, for its acronym in Spanish) stipulated in the PNIS program. It supports the Presidential Office for Stabilization and Consolidation (Colombia Peace Fund and UNDP) and “is designed to provide income to those who substituted coca crops, in exchange for the time invested in training and working collectively to strengthen alternative and legal economic networks.”

Its objective is to improve productive and learning processes in order to manufacture supplies, grow and process food, and develop productive projects from local raw materials, so that these communities can sustain their determination to leave behind the productive cycle of the illicit economies that feed the war. The productive potentials of each region are identified (PASO Colombia).

In addition, the process has encouraged convergence around the need to improve infrastructure facilities for the common benefit, the creation of marketing networks and *campesino* markets, and the strengthening of cooperatives and productive organizations. This project has been designed with a clear gender-based focus: 80% of its participants are rural women, which strengthens female leadership and generates positive impacts on the life quality of entire families.

The third project developed by PASO Colombia is Collaborative Partnerships, designed through a cross-cutting approach in order to sustain the aspects related to capital investment, markets, and training processes, required for the two previously mentioned projects. This strategy takes advantage, in

the best sense of the term, of the motivation displayed by companies and institutions to build support networks for local productive processes—in terms of governance and peacebuilding— developed through ERAs and the contingency plan. The purpose is to enable their productive projects by opening markets and obtaining fair prices, especially during the first stages of productive stabilization.

### *In retrospect*

From 2016 to mid-2017, PASO Colombia began exploring project alternatives in dialogues with national government agencies (during the final stage of Juan Manuel Santos' term), and municipal governments. In this stage, the foundation focused on exploring regional conditions, building a map of opportunities, and identifying feasible projects, which were presented to the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace.

The proposal focused on working with different types of government stakeholders, such as the national post-conflict office, the Mayor's office of Cali, the Mayors' Association of Northern Cauca (organized in AMUNORCA), and private actors, in designing territorial development approaches through the creation of job opportunities and productive projects for ex-combatants.

A map of opportunities was drawn up. This map was built with inputs from the thematic roundtables that we held in Cauca, which focused on identifying feasible crops and products. A total of 214 projects were identified in this initiative. We designed a template for the thirteen territories of Cauca, plus four in Valle and Antioquia. This allowed us to explore the concept of territorial peace: to approach the territory; to clearly understand what the local authorities had in mind and their perception of the material possibilities in the peace process; and most importantly, to be prepared for when the Peace Agreement entered into force (Woman, PASO Colombia's team, June 11, 2019).

However, according PASO Colombia's team members (2019), the office of the High Counselor for Post-Conflict considered that this perspective could not be sustained in that moment; the office expressed that the obligations related to reincorporation processes included in the Peace Agreement should be managed exclusively by the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN): basic income and single allocation, for collective or individual

projects. They also considered that territorial development planning and investment processes had other budgets and differentiated procedures.

This situation was an invitation to engage directly with territorial stakeholders and with ex-combatant leaders who were already making their forecasts on how to pursue reincorporation and how to make it sustainable. In this context, simultaneous dialogues were held in two areas of the country: in Nudo del Paramillo (Antioquia) and in Northern Cauca. One of the issues proposed from the beginning was access to land. However, the particularities of how to solve this issue and the resources needed to do it are different in each territory. For this reason, the happy convergence of ASPROZONAC, and the ex-combatants organized in CEPRODET opened up the initial space to begin the project, which would progressively become in the ERA model.

In view of this reality, it was time to rethink the strategy and to find a source of income for ex-combatants with the resources available in the territory. In the first rapprochement with the *campesino* association, they said: “Come on! We’ll give you some land so that you can develop productive projects with the ex-combatants.” This is the space where the ERA operates today, and that is where the work began, with the idea of training, but with productive projects at once (Man, PASO Colombia’s team, June 4, 2019).

### ***Like a jazz band***

Early on, PASO Colombia’s team understood that the challenge of developing sustainable productive projects started with knowledge transfer and the need to produce installed capacity. To do so, they needed to bring in the experts: this is how this organization, which had tried to find (without much success) scenarios of dialogue with national and regional public policymakers regarding the reincorporation policy and the projection of rural development, ended up agreeing with local stakeholders on the proposal of direct intervention in the farm La Elvira, through training on diverse topics: production of organic fertilizers, planting of fruit trees, perennial crops, community environmental strategies, administration, accounting, fish and pig farming, among others.

The process of learning how to improve training and how the previous knowledge of each participant was put into practice in daily tasks, allowed the discovery of the best path to follow through the experience itself. In this way, the ERA, as a school, becomes an experiment with the possibility of generating

a novel model that materializes the idea of collective reincorporation by means of trial and error in each productive process.

The methodology of iterative learning provides a great flexibility and allowed us to change the course of action when we didn't have lessons to learn from. It's not a fit-for-all formula. To make peace, you need to be like a jazz band and know how to improvise. So, it is, indeed, an improvisation method, and that's why, at the same time, it presents a big challenge, because you don't have the recipe; you know, more or less, where you're going, but the very method of learning as you go involved many difficulties and tensions. Let's say that it wasn't a formula, but you needed to move ahead because not everything was predesigned. So, learning as you go is very difficult, because of the team and so on (Man, PASO Colombia's team, June 4, 2019).

With each training process, the network of organizations and people that are involved in different aspects —such as training, leveraging resources, and commercialization— expanded. Simultaneously, the time, tasks, interactions, relationships, processes, and projections, started to take shape.

The reincorporation process also needed a stimulus. And that stimulus is what we in the ERA define as knowing “how to be and how to do.” And knowing how to be occurred here, at this point, because this is a gathering point where not only classes were taught. We call ourselves ERA, because an ERA is where you sow. So, we called it Rural Alternative School, because the alternative component was evident inasmuch as we didn't have a classroom, or bricks; the classroom was located in the furrow and that's where we taught and learned. In the furrow, that alternativeness allowed us to bring other allies to this farm as well (Man, PASO Colombia's team, June 22, 2019).

Schools are, by definition, a place in which the group relations that reveal the place that each person wants or aspires to hold in the world are created and established. Thinking about what you want to do in that land that is there, but which brings challenges, is not a simple task. The creation of the ERA was an opportunity to show that PASO Colombia could be helpful in “shaping” the productive idea, while concrete relationships among participants started to build up.

In this way, the constructivist educational conception, put into practice in the course of the different training processes, was also an opportunity to identify



the concrete forms of “knowing how to do,” defined through experimentation and ongoing adjustment.

Along this learning exercise, PASO Colombia’s team members discovered that the willingness to work, demonstrated by *campesinos* and ex-combatants, as well as their interest in participating in the training process, came from the fact that their previous knowledge was viewed as valuable and that they were treated in an unprejudiced manner, that is, without judgments or ideological preconceptions about their background.

To this end, the role of *extensionistas* —the teachers who accompany the training processes and provide technical assistance— has been crucial. One of their most outstanding traits is the conviction that their work has a more important meaning than project success itself, and that this is an exercise of self-transformation that allows them to advance to a country with better living conditions

We are on the side of the community we are serving. If we look back in history, we are apprehensive about working with the person who used to extort your family and so on. This process has been enriching, because it allows us to see life differently. I open myself to the task of getting to know people, without any prejudice, and that changes you. It’s difficult, because you judge people by the way they look, but that’s wrong...people can surprise you (Man, PASO Colombia’s team, February 4, 2020).

The presence and work done by the organization in Colombia grew significantly in the past three years, until becoming a pillar for the efforts of reincorporated ex-combatants, victims, and other *campesino* groups in the country. It has also become a reference for authorities and public institutions, both national and international, that work in peacebuilding and the implementation of the Peace Accord.

### ***ERA as a model***

The negotiation scenarios that were spurred by OEF’s initial commitment ended up becoming a work model, based on the idea of governance for peacebuilding, that has been replicated and tested in several spaces and experiences nationwide. Initially, this implies building trust among different types of stakeholders at all levels: community, government, foundations, organizations, and national institutions.

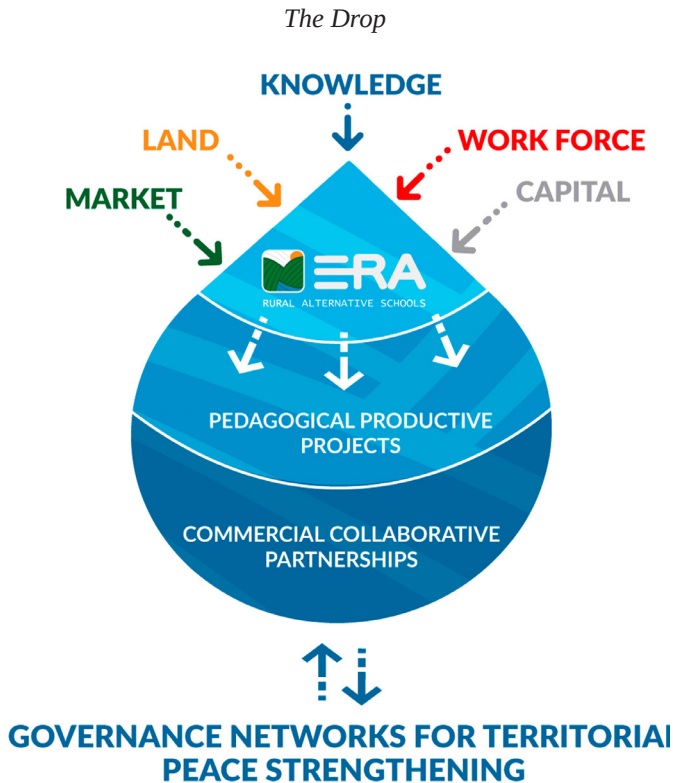
PASO Colombia discovered that proposing a first organizational exercise around a New Regrouping Point (NAR) (before they received this name), invites other entities and organizations to become interested in the process, as they are attracted by the first organizational and training initiative. From there, PASO Colombia decided to act as a catalyst of coordinated interactions that enhance the possibilities of producing results and generating benefits for a larger number of people.

From the first contacts between organizations, PASO Colombia's team begins to conceive the ERA as a collaborative platform in which diverse partners make their contributions, according to their particular objectives and missions, but enhancing at the same time the common goal, which is the sustainability of the economic and social reintegration process and the human development of those who participate in the initiative.

This network of interactions, with regard to the needs that emerge from the process of economic reincorporation, has been aimed at expanding local governance from a peacebuilding perspective, because, on the one hand, it generates management opportunities between stakeholders that were not previously related, and because it also engages local institutions to participate as facilitators and guarantors of these processes that transform the productive life, both for communities and partner institutions.

By using the iterative method in the ERA of Miranda, PASO Colombia was able to design a model that can be replicated in other experiences in the country and that contains five components that support the promotion and sustainability of the ex-combatant economic reincorporation process and the improvement of productive conditions for rural populations, such as the families that signed up to the PNIS program, for example.

In this model, the ERA is configured as an integrative proposal made up of five elements that are crucial for rural development and that, according to the diagnoses previously carried out by PASO Colombia, are key for a successful development of this type of small-scale productive projects. This idea is represented by the shape of a drop:



Source: Presentation of PASO Colombia's ERA.

The following is a brief presentation of the components represented in the Drop:

### **A. Access to land**

Access to land is a key component of the basic concept of rural economy. Although it is a central item of the Peace Agreement and the prolonged conflict, its materialization for the reincorporation process and project development was not specifically guaranteed. Therefore, addressing or resolving this condition appeared to be a priority issue. PASO Colombia supported the search for land and was instrumental in facilitating an initial understanding between *campesinos* and ex-combatants. PASO also helped define, in a creative way, the figure of the commodate for the property facilitated by *campesinos*, in such a way that ex-combatants and *campesinos* organized in CEPRODET were able to make use of that land.

Exploring different alternatives for access to land has been a key component of PASO Colombia's work. It opened up initial scenarios for productive processes, which have allowed ex-combatants to later expand their options. In the case of CEPRODET, they were able to expand their productive area with 12 additional hectares, by amending the commodate. Additionally, as a result of work conducted with CNR, they have been able to get a second farm, through a lease-to-own option.

It is also important to note, as will be explained in detail in the chapter on the economic dimension of ERAs, that some of the productive practices that became a constant in the ERA model, have been a source of land appreciation. Thus, organic fertilizer produced in situ, and the protection of water sources and reforestation achieved through the installation of a multipurpose nursery, are practices that, in addition to promoting environmental care and life quality, increase the value of the property.

## **B. Access to capital**

Based on another fundamental principle, PASO Colombia's approach highlights the relevance of having a starting capital, in order to mobilize other resources and initiatives. Once again, it is noteworthy that, although the issue of funding projects with a "seed capital" was raised in the institutional design for reincorporation, accessing and deploying these resources imply times and processes that do not take into account the "urgency" and celerity required to guarantee a concrete success of productive experiences from their early stages.

In this sense, OEF's strategy focused on providing seed capital to begin ERA operations and to jump-start the training and productive processes. Since it was also a matter of teaching participants "how to fish," PASO Colombia organized a meeting between representatives of several ETCRs in the country and financial entities, including Banco Agrario and Finagro, so that reincorporated ex-combatants could get to know the routes to access investment capital for their projects and the financial entities could receive first-hand information on their needs and expectations.

In the development of the experience, new sources of funding associated to specific projects start to appear. For instance, an agreement was made with Banco Agrario to offer access to credit for *campesinos* who had business agreements with the company Hugo Restrepo to grow chili peppers in the ERA. This experience showed PASO Colombia the importance of their role as

mediators with entities at different territorial levels to guarantee the success of local processes, not only with respect to access to capital, but also to various types of resources.

In this process, some of the difficulties faced by productive initiatives in *campesino* economies were identified. For instance, some ERA members were able to learn about the vast amount of requirements and see how the mechanisms that hinder access to credit for impoverished *campesinos* were now being replicated with “subjects without credit history,” such as ex-combatants.

### **C. Knowledge**

The rudiments of productive project development also emphasize the appropriation and application of relevant knowledge for their sustainability. A fundamental strategy of PASO Colombia’s approach, evidenced in the ERA of Miranda, was training, aimed at enhancing the productive capacities of the participating collective, through knowledge transfer on the productive processes and lines that were tested and implemented.

This is because even though the “collective” was “linked” to rural life, the concrete productive processes, especially if they are aimed at achieving sustainability, require the qualification and training of direct agents with innovative capacity.

In this process, dialogue and coordination with other stakeholders, such as SENA, CIAT, or the Federation of Coffee Growers itself, was crucial, as they contributed forms of technology transfer and training for specific processes.

This strategy was connected to the fact that the ERA was conceived, from the beginning, as a School with all its implications in terms of schedules, commitments, routines, and learning practices, which at the same time spurred healing and constructive forms to build the social fabric.

It is also important to point out how, from the courses taken and the daily work, participants developed productive specialties that have opened up possibilities for them and strengthened their economic projection, which is precisely what the reincorporation process is all about.

The acquisition of new knowledge enhanced the capacities of ERA participants for agricultural production and also for innovation, project management, and ability to interact and compete within market dynamics. Therefore, the economic reincorporation process, viewed from the logic of knowledge transfer, has helped guide reincorporation from a human development perspective (Sen, 1999).

In this sense, it is important to consider the relevance of investments made by other organizations in training and technical assistance, since, as shown below, the relative weight of the resources “leveraged” by this entity through the collaborative platform in the ERA of Miranda has been very important.

#### **D. Labor**

This is the nodal point of the ERA. In this context, labor is understood not only as a generator of value and material wealth, but as a process of personal and collective realization and transformation. Here, labor acquires the special meaning of shared and associative work, strengthened by the contribution of *campesinos* and ex-combatants. This associative characters, as PASO Colombia understands it, is at the basis of the development of the productive experience and the collective reincorporation process.

As will be explained later in this document, all the positive impacts of this process in terms of knowledge transfer; development of installed capacities; organizational and management learning; transformation of the routines and daily life of ex-combatants in civil life; transformation of the image and stereotypes about ex-combatants among community members; and creation of meeting and reconciliation scenarios, are derived from, or linked to, the daily work, both in agricultural production and the social work carried out by its stakeholders.

#### **E. Market**

Complementing this proposal and as a proof of its pragmatic character, from the beginning it was aimed at promoting connections with markets as a way to consolidate its sustainability and to open itself to an exchange that goes beyond the purely economic realm.

In this perspective, several actions were carried out: the establishment of commercial partnerships with some companies and entities, such as Hugo

Restrepo (for chili pepper production), the National Federation of Coffee Growers, or CIAT’s HarvestPlus program. These partnerships allowed ERA participants to start production lines with the peace of mind of having secured its initial commercialization. This was a starting point that made it possible to face the challenges of agricultural production and reduce the impact of one of its major issues: uncertainty and “instability.”

Under this perspective, ERA participants developed marketing initiatives for the local market, positioning ERA as a productive scenario and a potential supplier for local buyers.

The program also launched the initiative of *campesino* markets for peace, an ongoing process aimed at generating spaces for small producers to meet and coordinate various entrepreneurial processes, as a way to build peace in the territory.

In Miranda, these scenarios, from their early stages, operated as meeting places for diverse population groups. Several of these groups have participated in the training and accompaniment processes developed by PASO Colombia in the territory, including female family heads who signed up to the PNIS program, *campesino* families of ASPROZONAC, and ex-combatants who participate in the ERA, as well as victims and other local groups that operate as de facto micro spaces for reconciliation.

ERA as a model



Diagram of the ERA model. Designed by Jorge Rentería, Universidad del Valle, 2019.

# List of Rural Alternative Schools in Colombia<sup>11</sup> – One Earth Future Foundation’s PASO Colombia program

This list presents, in a summarized way, the expansion of ERAs as a national strategy in different regions of the country. These ERAs are located within or near the New Regrouping Zones, now known as NAR, and cover a high percentage of the persons and groups that initiated and remained in the reincorporation process after completion of the disarmament phase and signing of the Agreement, in November 2016.

## Anorí - (Antioquia)

**Participants:** 29

It has been operating since 2019, supporting the work of 28 ex-combatants and 2 neighboring farmers in the area. It has 200 hectares, 70% of which are native forest.

**Location:**

Village La Plancha.

**Productive project:**

Beekeeping.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

COOMULDESNA Cooperative.

**Partners:**

National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS), COOMULDESNA.

<sup>11</sup> Prepared by a team from *Universidad del Valle* with data from PASO Colombia.



## Araucita - (Arauca)

**Participants:** 79

The project focuses on growing sacha inchi to produce extra virgin oil, cocoa coated nuts, neutral nuts, and flour.

**Location:**

Araucita, department of Arauca.

**Productive projects:**

Sacha Inchi (nuts), Sacha Inchi (oil), roasted nuts, grated nuts, fish farming.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

Agropaz.

**Partners:**

Agropaz, HarvestPlus, Universidad de los Llanos.

## Buenaventura - (Valle del Cauca)

**Participants:** 24

This group of artisanal fisheries is aimed at diversifying catching procedures and reducing pressure on overexploited species, such as shallow-water shrimp, to meet the demand and decrease dependence on imports.

**Location:**

Village El Cacao, Mayorquín river basin.

**Productive projects:**

Marine artisanal fishing operations.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

Asociación de Pescadores Artesanales del Cacao ASOPESARCACAO.

**Partners:**

National Authority of Aquaculture and Fishery (AUNAP, for its acronym in Spanish), Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), World Food Program, Governorship of Valle del Cauca, and the UN Verification Mission.

## Buenos Aires - (Cauca)

**Participants:** 18

It started operations in 2019 with food security, fish farming, and cattle raising projects.

**Location:**

ETCR La Elvira.

**Productive projects:**

Beekeeping, fruit trees, coffee seedlings.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

CECOESPE.

**Partners:**

CECOESTE, Cauca Coffee Growers Committee, HarvestPlus, Sena.

## Cali - (Valle del Cauca)

**Participants:** 27

With ex-combatants grouped in Serviampaz, we promote the creation of networks of entrepreneurs using agricultural products from productive projects located on the Pacific Coast and in the rural area of Valle del Cauca. This creates value chains and commercialization routes.

**Location:**

Santiago de Cali, department of Valle del Cauca.

**Productive projects:**

Production and sale of biosecurity elements, commercialization of honey and community meals.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

SERVIAMPAZ.

**Partners:**

COOVIDECUJI, Cali Chamber of Commerce, SENA, Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), and the UN Verification Mission.

## Carmen del Darién - (Chocó)

**Participants:** 82

It was aimed at establish a community vegetable garden and integrating ancestral knowledge to preserve and grow medicinal plants. Herbs are used to manufacture health products that will be marketed locally and nationally.

**Location:**

Jiguamiandó river basin, on a 5-hectare plot ceded by the Indigenous High Community Council.

**Productive projects:**

Commercialization of products transformed with local medicinal plants; food security; commercialization of rice, cocoa, and plantain.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

COOVIDECUJI, ASOMUJIGUA.

**Partners:**

COOVIDECUJI, ASOMUJIGUA, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sena, Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), ECOMUN.

## Dabeiba - (Antioquia)

**Participants:** 37

Focused on cocoa cultivation in four hectares of the farm, and fish farming. The crop has been significant for agro-ecological management due to technological training received by its participants..

**Location:**

Dabeiba, department of Antioquia.

**Productive projects:**

Cocoa, fish farming, eggs, household vegetable gardens, chili peppers.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

AGRODABEIBA *Campesino* Cooperative, Futuro de Paz Cooperative.

**Partners:**

Partnership among Cier, Ceiba and Ceam, Confiar Cooperative, Futuro de Paz Cooperative, Governorship of Antioquia, HarvestPlus, Universidad de Antioquia.

## Dagua - (Valle del Cauca)

**Participants:** 37

Focused in providing technical assistance for fish farming, beekeeping, and laying hen raising projects.

**Location:**

Village El Queremal.

**Productive projects:**

Fish farming, fry.

**Beneficiary organization:**

Multiactive Cooperative Agropaz Valle, Coopagrovalle Asociación Vida Sana.

**Partners:**

UNDP, Governorship of Valle del Cauca, and Mayor's Office of Dagua.

## El Tarra - (Norte de Santander)

**Participants:** 28

It started operations in 2019 with food security, fish farming, and cattle raising projects.

**Location:**

Municipality of El Tarra.

**Productive projects:**

Livestock.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

28 ex-combatants from the ETCR Caño Indio

**Partners:**

UN Verification Mission, Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), and the Mayor's Office of El Tarra.

## Fonseca - (La Guajira)

**Participants:** 210

Operational since 2018 with a project of 400 laying hens.

**Location:**

Village El Conejo, Nueva Colombia farm (near the ETCR Pondores).

**Productive projects:**

Rice, coffee, laying hens, cattle feed, vegetables, passion fruit, plantain, and aromatic herbs.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

COOMPAZCOL and 30 women from the ETCR Pondores.

**Partners:**

HarvestPlus, UN Verification Mission, World Food Program, and SENA.

## Guapi - (Cauca)

**Participants:** 21

Aimed at promoting different projects that contribute not only to reincorporation, but also to the development of the municipality.

**Location:**

New reincorporation area located amid the rainforest, mangroves, and the Guapi river current.

**Productive projects:**

Broiler poultry farming, pineapple, plantain, avocado, taro, lemon.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

Multiactive Ecomún Guapi Cooperative.

**Partners:**

SENA, UN Verification Mission, Pastoral Social, and World Food Program.

## Ituango - (Antioquia)

**Participants:** 115.

Set up to support household vegetable gardens for self-consumption and productive agricultural projects, to generate income among rural families and ex-combatants.

**Location:**

Ituango, department of Antioquia

**Productive projects:**

Cheese, processed coffee, household vegetable gardens, beans.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

Agriculture for Peace Cooperative

**Partners:**

Cier Alliance, Ceiba, Ceam, Agriculture for Peace Cooperative, Governorship of Antioquia, HarvestPlus, University of Antioquia.

## Manaure - (Cesar)

**Participants:** 136

It has been operating since 2018 with food security projects for schools in the area.

**Location:**

Tierra Grata and 200 hectares in the farm Borja, located near the ETCR.

**Productive projects:**

Vegetables, plantain, BTC bricks.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

Tierragrata.

**Partners:**

Hermeco, COOPERPAZCE, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), HarvestPlus.

## Miranda - (Cauca)

**Participants:** 62

This project is located on a land that, for decades, was dedicated to sugarcane monoculture, which degraded the soil. It proposed agricultural projects aimed at recovering the soil through production and use of organic fertilizers.

**Location:**

Northern Cauca. It was the first ERA developed by PASO Colombia.

**Productive projects:**

Fruit trees, household vegetable garden, fish farming, free-range hens, cassava, corn, biofortified beans, coffee, plantain, bio-factory for fish feed, pigs, chickens and cows, pastures for cow feed, pig farming.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

CEPRODET, ASPROZONAC.

**Partners:**

Banco Agrario, CEPRODET, Cauca Coffee Growers Committee, PNIS, HarvestPlus, Hugo Restrepo, World Food Programme (WFP), SENA, Municipal Unit of Agricultural Technical Assistance (UMATA) of Florida, *Universidad del Valle*.

## Mutatá - (Antioquia)

**Participants:** 49

It has been operating since 2017, after a group of 45 ex-combatants left the ETCR of Tierralta, Córdoba, in search of land to settle with their families.

**Location:** Village of San José de León.

**Productive projects:**

Rice, fruit trees, fish farming, aromatic plants, plantain, sacha inchi, and cassava.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

La Fortuna Cooperative, Local Community Board of San José del León.

**Partners:**

Mayor's Office of Mutatá, Alianza Cier, Ceiba, Ceam, Confiar Cooperative, La Fortuna Cooperative, Local Community Board of San José León, Colombian Army, Governorship of Antioquia, HarvestPlus.

## Pasca - (Cundinamarca)

**Participants:** 22

Operates since 2019 with agricultural projects. It will produce organic fertilizers and crops for food sovereignty.

**Location:**

Municipality of Pasca, in the Sumapaz region.

**Productive projects:**

Tree tomatoes, subsistence crops, fodder crops, strawberries, rabbit farming, *campesino* markets.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

COOMUPAZ.

**Partners:**

UN Verification Mission and Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN).

## Patía - (Cauca)

**Participants:** 40

It is aimed at generating income and food sustainability, through the implementation of agricultural productive projects.

**Location:**

ETCR Aldemar Galán.

**Productive projects:**

Sowing (tomato, cassava, bell pepper, plantain). Laying hens and pig farming.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

CENDAPAZ Cooperative, ASOEMPPEPAZ.

**Partners:**

World Food Program, United Nations Development Program, SENA, and the accompaniment of the UN Verification Mission..



## Puerto Guzmán - (Putumayo)

**Participants:**141

It started operations since 2019 with an outstanding fish production project.

**Location:**

Puerto Guzmán, in a 16-hectare farm owned by the municipality.

**Productive projects:**

Fish farming.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

COMUCCOM Cooperative.

**Partners:**

Notre Dame University, International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP), the NGO Natura Amazonas, Mayor's Office of Puerto Guzmán, and the accompaniment of the UN Verification Mission.

## San José del Guaviare - (Guaviare)

**Participants:** 194

It started operations in 2018 and its animal feed production stands out.

**Location:**

Village Colinas, in San José del Guaviare.

**Productive projects:**

Protein bank, subsistence crops, fodder, breeding sows, fish farming, poultry farming, artisanal concentrates.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

COOMACOL, COOJAPAL.

**Partners:**

Universidad de los Llanos, WFP, SENA, Coomacol, National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS), HarvestPlus, and the accompaniment of the UN Verification Mission, COOMACOL Gobierno Nacional de Colombia (PNIS), HarvestPlus..

## Saravena - (Arauca)

**Participants:** 69

Aimed at renewing products such as cocoa and citrus fruits, and to breeding animals whose production and continuity had declined.

**Location:**

Saravena, department of Arauca.

**Productive projects:** COEPAZ - Fish

AFPAZ – Fish.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

Family Parents Association of the school Concentración de Desarrollo Rural.

**Partners:**

Mayor's Office of Saravena, Aid Live Foundation, CODEPAZ, CODEPAZ/AFPAZ, Community/ex-combatants, Educational Institution Concentración del Desarrollo Rural

## Sevilla - (Valle del Cauca)

**Participants:** 30

It seeks to reactivate the facilities of the Departmental Farm and to develop projects for pig breeding, fertilizer production, bean, plantain, and bell pepper.

**Location:**

Sevilla, department of Valle del Cauca.

**Productive projects:**

Chili pepper (the main one), plantain, calima beans, piglets.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

Auracol, ASTRACAVAL, Red HipHop.

**Partners:**

Mayor's Office of Sevilla, Governorship of Valle del Cauca, UNDP, the UN Verification Mission, and WFP.

## Tuluá - (Valle del Cauca)

**Participants:** 65

It is a collaborative project between *campesinos* and ex-combatants who work for the agricultural development of the region.

**Location:**

It groups the villages of La Moralia, Monteloro, San Marcos, Venus, Santa Lucía, Los Aguacates, and La Alejandría, in Tuluá.

**Productive projects:**

Pancoger, panela, lulo, mora, café, lechones, pollos de engorde, novillos, abonos orgánicos, semilleros de café, secado de café, comercialización de café, tostado de café.

**Beneficiary organizations:**

ASOPROVENUS and COOMULNES

**Partners:** Peace Secretariat of the Governorship in Valle, Mayor's Office of Tuluá, the social organizations Astracava and Asoprovenus, UNDP, and the UN Verification Mission..





## Chapter III

A school among the furrows



## CHAPTER III

### A SCHOOL AMONG THE FURROWS

The development of the teaching/learning processes in Miranda's ERA allowed participants to incorporate into their lives a commitment to the agricultural activities that consolidated during these three years. The School became a working model and a route for associative economic reincorporation.

The features of the commitment built by PASO Colombia allowed ex-combatants to take ownership of their space and build a sense of individual and collective belonging. Additionally, it guaranteed their food security and that of their families, even though the projects still did not yield individual profits or dividends that could be distributed as a payment for collective work. The valuation of labor has also been crucial as a method of learning and a way to create a sense of meaningfulness in the lives of ex-combatants. This has spurred the creation of support networks among ex-combatants, peasants, and local communities, gathering them around a shared horizon that counterbalances uncertainties.

The productive dimensions of the process allow us to understand economic reincorporation as a comprehensive transformation to build future projections in civil life through the productive process, with impacts on their social relations, the political and productive organization, and the transformation of leaderships.

## Laying the groundwork

In September 2017, when the ERA began in La Elvira, there were only two certainties:

1. Ex-combatants wanted to maintain an associative working nexus. CEPRODET had already been created since January of that year as the first associative initiative, even before Ecomun, which has been the generic cooperative model, stipulated in the Peace Agreement.
2. Fieldwork should be structured from principles that were coherent with the previous political issues of the protagonists: ecological agriculture, food production, and promotion of rural development based on peasant economies.

¡And yet, nobody knew for certain what to do exactly! These two premises already defined a milestone, but they did not necessarily indicate a clear route to start production in a land that was full of weeds, that was partially filled with motor oil, and whose soil had been exhausted by sugarcane production and the abundant use of agrochemicals, such as glyphosate.

The process of preparing the first 5 hectares required an adaptive and learning exercise that would be a permanent practice throughout the ERA development process.

Although PASO Colombia team members had already made all the projections and studies of feasible projects in each territory, they did not have clarity about how to get the project going in this area and with these two groups, each of whom had their own history and internal connections.

So the first exercises started by “dismantling” the terrain and several of the preconceived ideas that each group had.

For example, one of the first lessons occurred when, under PASO Colombia’s management, a sugarcane refinery, Riopaila Castilla, provided the machinery and labor to clear the land and make it suitable to start production. It is worth noting that this was not the most intuitive option, considering that both groups, peasants and reincorporated ex-combatants alike, have built a discourse structured against the agro-industrial activity of sugarcane refineries in the region.



In this initial stage and as the project moved forward, PASO Colombia discovered how to generate the basic guarantees so that the learning process and project take-off had better chances of success. This required an initial investment that was coherent with a “comprehensive” vision of the immediate needs in terms of infrastructure and subsistence, such as sanitary units, kitchens, some “housing units,” subsidies for transportation, tools, materials, and food for the initial group of ex-combatants (approximately 60 people).

Well, it’s one thing when they call you to a meeting and say, “Go, there’s a farm.” The farm is like that, so I imagined or dreamed of a lake... well, a farm. We were supposed to enter the farm. I thought that it was like a private farm and that the farm and the lake were clean and ready to get the fish farming project going, that is, that everything was ready for work and that we were just going to reinforce it. I thought it was ready! But then, I arrived and it was just the opposite (Woman, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, September 18, 2019).

The process of preparing the terrain required purchasing machinery and building a biofactory to nourish a land that was in poor conditions for agriculture. The tractor, which was part of the initial endowment secured by PASO Colombia, helped to generate a learning dynamic with respect to the land itself and its productive possibilities.

As the exercise moved forward, it was apparent that although peasants and ex-combatants have a strong identity in connection with agriculture, not everyone had the technical knowledge for agricultural production and development of concrete projects.

Training needs were permanent because it turned out that the hypothesis we began to work with was fulfilled: they said they were peasants by origin, but the reality is that they were harvesters. So, it was a very nice discovery: they sowed corn, they harvested it (without knowing how much they had harvested), and they used it. And that was it! They thought they were already farmers! And having that conversation with them was important because they realized that they were not going to be harvesters, but to work in agriculture, and that requires a cultural component, that is, observation and research. And let’s say that this was the constant in the founding ERAs (Woman, PASO Colombia’s team, February 10, 2020).

## *Being and wanting to be farmers*



Photo: *Universidad del Valle* team. Place where ERA participants arrange their belongings. September 2019.

### ***Adjusting the method***

This is how the “iterative model,” integrated as a unique stamp of PASO Colombia’s intervention, is derived from the ERA as an educational strategy that privileges the learn-by-doing method, which is based on the —sometimes conflicting— identification of the needs, desires, aspirations, and concrete representations of the protagonists. It is important to acknowledge that, since the objective of the educational process is to provide capacities for the sustainability of the reincorporation process, all training and productive investments in the ERA transform into a peaceful empowerment.

One of the key aspects of the ERA experience in terms of peacebuilding has been the unprejudiced approach of PASO Colombia’s team to the actors of armed conflict, which was apparent in their willingness to value the contributions, previous knowledge, and needs of each person, without any judgment. This has generated an atmosphere of trust and support among ERA participants. This proactive and constructive attitude does not depend exclusively on personal stances; rather, it evolves from an institutional arrangement based on

the “need to understand the challenges and responsibilities that we all face as a society, caused by the protraction of the causes of war.”

The iterative method or approach, characteristic of One Earth Future’s global strategy, implies an effort to keep options open and avoid fit-for-all procedures to obtain results. On the contrary, to achieve results, OEF tests different approaches and links new processes from previous outcomes. This implies that the path is evaluated and adjusted at each stage of the process.

Flexibility, openness to new ideas, and the negotiation of expectations and concrete possibilities, are principles that implied the willingness to fund, to an extent, the basic operational needs. This acted as a catalyst for the process and initiatives that shaped the projects, and which were built through dialogue, exchanging knowledge, and diagnosing the concrete needs that were solved through PASO Colombia’s management and sustained support.

In this ongoing assessment of difficulties and needs, it was important to discover that, besides the learning processes resulting from the arrival of partners reached by PASO Colombia, it was necessary to install scenarios of participation and self-management for the ERA itself. For this purpose, an ERA committee was created as a tripartite scenario in which ex-combatants, peasants, and PASO Colombia, conducted follow-ups, permanent evaluations, and decision making processes. From this space, PASO Colombia has been able to design a relevant intervention that generates recognition and legitimacy in the participants of the process.

The basic definition of any educational process is built on the idea of generating cognitive, relational, and emotional changes and in the capacity of agency. Therefore, one of the central features of the Drop model, which guides the ERA, is the connection between knowledge and labor.

The creation of concrete skills, habits, and routines, and the appropriation of responsibilities, started producing those changes that respond to the basic goal of the reincorporation process. In other words, this encouraged more fluid and horizontal interactions, thus building relationships of trust and processes of integration between ex-combatants and members of neighboring communities (in this case, the farmers who live in La Elvira).

For us, it was about reaffirming the method of learning by doing, fundamentally, and that’s why our experience was like that. We’re establishing projects, but we needed to receive training. Then, we did this

from each one of our activities. This means that it was a very free and unschooled pedagogy, but a very significant one. A learning process where the result was not the amount of knowledge that people had, but the result of the project that we were undertaking (Man, PASO Colombia's team, February 10, 2020).

The result has been the rapprochement of actors who were conceived as like-minded from the beginning, but also the progressive integration other stakeholders who had antagonistic representations, or even pain and resentment, caused by the military actions of FARC-EP's Sixth Front in the territory. Learning together through trial and error and uniting people in the efforts involved in agricultural work, ends up transforming the educational process into a daily example of reconciliation, which does not necessarily go through ritualization or verbalization.

When we arrived here, with my husband, we came from the house that we had in the upper region, because they threatened us for signing up to the crop substitution program; we did not want to grow coca anymore and we always thought that the ZRC was better. At first, it was tough to see them here, because my mother-in-law died in a FARC attack. So, there was a resentment... we knew them back when they were in the mountains and it wasn't easy with them. But then, after seeing them every day, struggling and working, we started to understand that it was better for everyone to have them here and not like before. Today we want to help them, because we've also seen that they're having a hard time (Woman, peasant, ASPROZONAC, March 5, 2020).

Each group and person has adapted to sharing space, projects, food, and daily life. From that first stage, which was strongly focused on educational processes, participants have been confronting their preconceived ideas about themselves and others.

Institutional stakeholders who are intervening in different types of processes become part of this dynamic. Strengthening bonds is a process that initially engages and challenges PASO Colombia and the technicians and teachers from other supporting organizations, such as SENA or HarvestPlus. In other words, the adaptive and learning process was a necessary transition for all the people and entities involved in developing daily life in the ERA:

And from the dialogues I realized something crucial: they had cut off relations with all their surroundings. The relationship they established was very rural, but they didn't have any connection with the academic

community whatsoever! They isolated themselves completely. It was like “they lived in a whole different country.” Therefore, we needed to establish this connection so that they would trust the academy, or this institution, because they were distrustful [...] Then, how do you reestablish these networks to start over? I think that the first year of the ERA was very nice, because it also put our feet on the ground, in real life [...], it made us question and reexamine the knowledge we had about FARC. What were their relationships? What were the assumptions we had about them? And how do we perceive them now? (Woman, PASO Colombia’s team, February 10, 2020).

## ***Land and knowledge***

This was how the preconceived images —and even the basic premises— that were so clear at the beginning had to be deconstructed and transformed during the learning process. One of the most important moments of the ERA as a school, was the stage in which, through trial and error, the basic premise about ecological agriculture as a precondition for agricultural production in La Elvira was adjusted. In the narrative presented by PASO Colombia, this moment was labeled as the “green teachers’ crisis.” The ERA program convened experts in ecological agriculture with the purpose of establishing this type of production, under the model of self-sustainable farms.

However, soil conditions and the effects of previous sugarcane production did not allow for a project framed under this ideal model. Then, it was necessary to have a discussion and a “negotiation” process between teachers—who had different proposals— and the stakeholders involved—who had to give up their ideal aspirations and adapt to the principles of reality of the productive process.

You arrive and meet with the ex-combatants, who say: “We’ve been fighting for fifty years of our lives, to have our own seed bank, so that our seeds are clean.” So, you say, “Great! Let’s do it!” And the first thing that happens is that plantains get sick...and then, you think that the crop is going to die. Then, you have two problems, the plantain plague and the quarrel between farmers on how to cure the plantain (Man, PASO Colombia’s team, June 4, 2020).

The lesson learned from this experience, which is an example of the process of developing a school, is that it was not only necessary to unlearn or reevaluate the basic premises and aspirations of the stakeholders and collectives, but

also to take into account the particular conditions and needs of a fundamental factor in the productive process: land.

This happened at the end of the first quarter of 2018. It was the green teachers' crisis. And then we arrived to the conclusion that moving from traditional to organic agriculture was not the right thing to do. First, we had to move from conventional to healthy agriculture, and then, from that point, make the leap toward organic agriculture. In this moment, we are in the stage of healthy agriculture, with the seeds that are currently being produced in the biofactory. Because we need to respect the history and conditions of the soil (Man, PASO Colombia's team, June 4, 2019).

With the purpose of gathering lessons about the relationship with the land, some basic principles were defined that mark this initial stage of the ERA as a school. They refer specifically to its character as a "territorial intervention." These principles became an underlying condition, allowing PASO Colombia to leave a unique mark in the 22 ERAs currently operating nationwide."

- To work on improving soil quality with organic fertilizers. In the case of Miranda, this involved building the biofactory.
- To work on water and overall environmental protection. In this point, reforestation is a key part of the learning exercise, one in which the multipurpose nursery is highly useful.
- The sustainability of marketable productive projects must be supported by other projects, aimed at guaranteeing food security.

## *The landscape shaped by labor*



Source: PASO Colombia's archive. July 2019.

## Productive aspects of the ERA

### *From the "Drop" to a diversified economy*

The ERA of Miranda was energized by the kick-off and implementation of a productive project in the 5 hectares initially given as commodate. This, as explained before, represented a key moment in launching and materializing the initiative.

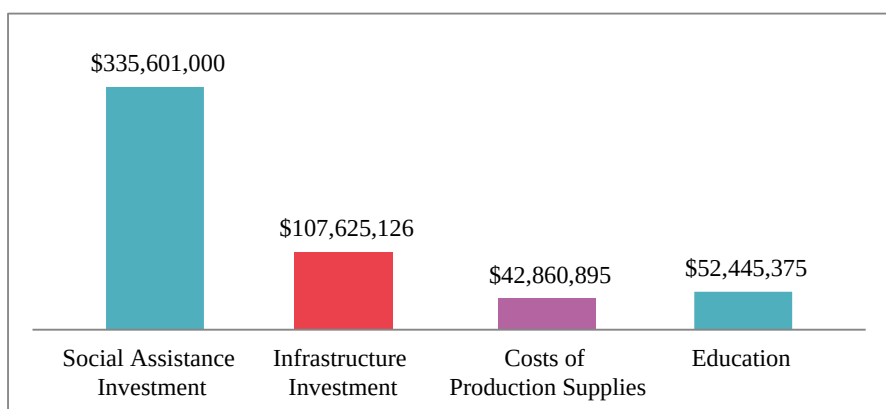
There are several events and facts that shaped this project, which began in a lot full of undergrowth and, at first sight, seemed far from being incorporated to a fully productive use. The transformation achieved in these two years, both in the lot and the surrounding area, attests to the work, creativity, and decisiveness of its participants, as well as to the success of a commitment that started as an idea or a dream and that, in the course of three years, became an experimental and learning farm with tangible economic results and several social and political benefits. This chapter describes the journey and logic of this economic process, its short-term achievements, the lessons learned, and the most relevant moments, in terms of sustainability and scope.

## Initial impulse for take-off

In order to understand the productive project, its development, and sustainability, we need to consider the role played by OEF - PASO Colombia, as an encouraging and galvanizing agent for the productive project in the ERA, as well as its fundamental contribution to one of the components stipulated in its strategic proposal: the endowment of a seed capital to allow take-off, guarantee a learning and maturing period for projects and initiatives, and mobilize other resources, such as land and labor.

As already mentioned, OEF's strategy focused on providing seed capital to start the ERA and to begin the training and productive processes.

*PASO Colombia's contribution to the ERA process*



Source: Prepared by the team of *Universidad del Valle*.

The overall estimate of this contribution indicates an investment of about \$537 million pesos in two years, distributed as follows: a majority (65%) was allocated to social investment, that is, to creating the minimum conditions of habitability, mobility, and permanence of the group within the ERA. Although, strictly speaking, it is not a productive investment, it was critical to enable the associative process and to ensure participation and the creation of working conditions. The second item is productive investment, linked to land improvement, the creation of the biofactory, and the adaptation of lots for productive projects. And, thirdly, investment to purchase seeds and supplies, which is also crucial for project development.

This sum is not negligible in quantitative terms, but if we consider the annual per capita amount, which is close to 13 million per participant, this



investment results in a lower figure than the one required to sustain a person who had taken up arms<sup>12</sup>, and therefore, its magnitude wanes. Nonetheless, this investment is rational if analyzed within the context of a project that demonstrates sustainability and is aimed at changing lives in a constructive and humanist sense. This also contrasts with the vast amount of resources that keep combatants from all sides on their feet to reproduce the cycle of violence and destruction.

This seed capital, invested to jump-start the ERA, also has the virtue of strengthening the project by encouraging other funding sources (credits, contributions, aid) that complement the requirements and enable not only the initial phase of productive projects, but also the development of the experience in all its different phases. As stated by PASO Colombia, we are looking to “leverage” other resources, which will not only give sustainability to the project, but will also allow us to scale it up in order to benefit more ex-combatants and people from other groups. In summary, we can calculate several cost-benefit estimations of this investment in the reincorporation process that demonstrate that it is an investment for peace—as opposed to an “investment” in and for war—that is not only financially rational, but also relevant from a social and humane point of view.

The ERA timeline (see illustration) presents some milestones, which may seem anecdotal, but emerge from the memory of the participants, for whom these were special moments of the experience. Outstanding milestones include:

1. Since the kick-off in the third quarter of 2017, the biofactory was built to produce the required organic fertilizer. This was done with the guidance of SENA technicians and PASO Colombia’s *extensionistas*, who simultaneously transferred knowledge about the practice itself and achieved the production of the fertilizer used in land improvement and product lines.
2. Support offered by the sugar refinery Riopaila-Castilla was crucial in the land improvement and recovery process. Through a dialogue that would have been unthinkable in a different context, the company provided machinery to clear the lot and start initial land removal activities.

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<sup>12</sup> The annual cost of maintaining a combatant is about \$30 million per person. In the case of professional soldiers, it amounts to \$33 million, including wages and equipment (Semana, September 17, 2014).

3. Expert teachers from Thomas Preston’s school, an ecological agriculture advisor, and from other schools, began the learning process on “sustainable production” and diversified agro-productive units, or Diverse Farms, which was an initial stimulus to strengthen the perspective of sustainability. In this stage, the tension between ideal and feasible paths was part of the lessons learned.
4. The construction of the “work unit” at the beginning of 2018, which was aimed at securing minimum conditions of habitability and sanitation for members of the groups involved in the experience. The unit included a bathroom, kitchen, two rooms, and a sanitation unit, which demonstrated a commitment with guaranteeing a dignified working space.
5. The beginning of the coffee seedling (*chapola*) line, with the adaptation of the space and the greenhouse. In this process, the agreement with the National Coffee Growers Federation was fundamental, as they supplied the seeds to produce *chapolas*, provided accompaniment and technical assistance and, finally, secured the purchase of coffee seedlings for distribution among producers from the whole Northern Cauca region through the municipal coffee growers committee<sup>13</sup>. In parallel, a nursery was established with the *chapolas* and the greenhouse. Its purpose on the medium term is to contribute to the reforestation in the farm and its surroundings with native species.
6. The support given by the company Hugo Restrepo, an important chili pepper processor and exporter, who offered to transfer knowledge and technical assistance to grow and process this product. Additionally, the company secured the purchase and assumed the transportation costs of the finished product. This agreement resulted in the development of a purely market-oriented line of chili pepper growing and early processing. In order to fund the first sowing and processing of chili pepper, the project managed to secure an initial loan from Banco Agrario for male and female farmers.
7. With support from SENA, in the third quarter of 2018, participants were trained in fish farming, fruit cultivation, and project management. They also began using the lake in the farm for red tilapia, with the

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<sup>13</sup> Cauca is one of the departments where coffee growing is most important. Generally, it is developed in small- and medium-sized farms, in rural, indigenous, and Afro-Colombian communities. There is an important development of specialty coffees in this department.

construction of the first cages and the purchase of fry, to project this line for food security purposes and distribution in the local market.

8. Participants also recall how, at the end of 2018, a gale knocked down the biofactory and how they overcame this “act of god” and raised it again, with improved resistance and durability conditions. At the same time, they built a pig shed and basic infrastructure facilities to process chili peppers, turn them into paste, and sell it to the company Hugo Restrepo.
9. The project received support from HarvestPlus, a program of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT, for its acronym in Spanish) that contributed with: special bean seeds of high nutritional value; training on cultivation, harvesting, and product selection to form a seed bank; and food security for the collective and other farmers in the area.
10. In order to secure sales of marketable surpluses of some of the products grown in the farm, a commercial partnership was launched with the collection center and the Central Market of Valle del Cauca, Cavasa. These entities offered guidance and training on this issue, which is crucial for the sustainability of small agricultural economies.
11. Over the course of two years, the network of cooperation and support of the project was expanded and diversified with the presence of institutions willing to support some phase or activity of the economic and/or the reincorporation process itself. This long list includes, among others, the United Nations, the Secretariat of Agriculture of Miranda, the World Food Program, *Universidad del Valle*, *Universidad del Cauca*, the Catalan Agency for Peace, Unicomfauca, Notre Dame University, and *Diálogo Interclesial por la Paz* (DIPAZ), among others.

## Timeline. ERA of Miranda, Cauca. Productive projects



Source: Prepared by team of *Universidad del Valle*

## ***Bid and experience on collective reincorporation***

Through the persistent work done by the collectives of peasants and reincorporated ex-combatants and with the support from PASO Colombia and the partner network, the ERA in La Elvira consolidated as a social process and an exercise of knowledge and capacity appropriation by its participants.

In addition, this process of building networks and developing joint work, contributed to the concrete transformation of the physical space. In this 5-hectare lot, initially covered with undergrowth, it has been possible to consolidate an experimental farm with access to electricity, a biofactory, fish cages, pig sheds, cattle, a greenhouse, a nursery, a chili pepper mill, and even a community hall. All this as a result of the ERA. In this sense, participants recognize and value the work and intervention of a large number of people and organizations, through actions that weave and support the experience. They also understand it as an initial transformation of their material living conditions.

As a result, this dynamic and the institutional support that surrounds it, are also valued by municipal social leaders outside the farm, as a sign of transformation of the immediate context, produced within the implementation of the Peace Agreement. For this reason, institutional support —initiated by PASO Colombia— produces an effect of optimism that counterbalances the fear induced by the persisting actions of violence.

The economic aspects of this learning process are critical, because its main stakeholders address the sustainability of economic reincorporation from a model of collective reincorporation. This model implies the permanence of the collective in the process as well as its participation from the decisions, activities, and benefits generated by the effort and work done by members of CEPRODET —which represents ex-combatants— and ASPROZONAC —as a key stakeholder of the project and the experience.

Even though it seems difficult to assess the performance of a productive process loaded with diverse meanings and purposes, it is relevant to show the economic rationality built around the overarching ideas that were essential to guide the process: diversification; staggered and small-scale production; combination between market-oriented and self-consumption projects with occasional marketable surpluses; experimentation and production with

sustainability practices; and a model of associative division of labor based on the principle of consensus among its basic stakeholders.

Aligned with these principles, the idea of diversification initially included production lines that were clearly market-oriented and were supported by agreements, accompaniment, and technical assistance. In the first phase, 2018-2019, this strategy focused on coffee seedlings (*chapolas*) and chili pepper. Table 1 summarizes some aspects of these two lines.

Table 1. ERA of Miranda, Cauca. Market-oriented products, 2018-2019

Iote No.	Micro-projects	Start date	Description	Associated Stakeholders	Production costs <sup>14</sup> (2018-2019)	Total revenue (2018-2019)	General characterization
1	Coffee seedlings	2018 – I semester.	Production of 300,000 coffee seedlings that will be used for post-sowing and maturation	Coffee Growers Committee of Northern Cauca, PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.	\$ 7,456,712	\$ 22,482,998	Extension of land used: 2,500m <sup>2</sup> , approx. Used supplies: seeds, sand, water.
7	Chili Pepper	2019 – I semester.	Chili pepper production: from sowing to transformation into paste.	Hugo Restrepo & Cía. PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.	\$5,566,808	\$16,079,695	Extension of land used: 10,000m <sup>2</sup> , approx. Supplies used: seeds, agrochemicals.

Source: prepared by the team of *Universidad del Valle*, with data from PASO Colombia<sup>14</sup> Standard prices.

Within a relatively short time frame, these two lines acquired and applied technical-productive learning with a relative success, albeit with some limitations. Nevertheless, it was possible to complete the cycle of sowing, care, harvesting and delivery (in the case of chili peppers up to processing). Both products achieved sustainable production in terms of average income; within two or three production cycles, income surpassed average costs and produced profits. In these two cases, developing a growth path was foreseeable by adjusting the size of the areas, increasing specialization, and adjusting care procedures.

The second line of products focused on food security, with products such as beans, cassava, and some vegetables. These are summarized in Table 2.



Table 2. ERA of Miranda, Cauca. Basic information of food security projects, 2018-2019

lote No.	Micro-projects	Start date	Description	Associated stakeholders	Production costs <sup>15</sup> (2018-2019)	Total revenue (2018-2019)	General Characterization
	Biofortified Bean 101.	2018 – II semestre.	Production of Biofortified Beans 101 to ensure food sovereignty .	CIAT (HarvestPlus Program), PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.	Not available.	\$ 2,854,000	Extension of land used: 2,500m2, approx. Supplies used: seeds, fertilizers .
	Vegetables.	2018 - 2019	Production of spices, vegetables, and legumes for food sovereignty	PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.	Not available.	Not available.	Extension: 5,000m2, approx. Supplies used: seeds, fertilizers.
5	Pumpkin, cassava, and corn.	2019 – I semestre.	Sowing of pumpkin, corn, and cassava for self-consumption.	PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.	Not available.	Not available.	Extension of land used: 10,000m2, approx. Supplies used: seeds, fertilizers.

Source: prepared by the team of *Universidad del Valle*, with data from PASO Colombia

<sup>15</sup> Standard prices.

These lines, which clearly implied production costs in terms of labor and supplies, managed to complete the production cycle and offer direct supplies for self-consumption and food production for members of the collective. These products were used to prepare meals for sale at various meetings and workshops held in the ERA space. In this case, while contributing to food security, they also became a source of income<sup>16</sup>.

In the specific case of beans, most of the production was destined for self-consumption; another part was used to provide seeds to other farmers in the area, as part of CIAT's HarvestPlus proposal; and a small portion was sold. This showcases the multipurpose nature of a key product that is part of the basic national diet.

The third product line had a mixed purpose, but it is expected that market sales will be predominant in the long term. This line includes livestock and fish farming products (tilapia and pig raising), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. ERA of Miranda, Cauca. Basic information of livestock projects, 2018-2019

lote No.	Micro-projects	Start date	Description	Associated stakeholders	Production costs <sup>17</sup> (2018-2019)	Total revenue (2018-2019)	General characterization
3	Fish Farming.	2018 – II semester.	Quarterly red tilapia production, for sale and food security.	PASO Colombia and CEPRODET	Not available.	\$2,762,850	Extension of the lake: 7,500m2 approx. Supplies used: fry, concentrate.
6	Cría de cerdos.	2019 – I semester.	Production of fattening pigs for processed meat and offspring sale. Progress on cold room construction.	World Food Program (WFP), Catalan Institution (Cold Room Project), PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.	\$ 4,067,403	\$2,340,008	Land extension: 2,500m2, approx. Supplies used: insemination, concentrate.

Source: prepared by the team of *Universidad del Valle*, with data from PASO Colombia<sup>17</sup> Standard prices.

The fish farming line had a headstart, the lake, which required investment and specialization, albeit of a relatively low complexity. Swine breeding started with an initial investment in the sheds and also involved learning on raising and care procedures, the requirements on basic sanitary conditions, and harnessing both the product and waste materials.

In both cases, investments require a maturation process and, above all, additional investment for other project components. This is the case of the cold room, which is needed to guarantee a proper management both in capture and sacrificing procedures so that the product has adequate conditions for sale in the local market. In this way, these lines show a relatively positive perspective in terms of growth and sustainability.

Following this path, in 2020 they managed to expand their production capacity and technification with new cages, 4 new fish farming ponds with aerators, and the construction of a fish farming factory with a cold room, evisceration, weighing, office, and warehouse.

A third line of products was designed and aimed at sustainability. As previously indicated, its initial stage focused on improving and “curing” the land received as commodate and in other land adaptation activities. The production of Bokashi organic fertilizer is an emblematic example. For this purpose, trainings were conducted by *extensionistas* from SENA and PASO Colombia.

Table 4. ERA of Miranda, Cauca. Production line toward sustainability, 2018-2019

Lote No.	Micro-projects	Start date	Description	Associated stakeholders	Production costs <sup>18</sup> (2018-2019)	Total revenue (2018-2019)	General characterization
2	Bokashi.	2017 – II semester	Production of Bokashi and microorganisms for soil recovery.	PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.	\$9,865,400	\$2,102,80019	Land extension: 2,500m2, approx. Supplies used: microorganism, organic fertilizer supermagro, chemicals. Production of 32 tons
3	Nursery.	2018 – II Semester.	Cultivation of fruit trees, ornamental and timber species.	PASO Colombia and CEPRODET.			Reforestation of the property and its surroundings with 1,800 trees.

Source: prepared by the team of *Universidad del Valle*, with data from PASO Colombia.

<sup>18</sup> Standard prices.

<sup>19</sup> This only includes the monetary income, since there is a hidden income represented in the fertilizer used for soil improvement and as an input for the different lines of agricultural products.

Despite the shutdown caused by the gale that destructed the first biofactory, at the end of 2018, this activity continued operations, producing a significant volume of organic fertilizer<sup>20</sup>. Its distribution was targeted, first, to use it directly in land improvement and as product fertilizer at the ERA; second, to sell it to some farmers; and, finally, as a donation, a solidary and pedagogical initiative to extend sustainability practices.

As mentioned above, this project had a significant investment that contributed to improve the land and increase productivity, which had an impact in product harvests. As for the nursery, it is a line and investment opportunity with a medium- and long-term projection in which 1,800 fruit trees and timber species were lifted and transplanted within the farm itself.

## Diversification and microscale economies

If we take stock of the exercise, the great diversity of productive processes is outstanding; over the course of two years, the ERA reached ten “lines” including: agricultural micro-projects (chili pepper, coffee seedlings (*chapolas*), vegetables); livestock (fish, pigs, and cattle); supplies (biofactory); and forestry (nursery for reforestation). This diversification is rational from a purely economic standpoint, and is typical of small-scale family and associative agriculture, which even makes it more efficient. This is why some scholars have called them microscale economies (Forero et al, 2016), and Agricultural Economy experts (Bejarano, 1998: 80-81) highlight some of their features: greater and intensive use of land, greater productivity per area, and higher number of harvests.

The concrete ERA experience implemented a relatively staggered series of micro-projects that not only overlapped, but demanded an important degree of attention and dedication. This demands were taken up by the associative model, with the achievements already indicated, but also with measures that generated a greater efficiency and effectiveness in the processes.

Indeed, the participative and collective character of the process, instead of denying, confirmed the need to designate clear responsibilities and functions and to ensure continuity in work and care procedures. As indicated in the testimonies, there are multiple reasons why the initial group could not be maintained, and the number of members decreased from 55 to 20 “rotating” participants between September 2017 and the end of 2019. This was influenced

by the threats and uncertainty of the period, which generated disturbance and increased desertion.

A second aspect to be considered in the diversification approach is experimentation. This concept guided the process in these semesters and generated results in terms of learning and knowledge appropriation, derived from the “learn-by-doing” and “trial and error” methods, which are typical of a constructivist view. However, this approach has opportunity costs and is specially demanding in terms of process effectiveness, efficacy, and efficiency. On the other hand, it requires a more demanding exercise of verification, monitoring, learning, and adjustment.

In this sense, the process was full of lessons. Most of them were well assimilated and a few others were less so, because of their implications in terms of resources and also because of the time in which they took place. For example, although the chili pepper line had secured the entire production, processing, and marketing chain, and had achieved efficient production and yield levels, it was more demanding in terms of care and technical attention, due to its vulnerability to climatic and biological factors. This was apparent in one of the last harvests, in which yields were lower and harvesters experienced some health difficulties, due to the substances that make the product useful and valuable in the market.

This also happened in the fish farming line. While they learned to calibrate the amount of food and water oxygenation, productivity was below expected and they had to designate one person to focus on the learning route and take responsibility of moving the project to a take-off point. The bean crop, with all its potential, required permanent irrigation and therefore a constant use of the water pump, which increased costs and challenged the very idea of sustainability. The improvement of basic infrastructure would eventually change that restriction.

To summarize, from a microscale perspective, the ERA farm showed a path of sustainability whose consolidation and improvement implied: adjustments in scale (productive areas); rotations to increase yields; a relative degree of specialization and consolidation of care practices; and, finally, investments to improve production and working conditions. Following this route, progress was made in electrification, and a more efficient irrigation system is planned.

In this same direction, the ERA is proposing a clearer division of labor, which combines collective with individual responsibility over processes.

## *Preparing the terrain for a new agricultural project*



Source: PASO Colombia's archive. October 2018.

### ***Self-consumption, food sovereignty and marketable surplus***

The second feature of product diversification in the ERA shows the combination between a production aimed at self-consumption —aligned with the purpose of “food security” —, and a production aimed at commercialization and income generation, including marketable specialized lines: chili peppers, coffee seedlings, and others.

The two purposes were also combined in varying proportions: beans, vegetables, fish, and pigs.

Biofortified beans were originally intended solely for food security. The first results showed that it could be scaled up to generate marketable surpluses, but, as noted, it required adjustments and irrigation, which, in turn, implied investment and a higher start-up cost. The relevance and importance in ensuring food security must be highlighted.

As a result, the ERA always secured food and meals for its members, and it became a basic condition of the daily lives of its participants. Over time, this



became a service for visitors, workshop facilitators and others, who also were “invited for lunch.” As already mentioned, all this is part of building meaning and social fabric.

One of the most interesting features of the whole process is related to the nature of productive labor, in its various modalities and combinations: cooperative, associative, and individual labor, supported by agreements of solidary economy, and connected with the ideal of “collective reincorporation.” Producers and workers are reincorporated ex-combatants (members of CEPRODET), and peasants (members of ASPROZONAC. The productive and working process was carried out under a model of negotiation between these organizations and their leaders. A high proportion of labor, measured in days, was carried out by the members of these organizations themselves, and only in limited cases, such as the development of specific tasks, did they hire external workers from the region.

It is worth mentioning that when we arrived there, peasants had already distributed the land, and two hectares were given to each peasant family, here there are 25 families. So, they told us, “we can give you five hectares.” But we never divided those five hectares. What we said was, “Let’s plan and work on them collectively.” So, the crops you see here are collective; here, nothing is distributed individually and we preserve that collectivity. It’s not like I’m going to take those 30 meters and grow beans just for myself, no. Some people are doing that, but it’s because they have a life project with another peasant. This is why some of them have said, “I’m going to do this with a peasant,” and so on (Man, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET leader, September 18, 2019).

It is difficult to measure the value of the collective work done by reincorporated ex-combatants and peasants, because a large part of it was devoted to projects that were not aimed at commercialization, but rather at sustaining shared living conditions, self-consumption, and land appreciation. These include: part of bean production, the biofactory, fish farming, the produce of the vegetable garden, and the development of the nursery.

This perspective can help us analyze one of the issues that is key to understanding the commitment and permanence of ex-combatants in productive projects, namely: incentive schemes. A substantial part of those incentives was expressed in kind, that is, in the guarantee of daily sustenance for those who worked in the process. Also, as shown in the testimonies, in some cases there was a direct incentive, expressed in yield share, income,

and wages, especially in productive lines with secured sales. Other incentives are more of a moral and emotional nature, which are significant not only because it is a collective project, but also because of the political meaning of the experience.

In this sense, the importance of the “savings and reinvestment” account of the project is evident, perhaps as an expression of a phase in which participants needed to attend to commitments related to credits, purchase of supplies, tools, and materials. This indicates the priority assigned to the sustainability and continuity of the different production lines and also to new investments required to secure project sustainability. It is also important to note that, as new projects are consolidated and new capital is invested, the possibility of remunerating labor increases, which strengthens the group’s prospects of sustainability.

Returning to the issue of diversification, and in relation to the labor required and the management model, we need to consider the cyclical nature of agricultural production. These cycles imply peaks and low levels of labor requirements, as evidenced in some projects with high labor demand, such as bean and chili pepper production. In these cases, there was not enough manpower to take responsibility for all the processes at the same time, and the incentive and distribution scheme experienced difficulties, which ultimately affected the performance and overall efficiency of the production unit

However, this observation shows but one part of the equation, which is actually completed with a fair assessment of the size of the projects and the total area in which the experience was carried out: 5 hectares, which extended to 12 hectares by the end of 2019. The initial area, on which all the micro-projects were developed, is barely close to the size of the Family Agriculture Unit (UAF)<sup>21</sup>, established for this zone at 4.1 hectares. This area would be barely adequate to sustain an average peasant family —made up of two adults and two or three children or adolescents—, whereas the project had the equivalent to approximately four families.

For this reason, the demand for higher productivity implies the development of capital and labor-intensive products, which are partially possible in this productive unit and on a relatively low scale. Achieving higher levels implies

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<sup>21</sup> For Lizcano and Asprilla (2013), the UAF is devised for the generation of 2 minimum legal wages in Colombia (Agreement 202 of December 29, 2009). According to the Xaverian University and INCODER (2013), the minimum and comprehensive UAF for Northern Cauca is 4.07 hectares.

a greater investment and that, precisely, is the challenging path that lies ahead in 2020.

At this point we return to the initial issue, which is ever present in the narrative of the two stakeholders: access to and availability of adequate land, with minimum conditions of accessibility and productive use. In this case, the vicious circle that the Peace Accord seeks to transform was provisionally addressed from below, based on initiatives such as the one that originated the ERA.

So, the peasants very kindly said, “Come here, and here you can implement the Havana Accords, on this farm.” That happened two years ago. And that’s when they began to implement the agreements in a swiftness that contrasts with the government’s slowness in implementing the provisions related with land access. So, the peasants said, “We have 5 hectares here that belong to common areas; they can come here and develop their productive projects. We also have a 12,000m<sup>2</sup> lake, with an approximate depth of 8 meters, and they can also use it to start their productive projects. That lake is the water source of this farm, water that comes from the Desbaratado river, located in the village Desbaratado, in the municipality of Miranda (Man, PASO Colombia’s team, June 22, 2019).

The dynamics of the ERA process, its successful evolution, and its demonstrative effect, opened the possibility of a new agreement with ASPROZONAC, to expand the crop area in 10 additional hectares, for the production of cassava, corn, and plantain, strengthening, at the same time, commercialization and food security products for both working groups.

### ***Experimentation, sustainability and transformation of the territory***

Undoubtedly, the project that best reflects the focus on sustainability and the general approach of the ERA, is the biofactory, in which the learn-by-doing method was materialized, thus encouraging a real change in perspective — one could even speak of an epistemological turn in terms of praxis— on land use and qualification. This shift had positive consequences, first, in land recovery; second, in productivity; and, finally, as already pointed out, with incidence in other local producers and clear educational effects. In short, this was a small step toward changing the procedures and methods to work the land.

A central aspect of this process was the transformation of the territory, the farm itself, and also its immediate surroundings which, as narrated in several testimonies, started in a lot full of undergrowth with soil deteriorated by monoculture and conventional practices, located in the ZRC. Its potential was brought to light by the immense associative and collaborative work and effort that has already been highlighted. The transformation is evident in the developments witnessed at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, and even in land appreciation. Indeed, this is a positive and perhaps unintended outcome of land improvement and sustainability practices. The appreciation of the ERA lot and also of La Elvira ZRC is remarkable: the price per hectare reached \$70 million, almost tripling the initial price at which the property was bought.

In a medium-term perspective, a nursery with different local species was created, which is an early bet on reforestation, sustainability, and environmental protection, that includes the recovery of water sources in the area. This is a sustainability-based investment with a medium and long-term perspective.

*Comparison of territorial transformation through the development of the ERA*



Source: PASO Colombia's archive. October 2017.



Source: PASO Colombia's archive. October 2017.



Photo: PASO Colombia's archive. July 2019.

Initially, when PASO Colombia arrived, there was no longer a sowing area; it didn't even exceed 10% of the farm's total area. Currently, the area destined for sowing, transformation, and productive projects is almost 100%. So, that is a substantial change. Another major change is the establishment of the different production lines that were carried out with reincorporated ex-combatants. This is also a substantial change that we're seeing, the projects already established (Man, Paso Colombia's team, February 10, 2020).

In terms of experimentation and learning, the various micro-projects showed a wide appropriation by the group, which gave space to the emergence of vocations and topics of specific interest among participants.

At the same time, the experience narrowed down and moderated the ideal expectations and forecasts that accompany undertakings of any scale. The process involved learning from mistakes, delving further into each project, understanding its potential, its limits and requirements, and learning to manage time and processes. This required combining technical capacity with dialogue and a self-reflective perspective on the role of each individual and the collective. The whole process evidences a search for productive partnerships, presenting projects, and managing the organization's internal processes, etc.

As a result of these learning and assessments, a new stage has opened. This stage includes continuities as well as recent developments, and is characterized by a greater economic projection, and the implications already mentioned in terms of sustainability, remuneration, and benefits for the life quality of the collective.

## ***Present and future***

In the narratives of the collectives CEPRODET and ASPROZONAC, who built this experience, there has been an emphasis on the lack of compliance and political will by the state. They raise issues such as poor access to land, delays in the allocation of resources for productive projects, and, specifically, the lack of guarantees to provide security and protection for fully reincorporated ex-combatants.

There is an ample debate on the implementation and compliance of the Peace Agreement that is riddled with political judgments, which sometimes makes it difficult to understand the complexity, not only of the Agreement itself, but

also of the circumstances in which it is being implemented by the government, FARC, and other national and regional institutions.

In this context, there are different assessments<sup>22</sup> and their evaluation requires a balanced position that analyzes the processes and actions developed in each component of the Agreement, which, amidst difficulties and doubts, show that progress is being made. It is also about reaffirming the will of different social sectors to continue demanding full compliance with the Peace Agreement, but also to support it through concrete actions and commitments from the local level, and through the accompaniment of unique processes, which, like this experience, are present in many parts of the national territory.

For this reason, exercises such as ERAs are relevant, because they showcase the will of ex-combatants, their enthusiasm, and creative work in the midst of difficulties, which reaffirm a commitment to peace and demand support from different sectors of society. On the other hand, they highlight the role of entities such as PASO Colombia, that fills a void in politics and public management by encouraging, accompanying, and providing support through substantial investment and institutional commitment. This is not only an economic reincorporation experience around productive projects, but an experience of comprehensive reincorporation, peacebuilding, and reconciliation.

It took almost three years to develop a project “from below,” in which, as an expression of territorial peace, it was possible to access land, even without being able to own it. We learned from our mistakes and acquired new capacities to plan investments, but above all, we built a path and a proposal for developing work on reincorporation and reconciliation.

Finally, two productive projects were approved for CEPRODET by the CNR in January 2020. Paradoxically, the state’s delayed response gave them

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<sup>22</sup> We already pointed out the existence of different monitoring reports that speak of the “glass as half full and half empty.” Most recently, the central concern in these reports refers to the communication obstacles between the parties, the murders and threats against FARC members and leaders of the process in the territories, and the slowness of some processes, such as project approval. To understand the complexity of the issue, one can read the reports published the Kroc Institute (2019) and Centro de Pensamiento, prepared within the framework of CSIVI (FARC-CSIVI, 2020). Also, the reports of the current government that give an account of the implementation and progress in various issues, even in comparison with the progress made by the previous government, who signed the Agreement.

time to prepare and propose, with greater certainty, new initiatives for investing their own resources.

From the end of 2019 to mid-2020, with support and accompaniment from PASO Colombia, they leased a new 23-hectare farm, conceived as a “second node” of the ERA. As a result of this expansion, new participants have joined and continue to receive training: there are currently 39 people from CEPRODET (10 women and 29 men), and 23 people from ASPROZONAC (8 women and 15 men), for a total of 62 people.

In this new space, they have invested in the first 10 head of high-quality dairy cattle, with mechanical milking; they expanded fish farming, with three new ponds; they refurbished the existing sheds and now they have 6 new breeding sows; they installed a new project of free-range hen raising; there is a factory of concentrates; and they have 8 grazing paddocks and 1 hectare for feeding pasture. With this new dynamism in livestock projects, they plan to build a meat processing plant and a dairy facility to make aged cheeses.

Several of these new projects have been funded by the World Food Program, the Catalan Agency for Cooperation, the European Trust Fund for Colombia, and the International Organization for Migration. Therefore, its own management has made progress possible.

In addition, their neighbors and colleagues of ASPROZONAC have extended the concession of new lots, from five to twelve hectares in La Elvira. In this space they want to install a Cultural Demonstrative Village in which there is a museum, with the archaeological pieces that their former commander, “Zepelin,” collected when he was alive. They want to tell their own story through this museum and install an eco-trail in homage to the victims of a conflict of which they were authors, to heal the pain of the past, without forgetting it.

We have thought about making eco-trails, and to bring some artists to make paintings and murals. We will also identify the trees that are going to be planted, put the names of the victims on them, and perhaps some anecdotes and phrases of what should not happen in Colombia anymore (Man, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, October 17, 2019).

How can we assess this elapsed time? Perhaps the days and months of effort, frustration, learning, and motivation, are the best way to materialize the political transition they imagined when they were in Monterredondo, with



uncertainty running high and on the verge of laying down their weapons. The productive bet served as a “motivation” and sustenance for a more complex project whose overall assessment is difficult, if not impossible, to complete.

Indeed, how can we assess hope in a concrete reincorporation experience? How can we measure the value of building a process that allows us to minimize the risk of conflict relapse? What place do we assign to learning and capacity building, not only in productive, but also in social and civic terms? How can we dimension the ERA, considering that it has produced small gestures of reconciliation, rebuilding of daily family life, and construction of new social bonds and the social fabric of communities affected by many years of conflict and violence?

In short, not only is it difficult to assess the economic performance of a productive process loaded with other meanings and purposes, but nor does it seem to be the central issue at stake, as long as it is separated from its social, political, and cultural value.

## The era as a reincorporation exercise

### *Organization and productivity*

For peasants in ASPROZONAC, the arrival of PASO Colombia and the development of the ERA opened up a concrete possibility to settle definitively in La Elvira and entertain a real possibility of living from agriculture. This happened because, once they received the land they had fought for, faced with the lack of technical assistance, technological tools, and the guarantees negotiated with the state, they came to think that it would not be possible to transform a land exhausted by sugarcane production into a space for family agriculture. For that reason, one of their plans was to rent the farm to continue sugarcane production.

Today, the 25 peasant families have been able to establish their productive lives based on land improvement. To do this, they have relied on their individual empirical knowledge, in trainings developed in the ERA, and in the resources, infrastructure, and institutional support that has been expanding along its development.

In the ZRC, the production of each plot belongs to a family and the commercialization of the produce is sometimes done by setting up stands

in the farm, which are attended by inhabitants of the area, or by taking the products to the municipal farmers' market. In the case of some products, there are agreements with grocery stores in Miranda, Palmira, and Cali, although they are incipient. Farmers in La Elvira have recently joined collective efforts aimed at setting up peasant markets on a permanent basis, a proposal under negotiation with the mayor's office with the support of PASO Colombia.

For ex-combatants, entering the associative world through the creation of CEPRODET was an important shift in their relationship practices, as it differs from the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of their lives in the guerrilla.

As previously pointed out, CEPRODET was created with the support of PASO Colombia in the stage of early reincorporation, to encourage the creation of associative productive scenarios and access international cooperation resources and credit. Also, it was devised as a political platform for those who were interested in doing local or regional advocacy.

In terms of working with ex-combatants, PASO Colombia highlights that, due to their experience in war, many of them have developed skills to work as a team; they have discipline, respond to guidelines, and maintain a spirit of cooperation and a high sense of collective belonging. Additionally, they possess strong skills in constructing and using spaces. The ERA has been a setting in which, through processes of knowledge transfer and empowerment, they have been able to recognize, redirect, and enhance their previous capabilities.

We pride ourselves on confirming that reincorporation is possible. We've shown that the strength, discipline, and manpower of reincorporated ex-combatants is unique. There was a shelter that they started to build in October and they finished it in December. The shelter came up to here, it was more than 500 meters long. A gale knocked it down in just one second. That's why they rebuilt it with pillars and cement, but the previous shelter came up to here and it lasted almost a year, until the wind blew it away. There we had a very large biofactory, but they immediately reacted and built this new one. They have discipline and a large work force. They only lacked part of the technique, which they inherited from the farmers, because they have cultivated all their lives. This technique was also transferred by the advisors or *extensionistas* provided by PASO Colombia (Man, PASO Colombia's team: June 22, 2019).

*Farmer doing sowing work at the ERA*



Source: PASO Colombia's archive. April 2018

Thus, the challenge for ex-combatants is twofold: on the one hand, they have to transform their own relationships, harnessing the strong bonds generated by “camaraderie,” their identity, and common history, but transforming their structures of hierarchy and authority. The ERA committee, for instance, is a learning scenario in which they work week by week on concrete needs and make decisions within a setting of horizontal relations. The same occurs with the deliberative spaces created by CEPRODET:

Here, you may have your own ideas, but everything is done democratically. We tell them, “guys... here’s what we have. And if the majority says no, then no it is. But here CA is the one who proposes, and that’s why CA is successful. And he’s not even the commander anymore! (Man, administrative, CEPRODET, February 6, 2020).

The other challenge has been to transform the way they relate to external stakeholders, because the previous symbolic and material resources they used with inhabitants of the territories, were based on more vertical relationships of control and coercion.

Today, this situation has been transformed. Since the founding of CEPRODET as an associative initiative that includes mostly ex-combatants, but also some peasants and local inhabitants, new relationships have started to emerge as a result of an effort to achieve greater horizontality. The importance of this exercise has been recognized and legitimized by those who value not only the fact that agricultural production is at the center of the project, but also the substantive change in terms of attitudes and relationships. Added to this is the responsibility of repairing the social bonds that were severed due to their participation in the war.

I've known CA for a long time. He used to spend a lot of time in the area where we lived when he was a commander. Once, he went to my house and sat down in the doorway, and from that point, you could see the whole mountain down. And he sat there! He said he was going to lead an attack from there, and I was about six months pregnant! And I asked him, "Are you going to stay here?" And he said, "Yes." So, I had to take my daughter and go out to the mountain, to look for shelter! That time I was very angry! But you see him now and you know he's having a hard time! So, as I've always liked politics, representing people, and participating in spaces—I represent peasant women—, now I go with him to the meetings! (Woman, Peasant, ASPROZONAC, March 5, 2020).

## The value of labor

In the three years of CEPRODET's existence, both peasants and ex-combatants have distributed their time and efforts in four different aspects of the organization: political representation, project and partnership management, productive project development, and maintenance of collective domestic life.

For this reason, it should be noted that the organizational process and internal labor management is part of the exercise motivated by PASO Colombia to produce socio-political transformations from organizational processes of economic production. That is why it is so important—recognizing the organizational challenge that it represents—that all ERAs develop exercises of association between peasants and ex-combatants.

In this sense, the change of attitudes, values, and behaviors in order to build peace is conceived as a work exercise, that is, not only as a meeting and dialogue scenario, but as a daily task. In the words of its director: "The

gesture of peace par excellence is to work with the other to change that which reproduced war” (Man, PASO Colombia’s team, July 24, 2020).

This, as we previously mentioned, is part of a learning process that had to take place through starting and developing productive projects. However, since the disarmament, the possibility to exert free will has been extended, and this has been substantial in changing the lives of ex-combatants.

Although the motivation to work in the farm is clear, defining a stable group and reaching internal agreements on the consistency and periodicity of working times has been a slow and difficult process, which today is closer to taking shape. As can be deduced from the testimonies and dialogues, this has sometimes affected the evolution of productive projects and the assignment of responsibilities.

What happens here is that there are several tasks. They work on Mondays and Fridays. Several of them participate, but the most constant ones are S and L, because the others come more rarely. There are about seven women [...], there are some of them who stop coming for about 3 months, but seven of them are constant (Woman, peasant, CEPRODET, December 12, 2019).

For example, we developed a chili pepper crop and it was a beautiful experience, because the company sent a technician, we did the work, they bought the chili pepper from us, and we sent the chili pepper to the company, and so on. Then, the project started to collapse, because out of the colleagues initially involved, there’s only one who’s committed and the other got out. So we’re in that situation, we don’t know who’s going to lead the way, if we’re going to continue planting at all, or what’s going to happen to the agreement with the chili pepper company (Woman, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, December 12, 2019).

*Chili pepper harvest in Miranda's ERA*



First harvest of the productive project in partnership with Hugo Restrepo & Cía. January 2019

Productive life is an integration exercise in itself, which “orders daily life,” creates routines, assigns roles, and produces forms of integration with other stakeholders. However, the organizational process has been progressive and has been adjusting slowly. The assignment of specific roles and responsibilities required the team not only to adjust its availability, but also to learn and adapt to a concept of labor with strong associative characteristics.

### *Coffee seedlings (chapolas) at the ERA*



Source: PASO Colombia's archive. October 2018

Sometimes it is difficult to make their life stories compatible with business and income generating activities. But, at the same time, being facilitators of coexistence through a productive enterprise creates a situation in which learning occurs naturally, from farmer to farmer. The war did not allow this to happen. Before they spoke about FARC as an organization; now, they speak about peasants, that is, they feel like peasants in the area, they begin to have a vision of their own future (Man, PASO Colombia's team, February 4, 2020).

In the first stages, external stakeholders, such as the technicians who accompany the processes, were used to more “orderly” dynamics or to have dialogues with individuals and not with collectives, so they were not able to understand the entropy of the group's organization: they felt that there were difficulties in appropriating roles and responsibilities.

(About the productive project) Let's say that, for them, as peasants, the model fits very well, as long as they receive some accompaniment or resources. But we could not say that the project as such should go to a group, because there's no direct responsible. You may have a group, but no one's responsible for the activities, as such. Or they could say: “Well, I did

this,” or “this belongs to me.” So it’s good to think that a hectare generates labor, because then you’re going to need several people for collecting, supporting, and maintaining that harvest. But, then, we don’t have a direct responsible, and when we need to speak with the person in charge, there’s no person in charge. So, that’s a shortcoming. It would be good to have two or three people overseeing the project and its continuity, to prevent people walking away from relevant activities... (Man, technician from the company Hugo Restrepo, October 23, 2019).

## Collective reincorporation and particular needs

One of the most complex aspects of this process was the substantial change experienced by ex-combatants when the organization that structured their daily lives ceased to exist and their personal needs started to appear as a purely private matter.

It should also be noted that, with few exceptions, ex-combatants have had access to basic income, the stipend that the state committed to allocate for a 24-month period after disarmament. These resources have bought time for the productive process at the ERA, including the adjustments derived from trial and error. But, besides this stipend, it is crucial that, depending on the results of the productive process, ex-combatants have access to some individual economic retribution.

In this regard, it is important to point out that the productive bet of the ERA is strongly anchored in the political conception that FARC-EP had of its own organization.

In guerrilla life, each member of the structure was conscious of the specific role they played in the survival of the organization. Their activity was not a job in itself, or was not conceived of as such, but rather as a way of life. The social bond, despite being mediated by military hierarchy, is frequently evoked by ex-combatants as “a school” and as “a family.”

Under this premise, high-ranking officers, often invisible or distant to rank and file guerrilla fighters, appeared as providers of the material bases for existence. For this reason, daily work within guerrillas did not have any type of remuneration perceived as “salary.”

During the negotiation of the agreement, it was foreseen that this change would be one of the most difficult issues in early reincorporation. FARC-EP



negotiators were confident that their organization would be able to maintain cohesion, as it had multiple symbolic resources to preserve the bonds, based on the projection of its political platform into civilian life.

CEPRODET was created for this purpose, and the accompaniment of PASO Colombia has been important for them. In the process of developing the ERA, PASO Colombia has been providing answers to the question of what economic reincorporation is and how it can be achieved from a collective perspective. This effort is valuable beyond the context of La Elvira itself, since no previous DDR process in the country had attempted to model and conceptualize the problem with this perspective.

Personally, I liked very much that J, who had been a leader, explained to me that this idea came from a non-governmental foundation willing to bet on this process, and that they were practically guiding us and shedding light on where to go. And I said, “If it’s like that, we need to do it.” Sometimes, not so many words are needed. So, I said, “If you’re there, I am going.” And I came here, and here I am (Man, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, September 4, 2020).

### ***Leadership transformation***

“To command by obeying” and “to convince and not defeat” are two of the best known Zapatista principles in Latin America. Both premises summarize the most important challenge of the political transition materialized in the development of the ERA and its transformation of the role of leadership.

We have already mentioned that some of the commanders of FARC’s Sixth Front have been the visible heads of the entire process, since the concentration in the PTN of Monterredondo.

As often happens in the early stages of peaceful empowerments, the achievements and progress in positioning and maintaining the ERA as a school, maintaining the collective organized around the alliance ASPROZONAC – CEPRODET, and sustaining the will for peace of ex-combatants, is directly related to the work of their leaders, who have turned this commitment into their life project.

To this extent, it is possible to identify the collective dimension of the entire productive and learning process, but in terms of administrative and

“managerial” capacity, the ERA process has been quite focused on the figures of the leaders, who are predominantly male.

Acquiring a broad vision of the productive process, opening up marketing opportunities, and funding new processes, has been a substantial learning experience for them. However, the processes of taking initiative, making decisions, and representing the organization, have been highly focused on their management and decision-making capabilities.

Political work, management, and positioning the productive bet have allowed these leaders to effect a fundamental transformation in the way they position themselves in the local sphere and strengthen their leadership in this difficult context of political transition, avoiding the pitfalls resulting from successive crises in the near and distant context, and in the process of implementing the Peace Agreement.

The truth is that I’m here working because of the leader who is at our side. That was the experience, because we spoke about many cooperatives. So, the first thing I saw, or felt, was the person who was going to lead us. Because there are a lot of people who say they want to do it, but they don’t do it in such a way that everything is legal, that everything is fine. And we and our colleagues, in spite of the difficulties, have to be there. So, we need a leader who knows how to solve that! So, that’s why I chose to be here. And I thought, “If you go there, then I’ll go there too.” And in spite of so many things, thank God, we have done well, he’s been a leader who helps in some way or another. He knocks and knocks on doors, he supports us and we support him, we have a collective work and that has been good (Woman, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET: December 12, 2019).

There are three elements that stand out in their current discourse about their recent civil role as a productive and political group:

- The importance of creating partnerships with different social sectors to position peace as a priority in the agenda.
- The importance of training and qualification processes for CEPRODET members.
- A joint political agenda with other territorial stakeholders pointing out the need to democratize access to land, food production, and environmental care.

And without hesitation, we said, “This is the opportunity, we’re going to the farm La Elvira, we’re going to start producing, we’re going to harness these resources that PASO Colombia is giving us, and we’re going to make this a place of integration.” And that’s what the ERA has been. It’s a place of integration where organizations arrive, where the academy arrives, where all the institutions that want to help arrive. And here, we make our proposal. But there’s also an exchange of experiences with surrounding communities. Here, one of the slogans built with PASO Colombia and the peasants is that we’re going to “learn by doing.” Many of us lack knowledge of how to sow with current technological methods, so our production is rudimentary, in our own ways. Now, we’ve learned a lot from these technological advances in agriculture, and now we see this knowledge being put into practice with communities, with indigenous people (Man, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET leader, June 22, 2019).

For better or for worse, with their deep-rooted ideas and their pains, process leaders represent a “group” that, to a large extent, is made up of local people who, in the midst of pressure from those who remain in arms, have sustained their will to persist in civil society and to consolidate a productive project to the benefit of those who participate. Because of all the learning and skills in management and political representation, it is not surprising that decision-making processes within CEPRODET are centralized around their criteria.

Generally, whatever CA says is done, because he’s on it. He’s always thinking how to direct and there are many people who are good warriors, but they have to be told when to leave. As he says, “There are people who are good warriors, good at firing weapons, they move forward and do as they’re told, but if you don’t tell them anything, they don’t do anything, right?” So, he has the ability that he sees situations and how they unfold, and we follow him. If somebody else comes here to command, we won’t cooperate (Man, administrative, CEPRODET, February 6, 2020).

## *ERA participants in a class within the biofactory*



Photo: PASO Colombia's archive. February 2018.

### ***Social impacts of the ERA***

We have already underscored some fundamental aspects of the integration process among peasants and ex-combatants and of the way in which learning has taken place in the associative and productive life, giving shape and meaning to the sociopolitical reincorporation.

But what other changes occurred in this phase? After going through the negotiation process in the PTN, after laying down arms and spending several months in the ETCR, engaged in various training and internal organization activities, the arrival to La Elvira to begin the ERA process took place. In relation to this process, almost all ex-combatants mentioned the turning points experienced in their lives during these months.

Besides the evident rupture of not living amidst confrontation anymore, that is, of not being “under fire,” there are two key turning points: the freedom of mobility—even though in Miranda there are still security issues that affect this perception of freedom—, and the possibility of strengthening family life, of giving an important place to personal intimacy.

The situation changed. It’s not like before when we were “outside” and we said, “Watch out! The planes arrived! The army arrived! They are in that place and we need to leave or fight!” It all changed, right? Now we’re more relaxed. If they’re fighting, well, they’re over there and we’re here, working the land [...] Now we’re closer to our family, we communicate more, we have more freedom to be by their side (Woman, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, December 12, 2019).

This co-occurs with the responsibility of “catching up” and acquiring tools to overcome, in a “race against the clock,” the feeling of “backwardness” produced by years without access to opportunities of personal development. Additionally, it is also an opportunity to put these new resources at the service of, or in function of, the project of self-reincorporation and the reincorporation of those who surround them.

The following semester we went to the Advanced School for Public Administration (ESAP), to study, and we already finished. ESAP has a modality that did fit our needs: daytime, nighttime, Saturday full-time, and Sunday part-time. We knew that we were going to sacrifice our weekends. Many of us distanced ourselves from our families, because as you may understand, in the context we come from, not all of us had the possibility to say, “I’m going to be there with my family,” for many reasons, including security. So, what we could do was to spend the weekends with our families. But after going to school we sacrificed that. We only spent two or three hours with our families; the rest of the time we were in school and the remaining five days were devoted to the reincorporation process (Man, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, June 22, 2019).

This is why the ERA opens up the possibility to access three substantial elements for human development: training, means or resources for productive life, and a space in which strengthened social links eliminate the tension generated by armed conflict. Having new projections in a productive area full of challenges, such as agriculture, and the demand for new skills and knowledge, have generated an optimistic attitude toward the chances of success of productive projects and the reincorporation process itself.

Recently my colleagues asked me, “Don’t you want to go to back to the mountains?” I told them, “No, what am I going to do there, if I’m already working here!” There’s a lot of work here, there’s a lot to do. For example, right now, you were looking at the fertilizers, and if you ask me: “Do you know about this? I can say: “Yes, of course!” We make a very good fertilizer, it does not smell, it’s better than chicken manure. And if you see the biofactory, I built those columns. I’m working! (Man, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, October 29, 2019).

The country learned important lessons and built an institutional framework from previous peace accords (Villarraga, 2017). However, the transit from the idea of reintegration, as it was proposed in the route designed by the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR), to that of reincorporation, poses challenges for all stakeholders involved, in economic, political, psychosocial, and cultural terms, which, in turn, imply more systematic public policies and programs. This also requires a broader understanding of what the sustainability of collective productive projects and organizational processes imply.

### *Internal cohesion and protection*

For those who are in a reincorporation process, the perception of insecurity is higher, because of the vulnerability that comes from feeling unarmed and threatened by FARC-EP dissidents and by other armed actors who are fighting to gain control of the area.

This situation has generated a paradox that reflects the tensions of this transitional stage between peacebuilding and conflict protraction. In other words, it reveals the skillful juggling gesture required by the imperfect peace. We are referring to the transformation of the relationship between ex-combatant collectives, particularly those who are part of the ERA, with the Army and the Police, who are now responsible for protecting their lives and freedom.

In this context, for social movements, who sometimes have confronted armed forces in mobilizations and blockades, proximity to the police and the army generates resistance. There is also the fear of that visit or “contact” with state institutions being interpreted as a “threat” by those who maintain illegal armed structures.

But for ex-combatants it is necessary to count on the protection of the Army and the Police, because that gesture ratifies the will to keep their commitment

with the Peace Accord. This issue has been the subject of discussion between CEPRODET and ASPROZONAC.

There have been some differences with respect to police visits. Some were opposed, because in marches, police officers treat them as enemies, so the idea that they're enemies continues. So, sometimes they were here patrolling, and they would come and say, "You're leaving" [...]. But it was solved! They held a meeting and said, "Those of us who live here need them to take care of us, ex-combatants need security. Those of you who are complaining live out there and during the day you are calm. But when you leave at night, we have to stay here. So, let's fix this and give them permission to be here." And without us interfering, they solved it and told us, "Let's talk to the police, they can come now." And it was solved! (Man, administrative, CEPRODET, February 6, 2020).

There seems to be a consensus that, during the first months, the issue of security when travelling from their places of residence to La Elvira was one of the most important causes of defection by some of the initial ERA participants. Since the land was given in commodate and was not their own, this did not allow them to supply the housing needs of the whole group.

I believe that the number of participants decreased over time, due to different factors. The one that concerns the community the most, is violence. It decreased a lot, because when we started working here, we had people from Toribio, from Caloto. And they would travel, and even today some of them continue to come. At the beginning, people from the ETCR came here, but they became intimidated by comments from groups that emerged in the area. There was a moment when we were declared a military objective, and those of us who led this process were considered as traitors. Then, many people said, No, I'm not getting in there. It's a good idea, there are a lot of expectations, but I don't want to get into trouble" (Man, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, September 18, 2019).

However, the appropriation of the productive process, the appreciation of learning, and the sense of collective belonging have helped maintain part of the initial group in the territory and in the ERA, thus giving meaning to the gesture of "coming down from the mountain" and building roots in the ZRC. On the contrary, those who remained in the ETCR of Monterredondo have had to progressively abandon the region because of direct threats and the recent pressures experienced by the surrounding community (Forero, 2020).

For this reason, it is clear that the issue of security is, and will continue to be, a central factor of the reincorporation process.

In this way, the ERA is both a process and a place. First off, the ERA is a school, a place of gathering and learning. And the farm La Elvira, with its doors and its fences (only at roadside edge) is a “material dwelling” to contain the uncertainty produced by the threatening environment.

Indeed, those who have participated in the reincorporation process at the ERA may be threatened by the feeling of uncertainty, as happened to those who did not continue in order to avoid exposure. But the ERA can also be perceived as a shelter to mitigate the feeling of vulnerability, not so much because of the security afforded by its doors, but because of the atmosphere of trust and mutual protection that peasants and ex-combatants have managed to build together.

In spite of the fact that we move around the territory, we’re very political. Instead of fighting and threatening, we build political proposals so that when the time comes to talk to armed or illegal groups, they can talk to us and understand us, because we’ve talked to different politicians and communities, whether they’re legal or illegal. For example, when they arrived, if you didn’t speak and they found out, they could think, “They took them out of there and put them here” right? So, it’s no secret to anyone that, as peasants, we have our guard that controls the public forces or illegal organizations when needed, so we need to have political interactions with any actor, so that they respect us and we can respect them... (Man, peasant, ASPROZONAC, September 4, 2019).

But it is also important to highlight that the sustainability of this peaceful empowerment, like that of all others in the country, depends on the ability to contain the “post-agreement” violence that has been taking place over the last year in different territories. This implies the consolidation of forms of peaceful resistance in contexts of growing violence, the consolidation of action networks by civil society organizations, the convergence of multiple stakeholders at all levels, and also an effective protection by the authorities. All this as an exercise of governance for peace.

With the support of PASO Colombia, the ERA process continues to open the possibilities of strengthening productive projects and, with it, the determination of ex-combatants and peasants to remain in the territory and sustain peace. Fortunately, in Miranda, due to its long history of conflict, these



lessons have already been consolidated and, as pointed out, there are multiple key stakeholders engaged in the creation and sustenance of peace initiatives.

### *Community Mural*



Community mural developed in the process of systematizing the experience of the ERA in Miranda. Photo: Team of *Universidad del Valle*. December 2019.

Let's say that there's a sense of fellowship. And I admire that here, because when you lose that, it's difficult to recover. Here, you see companionship, family unity. And when you come to this space, you feel at ease with everyone, you feel safe, you feel good... We listen to each other and dialogue and, well, that is what allows us to have a collective. Because there may be flaws in all the work that we do, but if we dialogue and try to improve every day, then we're trying to move forward (Woman, reincorporated ex-combatant, CEPRODET, September 18, 2019).





## Chapter IV

Feasible reoutes



## CHAPTER IV

### FEASIBLE ROUTES

This systematization exercise of the ERA in La Elvira, Miranda, promoted by OEF's PASO Colombia and built with the participation and commitment of two collectives with different connections to the armed conflict in this region (CEPRODET and ASPROZONAC), has allowed not only to visualize the wealth, but also the complexity and uniqueness, entailed by a process of ex-combatant reintegration, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in the territories.

Assessing this experience allows us, first of all, to reaffirm the historical significance of the Peace Accord between the Colombian government and FARC-EP guerrillas and to understand the complexity and challenges of a comprehensive implementation and compliance. This is so because, in spite of committing multiple stakeholders, including the state, institutions, society, the public at large, ex-combatants and their environments, its development depends, first of all, on an effective commitment and coherence of the public policies promoted by the current government in relation to each item of the Agreement. But other factors, widely linked to local dynamics, to governability, and to the problems and conflicts that persist in many territories —especially around northern Cauca—, also have an influence.

This uniqueness underscores the need to take into account the load of meanings, constructed narratives, hopes, frustrations, and fears that shape

the process and journey of each subject. Also, it highlights the relevance of ex-combatant and peasant leaders both as peacebuilders and representatives of their social context. Finally, it pinpoints the role played by organizations such as PASO Colombia and others, which, as representatives of what has been called civil society, have assumed commitments and responsibilities in terms of the challenges and expectations posed by the Peace Accord—in this specific case, regarding reincorporation.

We hope that this document is useful not only to understand the richness and complexity of the systematized process, but also, to the extent possible, to draw and reach conclusions that will nurture the reflection needed in this prolonged transition phase of post-agreement or post-conflict—depending on how it is conceived.

This stage of national life implies uncertainty as well as hope. This twofold effect is derived, precisely, from peacebuilding processes and gaps that occur in the micro and local levels as examples of territorial and imperfect peace, that is, as processes that demand commitment, dedication, and broad engagement. These are unfinished processes, that act as a path and a proof of a turn that we are taking as a society. A turn which, in this case, is not only epistemological<sup>23</sup>, but that implies practices required by the transformative approach of the Peace Agreement.

In the following lines, we introduce some general considerations that we want to highlight. Surely, to the extent that this process is known and analyzed by multiple stakeholders, these ideas will be discussed and debated, which is also encouraging for us, given the need to promote spaces for constructive, broad, and pluralistic dialogues. As a summary, we have gathered some of the ideas already presented and developed through the text.

## Governance for peace as an overarching idea

The experience can be read as an example of Governance for peace. This implies recognizing that both the success and the difficulties encountered are related to institutional capacities; devices and leaderships aimed at achieving agreements and cooperation among diverse and unequal agents (institutions, organizations, groups; and people); the development of concrete plans and agendas; and the convergence of political wills.

- Regarding this issue, we highlight the role of institutions that promote and lead initiatives aimed at generating governance for peace. This is the case of PASO Colombia, who additionally encouraged CEPRODET and APROZONAC to follow that path. For this reason, cooperation networks have been built around specific purposes, joined by government stakeholders, international cooperation organizations, and companies of the private sector.
- The development and sustainability of this perspective requires a persistent approach with different national, regional, and local instances. We highlight the relevance of sustaining dialogues with municipal governments, which should break the Myth of Sisyphus, strengthening and enhancing the experiences acquired by PASO Colombia in other scenarios outside the ERA.
- For PASO Colombia's team, territorial peacebuilding translates into a commitment to find comprehensive solutions for a diverse range of interrelated problems that have produced poverty, exclusion, and lack of development opportunities for the country's rural population. This effort, specifically targeted at ex-combatants, has characterized the ERA as a whole. This is aimed at providing sustainability in the economic cycle (production, distribution, circulation), and political and cultural sustainability to the experience, through dialogue and collaboration with a multiplicity of stakeholders in the territory.
- The management of collaborative partnership platforms, based on the articulation between territorial intervention and governance. This implies and reaffirms that reincorporation is a collective responsibility. This has concrete implications, such as preventing ex-combatants from relapsing due to a lack of opportunities, and it is, therefore, a social and political challenge for the country. We also understand reincorporation as a conflux of wills and joint efforts, which is produced by accepting that the conditions that produced war and kept it going were socially produced, with participation of all social sectors.
- These are experiences in collaboration, network building and concrete agendas that could help and contribute to other processes, such as PNIS, PDET implementation, Rural Development Programs, the processes that will be developed through the Land Fund, and municipal and departmental development plans, among others.

- The entire ERA experience is based on the need to access land. This is a key issue, because it shows that it is not only a matter of guaranteeing access to land for rural sectors and families, but also of developing more comprehensive programs, based on effective agency and engagement from these population groups.
- A reiterated complaint in the narrative highlights the “impossibility of accessing land.” PASO Colombia’s pragmatic approach to find it, through various legal figures, such as the commodate or leasing, shows that the solution to this problem requires, on the one hand, political will; and on the other hand, to be included as a priority in the agenda and the actions related to the reincorporation process.
- Thus, this could be a way to overcome the limited access to land titling, which is one of the preconditions to ensure stability and sustainability in productive processes and the lives of its participants. When land is given as commodate or leased, it is not so easy to invest in housing and improvements. This is why in the case of La Elvira farm, housing projects are on hold and all improvements have benefited the farmers, who own the land.
- PASO Colombia has recently incorporated a broader view of its commitment to peacebuilding for this territory, extending the processes of knowledge transfer, capital mobilization, and market exploration from La Elvira to other population groups, such as PNIS beneficiary women and other ASPROZONAC farmer.

## On sociopolitical reincorporation

- The experience indicates that this is a challenging bet that requires more systematic public policies and programs based on constructive dialogues and an effective consultation between the two main stakeholders—at all territorial levels. Programs should be targeted at developing comprehensive strategies and emphasizing the need of “productive projects.” As a matter of fact, this requires other key components: social, cultural, family, and security.
- The experience reveals various obstacles to the effectiveness of “productive projects,” which have already been pointed out in rural development studies, such as access to and provision of land and



other public goods. Additionally, this experience generates awareness of a vicious circle in which the government and ARN do not allocate resources for project start-up because they consider that these are only “project ideas,” presented by groups of ex-combatants with limited information and support.

- For this reason, CEPRODET’s experience with CNR in the approval of productive projects, shows the importance of the work done by organizations such as PASO Colombia, which is meant to break this vicious circle. In fact, the design of feasible and adequately structured projects requires previous training and accompaniment, because given their “experimental” nature and the emphasis on learning by “trial and error,” the probabilities of failure are not low.
- Therefore, investment in qualification and in basic allocations for enlistment and development of the experience, the construction of self-confidence, and the appropriation of productive practices, imply diverse costs and resources. In the case of CEPRODET, this investment was allocated by PASO Colombia, which, through the articulation strategy with other organizations, enabled the learning and productive empowerment route, responding in a pragmatic and flexible way to basic needs, and guaranteeing project start-up.
- This support, translated into capacity building, trust, and endowments, turned into material progress: electricity, the organic fertilizer line, reforestation or vegetable gardens and greenhouses, the “community hall,” and food security. But the progress of the reincorporation process is especially visible in the social and symbolic cohesion, which are essential to sustain the process of political transition.
- Another key issue, especially for ex-combatants and leaders of the new Common Alternative Force and organizations such as ECOMÚN, refers to the meaning, difficulties, and challenges of “collective reincorporation”, which is constantly highlighted in all their narratives. This is also the purpose of PASO Colombia’s approach.
- It is a bid that articulates several aspects: first, the disposition, expectations, and interests of reincorporated ex-combatants, which, from an ideological-political perspective, are nourished from the collective strengthening expected from collective reincorporation. On the other hand, it is also important to consider the possibilities offered

by the environment (land, housing sites, security conditions, support and exchange networks). And, last but not least, the agreements and rules that signify the collective or, better yet, associative and cooperative nature of each experience.

- Agreements and contracts require defining the levels and forms of effective participation, which allow to measure the commitment of participants in terms of contributed working times, in the definition of responsibilities, in decision making, and in defining the rules for using and distributing surpluses.
- In its development as an organization, CEPRODET has exposed the tension that usually arises in projects conceived as alternatives to the capitalist logic. This is an idea that favors a cooperative or collective economic model in connection with a political ideal. However, this relationship should not be considered established per se, but should be built with each participant in the project, based on the recognition that belonging to a productive project requires training and education.
- It's also interesting to see that participants' testimonies highlight the fact that the tension between common interests and individual expectations cannot be ignored by the organization. On the contrary, participants are very aware of this tension. For this reason, establishing clear rules and explicit contracts by mutual agreement allows to break the tension between the individual and the collective and to generate greater engagement and commitment.
- The ERA experience has also made it possible to identify the potential of these spaces to build processes and projects of symbolic, political, moral, and material reparation and reconciliation. An example of this can be identified in the material contributions of the project to the community welfare: seeds, knowledge, environmental protection, reforestation, promotion of "solidary and farmer's" markets, cultural expressions and their potential as a scenario for reparation and memory building.
- This experience shows the possibility and the relevance of promoting—although not without difficulty— projects that bring together diverse groups, in this case, ex-combatants and peasants. However, this implies challenges regarding the consolidation of previous agreements. In this case, the connection between ex-combatants and peasants made it

possible to address several uncertainties of political transition. One of the most important is: access to land —although provisional—, and the possibility of pooling different resources and having support networks for mutual protection, including community self-care protocols in the ZRC.

- The achievements of this type of projects, its demonstrative effect, and its visibility (in this case, systematization and circulation) operate as vehicles of recognition and legitimacy for the reincorporation process. This productive exercise, and the development of its activities and actions —some of which are intentional, while others have a spontaneous nature—, allow participants to create a path toward scenarios of reconciliation and social dialogue with their environments, with neighboring communities, with victims, with institutions, and with public forces, as evidence of a new form of relationship between former contenders.

## Organizational and leadership dynamics

- From the standpoint of projects with a “collective” or associative approach, having clarity over agreements and rules is essential. These result from dialogues and require —without leading to bureaucratization— clarity over the associative form in decision-making levels, division of responsibilities and tasks, and overall project management. These elements are important to ensure sustainability, which, in turn, affects organizational cohesion, commitment, and learning about its processes, achievements, challenges, and difficulties. They also serve to enhance the stability of the associative process.
- It is important to highlight some aspects of the associative character of the ERA, namely: group decision-making and the use of “written commitments” to ensure accountability and follow-up. These practices were the result of leadership exerted, not from “positions” of power, but from the authority earned from the capacity of showing new paths, uniting, organizing, and contributing to constructive dialogue.
- In this sense, one of the key elements of the experience has been their capacity to solve differences and conflicts through dialogue, consultation, and, in some cases, with the mediation of those who assume political or administrative leadership. The ERA’s committee has

been valuable as a scenario of negotiation, monitoring, and evaluation among diverse stakeholders with a common interest.

- Learning on administrative management and business projections encouraged the expression of concrete leadership and enhanced the capacity of process leaders to act in different political scenarios and promote partnerships. This has increased their capacity to transform the practices that once characterized leadership in the armed organization into a leadership that generates recognition and trust from a diversity of stakeholders, both inside and outside the ERA process.
- With regard to gender issues, the role of women has been very important to support major activities of the sustainability process, such as time management, tasks, and commitments for productive processes, as well as domestic life management within the group.
- Despite the existence of female political leadership, women still do not have a balanced position in decision-making or political representation spaces. As a consequence, it is crucial to strengthen new female leaderships, both in productive and political spheres, and their projection toward women organizational processes in the municipality.

## On the social dimension of the experience

The experience of the ERA in Miranda has produced valuable learning about the impacts produced by economic reincorporation processes on social life. Some of them are:

- Preserving personal and family bonds in the daily lives of ex-combatants has acquired greater importance. Considering family needs has been essential to encourage work in the ERA. It is also valuable that La Elvira has become a place of convergence of groups and families, as well as of social and work-related activities. Likewise, families feel hopeful for being part of an ongoing productive process, with all its implications.
- The difficulties inherent to the process of adapting to a change of life, developing mutual acknowledgement and understanding, and motivating others in difficult moments (including security issues, financial hardships, or uncertainty regarding the political situation of the peace process) have been progressively overcome, but have had effects on the development of productive projects.

- The consolidation of group relations and daily coexistence in that space allowed reincorporated ex-combatants and farmers to join efforts in order to qualify productive life, exchange knowledge, and protect each other in situations of stress and difficulty, arising both from the productive life and the political context. Group bonds and the associative figure provide motivation and are useful to counteract the uncertainty of entering to a productive life that is dominated by the logics of competition and labor market.

## On methodological aspects of the ERA model

- The experience of Miranda’s ERA allows us to assess the constructivist strategy and approach adopted by PASO Colombia in encouragement and accompaniment processes. Principles such as “iteration,” “learn-by-doing,” “encouraging empowerment,” and “dialogue between wisdoms,” which guided the intervention process, have been key to its success. Since the pedagogical criteria allow certain degree of flexibility, it has been possible to adapt to specific needs and to approach processes according to the journeys and subjective characteristics of the participating groups, such as previous knowledge, interests, and skills.
- This type of methodologies requires understanding and knowing the groups, assessing processes on a permanent basis, and conducting follow-ups, feedbacks, and adjustments of concrete processes in time. In the case of Miranda’s ERA, this produced important lessons for PASO Colombia.
- Therefore, there is a relative advantage in not having rigid templates or budgets. However, from the perspective of the facilitating organization, time and resources do count and they must be managed. For this reason, agreements and commitments aimed at strengthening self-management and defining the purposes that will be evaluated and monitored, are key.
- Considering agency as a starting point, but above all, recognizing and encouraging it in every step and phase of the project, is not only a part of success, but also of a position that echoes the “iterative” and empowerment approach, and the valuation of processes, stories, and capacities of each group.

- A key issue in the intervention logic is to devise pragmatic responses to situations produced by deficits (in terms of access to land, capital, markets, institutions) and by the various challenges arising from the process and context. Therefore, it is crucial to execute alternatives in concrete exercises: identifying funding and leveraging sources for projects; promoting trade agreements; addressing environmental deterioration; promoting protection agreements or facing risks derived from the complex political and social context.
- Rapport, dialogue and knowledge in action allow the construction of trust between agents and the definition of work lines and “basic plans” on strategic issues that, as in the case of this experience, have diverse potentialities, in terms of technological, social, environmental, cultural and political learning. These strategic issues also work as vehicles and capacity generators.
- As shown in the ERA’s micro-project lines (Tables 1 to 4), each line in itself involved different process dimensions: support networks, resource leveraging, market opening, technological learning, interaction, and conflict management.
- An important aspect of process management with the participation of several entities, encouraged by PASO Colombia, is the recognition and encouragement of “partner protagonism,” that is to say, the protagonism of peasants and reintegrated ex-combatants in the space where activities are developed. They are the ones who have produced learning, guidelines, and practices linked to the whole economic process: production, benefit distribution, planning, and strengthening the autonomy of those who undertake their productive processes.
- The experience also highlights the importance of good recording (audiovisual, documentary, accounting, news, etc.) and monitoring systems, which are key elements not only for academic exercises, but above all, for effective project management and learning, for scaling up projects, and for introducing adjustments and improvements, not only in processes, but also in approaches and work methodologies.
- To deepen this learning, it is important to promote spaces and support, both in public programs and other institutions, for ex-combatant training in a peace culture, mediation, project management, marketing, production chains, quality management processes, and product

certification, because this offers a perspective of a comprehensive intervention, in coherence with the complex challenge of simultaneously enabling the overarching ideas behind the process: reincorporation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding.

*Peasant woman visiting the ERA*



A coca eradicator, who signed up to the PNIS program, visits the ERA in Miranda to learn about productive projects and collaborative work. Photo: PASO Colombia's Archive. December 2019







# Annexes



## Annexes 1. List of acronyms

ACIN	Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca
AMUNORCA	Association of Municipalities of Northern Cauca
ANT	National Land Agency
ANZORC	National Association of Peasant Reserve Zones
ARN	Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization
ASPROZONAC	Association to Promote Peasant Reserve Zones
AUC	United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
CEPRODET	Promotion Center for Territorial Development
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIMA	Committee for the Integration of the Colombian Massif
CNR	National Reincorporation Council
CRIC	Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca
DANE	National Administrative Department of Statistics
ELN	National Liberation Army
ERA	Rural Alternative School
ETCR	Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces
FARC - EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army
FARC	Common Alternative Revolutionary Force
FENSUAGRO	National Unified Agricultural Trade Union Federation
ICANH	Anthropology and History Research Institute
GAOR	Organized Armed Groups
INCORA	Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform
NAR	New Regrouping Points
MAQL	Quintin Lame Armed Movement
OEF (en inglés)	One Earth Future
ONIC	National Indigenous Organization of Colombia
PASO Colombia	Sustainable Peace for Colombia
PCN	Black Communities Process
PDET	Development Plan with a Territorial Focus

PMTR	Municipal Pacts for Regional Transformation
PNIS	National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops
PNUD	United Nations Development Programme
PTN	Transitional Normalization Points
SIVJRNR	Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition
UAF	Family Agriculture Unit (UAF)
ZRC	<i>Campesino</i> Reserve Zone

## Appendix 2. Oral sources collected in miranda's ERA

Source type			
Activity	Name	Membership	Date
Workshop	Fernando Pieschachón	PASO Colombia	June 4 and 11, 2019
Workshop	Juan Fernando Lucio	PASO Colombia	June 4 and 11, 2019
Workshop	Blanca Melba Gómez	PASO Colombia	June 4 and 11, 2019
Workshop	Fernando Cruz	PASO Colombia	June 4 and 11, 2019
Workshop	Andrés Siabato	PASO Colombia	June 4 and 11, 2019 and February 4, 2020
Workshop	Hugo Plata	Peasant Farmer - CEPRODET	June 22, 2019
Workshop	Óscar Echeverry	Excombatant - CEPRODET	June 22, 2019
Workshop	Ricardo Moreno	Excombatant - CEPRODET	June 22, 2019
Workshop	Euner Muñoz	Peasant Farmer - ASPROZONAC	June 22, 2019
Workshop	Lorenzo Heredia	Community - CEPRODET	June 22nd and September 4th, 2019
Workshop	Alfonso Molina	PASO Colombia	June 22, 2019
Workshop	Fernando Cruz	PASO Colombia	June 22, 2019

Field Notes	Alfonso Molina	PASO Colombia	June 5, 2019
Field Notes	Francia	Peasant Woman - ASPROZONAC	June 5, 2019
Entrevista individual	Gerardo Pete	Excombatant - CEPRODET	5 de julio del 2019
Workshop	Alfonso Molina	PASO Colombia	July 22nd and October 17th, 2019 and February 10th, 2020
Workshop	Cristóbal Guamanga	Peasant Farmer - ASPROZONAC	September 4, 2019
Workshop	Ricardo Moreno	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Miller Quiguanas	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Ferney Rivera	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Vladimir López	EXcombatant - UNP	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Miguel Ángel Ipía	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Gerardo Pete	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Henry Otálora	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Óscar Echeverry	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Carmen Mestizo	Community - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Workshop	Sandra Tálaga	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Individual interview	Enelia Dagua Lorena	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Individual interview	Ricardo Moreno	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019
Individual interview	Miguel Ángel Ipía	EXcombatant - CEPRODET	September 4 and 18 and October 29, 2019

Individual interview	Euner Muñoz	Peasant Farmer - ASPROZONAC	September 4, 2019
Individual interview	Hugo Plata	Peasant Farmer - CEPRODET	September 18, 2019
Individual interview	Sandra Talaga	Excombatant - CEPRODET	September 18, 2019
Individual interview	Óscar Echeverry Carlos Antonio	Excombatant - CEPRODET	September 18, 2019
Individual interview	Analía Restrepo	Hugo Restrepo & Cía.	October 17, 2019
Individual interview	Michael López	Agro Sena	October 25, 2019
Individual interview	José David Bustamante	Hugo Restrepo & Cía.	October 23rd, 2019
Individual interview	Luz Adriana Jiménez	CIAT - HarvestPlus	October 23rd, 2019
Individual interview	César Oviedo	Peace Office - Miranda Mayor's Office	October 29, 2019 and February 6, 2020
Individual interview	Carmen Mestizo	Community - CEPRODET	December 12, 2019
Individual interview	Enelia Dagua	Excombatant - CEPRODET	December 12, 2019
Individual interview	Carlos Fernando Castellón	Office of the High Commissioner for Peace	January 31st, 2020
Individual interview	Martín Bernal	National Coffee Federation	February 1, 2020
Individual interview	Jonathann Cuervo	Risks Control - OEF	February 4, 2020
Individual interview	César Quintero	PASO Colombia	February 4, 2020
Individual interview	Zorayda Cunda	Miranda Victims' Roundtable	February 6, 2020

Individual interview	César Oviedo	Miranda Peace Liaison	February 6, 2020
Individual interview	Andrés Romero	Miranda Victims' Roundtable	February 6, 2020
Individual interview	Ana Rojas	Miranda Community Leader	February 6, 2020
Individual interview	Lorenzo Heredia	Community - CEPRODET	February 6, 2020
Individual interview	Marta Salazar	PASO Colombia	February 10, 2020
Field Notes	Coronel Nelson Oviedo	National Army High Mountain Battalion No. 8	February 6, 2020
Field Notes	Cristóbal Guamanga	Peasant Farmer- - ASPROZONAC	March 5, 2020
Field Notes	Briseida Lemos	Peasant Woman - ASPROZONAC	March 5, 2020
Focus Group	Blanca Melba Gómez Juan Fernando Lucio Fernando Cruz	PASO Colombia	June 19, 2020
Focus Group	Blanca Melba Gómez Juan Fernando Lucio Fernando Cruz	PASO Colombia	July 3, 2020
Focus Group Economic Analysis	Juan Fernando Lucio Blanca Melba Gómez Andrés Siabato María del Pilar Gómez Gloria Mejía	PASO Colombia	July 21, 2020

Focus Group	Blanca Melba Gómez Fernando Cruz Alfonso Molina	PASO Colombia	July 24, 2020
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