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DRUG TRAFFICKING: SHADOW POWERS AND THEIR HIDDEN IMPACT ON THE WOMEN´S LIFE IN LATIN AMERICA

Realities vs. Drug Policy

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The Urgent Action Fund of Latin America is an independent, nonprofit organization whose strategic mandate is to protect and promote women's human rights through Rapid Response Grants, Collaborative Initiatives, researches and publications.

Executive Director
Tatiana Cordero Velásquez

Editorial Coordination
Aydée Marín Pallares – UAF-LA Program Coordinator
Tania Correa Bohórquez- Consultant

Authors
Tania Correa Bohórquez, Laura García, Mercedes Hernández, Red de la No Violencia contra las Mujeres REDNOVI, Winifred Tate, Karina Sarmiento, Lorena Zelaya

Editorial Support
Claudia M. León Arango

English Translation
Eleanor Douglas

Design and ilustration
M.A.L - Movimiento Artístico Libre: Juan Camilo Alfonso, Camilo Cuervo Benavides, Federico Montealegre Díaz, Oscar J. Heredia, J. Anthony Alarcón

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Contact :
Carrera 27A No. 40A-68 / Bogotá, Colombia
(57 + 1) 368 6155
www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co

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Introduction

The Urgent Action Fund of Latin America, concerned about the situation of women and the consequences for their lives and communities of the dynamics of drug trafficking, initiated the Collaborative Initiative, Women, Resistance and "Shadow Powers", in 2013. The goal was to promote collective action among activists, members of women's organizations, and academics, who influence public policy in Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Colombia, Ecuador and the United States.

The present publication is the result of this effort and responds to the interest of bringing to light the effects of drug trafficking and "shadow powers" on women's lives, as well as their strengths, strategies, and multiple and diverse forms of resistance.

"Shadow powers" involve individuals and organizations from the illegal economy, mainly drug trafficking and other related activities, such as human trafficking, and contraband in arms and merchandise. On occasions, they are articulated with State entities and armed groups. These "powers" are in the "shadow" in the sense that they are part of the illegal world, but at the same time they are real and they exercise control over territories and people. The differential impact on women has been hidden from view and our purpose in publishing the information presented here is to highlight insights and promote discussion.

The starting point for the research was the First Encounter, which took place in the city of Bogotá, D.C. (Colombia) on November 27, 28 and 29 of 2013, with the participation of women academics, defenders and activists. Conclusions emanating from this event noted that the impact of the fight against drugs and "shadow powers" on women's lives was an invisible problematic in the region; that there was an absence of specialized information; and that women's organizations had not themselves taken up the issue.

During the Second Encounter of Women, Resistance, and "Shadow Powers", held in Mexico, D.F. between November 11th and 13th, 2014, participants analyzed other dimensions of the problem: among them, the situation of female consumers and women detained on drug-related offences. In addition, women engaged in an up-to-date contextual analysis, as well as sharing successful experiences of policy advocacy and women's resistance in contexts of violence.

The objective of this initiative is to identify existing information related to the specific dynamics of this issue in the region and to bring out distinct points of view regarding the problem, the final goal being to identify ways to develop shared advocacy initiatives in the defense of women's rights.

In the first section, two chapters establish general parameters related to drug policy, drug trafficking, and their effects on the lives of Latin American women. The first chapter shows how drug policies, and specifically the "War on Drugs", as promoted by the United States, has affected the dynamics of drug cultivation and trafficking in Latin America, increasing levels of violence against women. The second chapter presents a revision of existing information related to the context and the dynamic of "shadow powers" in relation to women, building from four different perspectives: women as consumers, women involved in drug trafficking, women in jails, and other associated problems.

What follows is a series of concise articles related to the current context in some of the countries represented in the two events mentioned above, written from the perspective of the women participating in these encounters: Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. Each article makes reference to:

1. Laws or programs related to current drug policies in the country.
2. The overall country context in relation to drug-trafficking and "shadow powers".
3. The major effects on women.
4. Most important resistance strategies used by women and organizations, mobilizations, etc.

To conclude the reflection and analysis, an article entitled "Feminicide, a Transnational Crisis and 'The War on Drugs', a War against Women" presents an analysis of feminicide in relation to the war on drugs in Central America.

We hope the document will be useful to organizations and that it contributes to building awareness about specific contexts, motivating further research and action concerning the violation of women's Human Rights in relation to drug-trafficking.

DRUG POLICY, SHADOW POWERS AND WOMEN IN THE AMERICAS

Winifred Tate / Colby College

At their most basic, drugs are simply substances that alter brain chemistry. Throughout human history, drugs have been employed — as found in nature or synthetically manufactured — for religious, medicinal and recreational purposes. Yet their regulation has become a central preoccupation of contemporary political life throughout the Americas, as these substances have shifted in cultural, legal and economic value and status, from treatment to leisure use, and from domestic to commercial production. While anti-drug policies may claim to work to protect citizens, efforts to regulate the consumption of chemical stimulants have been based on racially biased social engineering goals. The forms of the contemporary illegal drug industry are in many ways produced by the policies intended to squelch them, from the huge profits made possible by a prohibitionist regime to the serendipitous innovations in criminal practices created by chance jailhouse meetings. Waves of enforcement have moved production and trafficking into new regions and new practices, as both a means of livelihood for peasants and as engines for conflict.

US anti-drug laws, which have in turn been imposed throughout the continent, are intimately connected with attempts to improve police, assimilate, or exclude particular kinds of threatening populations. These policies emerge from deeply rooted concerns about urbanization, immigration, and racial and social mobility.[1] The bodies out of place and out of control include newly-arrived urban immigrants, unhappy women, white youth rejecting social norms, and black youth feared as a criminalized underclass. These efforts have been reinforced by the institutional alliances of government agencies, the activities of reformist civic organizations, and scandal-mongering media. Yet drug policy is a transnational field that creates opportunities and motivates multiple actors, including politicians, peasant farmers, and entrepreneurial traders. New forms of drug commodification, trafficking and use are among their results.

[1] Gootenberg, 1999 and 2009; Morone, 2004; Massing, 1998; Reinarman and Levine, 1997.

These prohibitionist policies have also contributed to the formation of shadow powers by creating a profit margin and motive. These shadow powers involve many distinct illegal businesses, including black markets in weapons and contraband, human smuggling, and of course the largest among them is drug trafficking. These shadow powers are also characterized by deep linkages with state enterprises. Military entrepreneurs, violence professionals who enter and exit state service while pursuing personal economic projects, have a long history in Latin America, and are central to this contradictory dynamic (Heyman, 1999). These shadow powers have come to dominate rural and urban political spaces and local institutions at the municipal, state and departmental levels. Beginning in the 1990s, Latin America was seen as a continent on the path of democratization, with the transitions from authoritarian military governments to civilian elections, from civil wars to negotiated settlements, and with increasing decentralization, new avenues for democratic participation. These processes spurred many unintended and contradictory consequences, including opening space for the expansion of shadow powers to penetrate official agencies and infrastructures.

Women are profoundly impacted by drug policy and the draconian punishments imposed on vulnerable communities. Women also participate in shadow power structures as leaders, but more frequently as workers, intimate partners, and family members. They are also victims and bystanders caught in the cross fire of the violence and dispossession associated with shadow powers. In many areas, women lead community resistance efforts against these repressive forces. This introduction provides a general overview of these issues, including a brief history of US drug policies, its increasing militarization, and the shadow powers throughout the continent, ending with a cross study of the range of issues raised in Colombia.

Coca, Cocaine and US Drug Wars in Latin America

Coca has been grown for more than five thousand years along the subtropical foothills of Peru and Bolivia and was widely cultivated throughout the Incan Empires, which stretched along the Andes mountain range from southern Chile to southern Colombia. The leaf is mixed with ash, lime or other alkaloid and sucked while held between the cheek and gum. The effect is similar to the stimulant of caffeine, as well as reducing hunger and providing minerals and vitamins. Coca leaves were early on offered as tribute to rulers and gods, and were probably also consumed by the general population, particularly indigenous people doing hard labor at high altitudes in the silver mines, following the Spanish invasion and conquest. Coca chewing remains important in indigenous communities in Bolivia and Peru (Quechua and Aymara); in Colombia it is only used by the comparatively miniscule groups of Paez/Nasa in the Cauca region and the Kogi on the Atlantic Coast.[2]

[2] Unlike the Incan Empire to the south or Aztecs and Mayans to the north, Colombia's indigenous population lived in relatively isolated small groups, and today only accounts for approximately 4% of the population, one of the smallest percentage of any Latin American country.

Cocaine, the name given to chemically processed coca, has, like many now-illegal drugs, morphed from miracle cure, to festive diversion, to deadly threat (Courtwright, 2002). The powerful stimulant properties of coca's alkaloids were first isolated in 1860. Cocaine enjoyed its first commercial success beginning in 1884, as a topical anesthetic critical for the development of early surgical practices. By the late 1890s, cocaine and fluid coca extracts were widely used in the United States as tonics sold to treat drug addiction, alcoholism, depression, fatigue and general ailments, and in beverages, most famously in Coca Cola.[3] The early efforts to regulate cocaine and coca use are indicative of the kinds of political movements that would come to inform drug policy in the 20th century. US groups supporting drug prohibition in the early 20th century included coalitions of private and governmental organizations ranging from physicians and their emerging professional societies, government agencies attempting to expand their regulatory reach (including municipalities, state and federal agencies, boards of health and boards of pharmacies), journalists (whose published exposes of abuse drew outrage while employing sensationalist fear-mongering narratives), and private social welfare organizations, including temperance groups and community welfare associations particularly concerned with children.

The growing hegemony of the U.S. following World War II and the post war decolonization movement cleared the way for increasing internationalized law and enforcement agencies championed by the United States. The United Nations became a channel for U.S. counter-drug lobbying, culminating in the 1961 U.N. Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, a binding counternarcotics platform that equated coca and cocaine with a profound impact on producer countries (Gootenberg, 2009: 207). During the Cold War, the United States expected loyalty from Latin American governments, requiring parallel drug policies, and expanding shared intelligence and enforcement efforts. At the same time, Cold War political transformations pushed drug trafficking into new routes. For example, a Chilean network of suppliers, connecting Bolivian producers to US consumers, was crushed following the 1973 coup, when a DEA agent convinced new president General Augusto Pinochet to jail or extradite the country's top traffickers (Gootenberg, 2009: 304)[4].

President Richard Nixon (1969-1974) declared the first U.S. "war on drugs" in 1971. His administration focused on the rising rates of heroin addiction among veterans of the wars in Southeast Asia. Unlike drug consumers associated with crime and social deviants, as soldiers these addicts were viewed as worthy subjects for rehabilitation. For the first and only time in American history, treatment on demand was made available, medical professionals drove drug policy, and users were viewed as patients (Massing, 1998). However, Nixon's antidrug rhetoric linked drug consumption and crime, as part of his larger law and order agenda, defining drug treatment as an anticrime program and exacerbating social fears of criminal drug users.

[3] The Coca-Cola Company reported one million dollar in sales by 1903; numerous competitors joined in the coca beverage business, nearly all employing fluid extract of coca, but very little cocaine (Gootenberg, 1999).

[4] Pinochet was himself accused of selling cocaine by the late 1970s. The drug was refined at Talagante Army chemical plant, and used to fund the overseas anticommunist terror network, Plan Condor, and to enlarge family fortune abroad.

The U.S. market for cocaine ballooned during the late 1970s. In 1974, only 5.4 million Americans reported having tried the drug; by 1982, that figure reached nearly 22 million (Streatfeild, 2003: 238). Cocaine became the era's signature glamorous party drug; in the era's most fabulous nightclub, New York's Studio 54, the dance floor décor featured a neon man in the moon sniffing glittery dust from a spoon. A 1981 Time magazine cover featured a martini glass filled with an olive, swizzle stick and white powder, "a drug with status." Some Colombian traffickers repurposed old shipping routes when a government crackdown on a wave of marijuana trafficking in the early 1970s contributed to a shift to the more profitable – and easier to handle – cocaine trade. The serendipitous meeting in a Connecticut jail cell of George Jung, a small-time pot dealer from New England, and Carlos Ledher, a Colombian car thief who would rise to be a founding member of the Medellín Cartel, led to the dramatic expansion of cocaine sales along the West Coast of the United States (Bowden, 2002). In the early years, little of this cocaine was produced in Colombia. Coca leaf and paste produced in Bolivia and Peru was refined and shipped through to the U.S. Over the next two decades, however, Colombia became a major source of coca for cocaine.

The "war on drugs" escalated dramatically in the 1980s. The white parents' movement and Reagan-appointed policymakers rejected science-based studies of addiction to focus on preventing middle-class children from gaining access to drugs, and attempting to terrorize them into rejecting consumption. "Their concern was not with inner-city addicts, but with suburban teenagers, not with heroin but with pot, and not with treatment but with 'zero tolerance.'" (Gladwell, 1998). According to Michael Massing's account of the evolution of U.S. drug policy, these parents and policymakers felt that "the notion of recovery meant that addicts could get well—a message that, they felt, undermined their warning to young people not to use drugs." This view was echoed by prominent drug policy officials, including the first 'drug czar' appointed by the first President Bush, literature professor William Bennett.

Cocaine addiction, and the crack economy, had real and devastating effects on many communities during this period, particularly among inner city African Americans. However, press coverage and public narratives of drug use during this period relied on racist stereotypes and inaccurate understandings of the nature of addiction and failed to examine the larger systems of social and economic exclusion generating much of the social damage attributed to individual drug use.[5] Media coverage of drug consumption during this period exacerbated fears of its dangers. The widely publicized death of University of Maryland basketball star Len Bias in June 1986 of a heart attack connected to cocaine use was linked to the rising concern about the negative impact of such consumption.

During the 1980s, Congress created legislation to address the moral panic over drug use, particularly crack cocaine. The 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Law mandated grossly unequal sentencing structures for powder cocaine (associated with white use) and crack cocaine (associated with African-American use and sale). According to the law, 5 grams of crack (10-50 doses) triggered a

[5] Reinarman and Levine, 1997. For more on the impact of drug consumption and counternarcotics policies on poor communities, see Bourgois, 2002; Bourgois and Schonberg, 2010; Campbell, 2009; Garcia, 2010.

5-year mandatory minimum while 500 grams of powder cocaine (2,500-5,000 doses) was required for the 5-year minimum sentence. This legal structure, combined with discriminatory enforcement practices, resulted in a profoundly disproportionate number of African-Americans (primarily men) jailed for drug offenses. Law enforcement powers expanded, as counternarcotics legislation eroded civil rights and multiplied the punishments faced by drug offenders. Counterdrug efforts also contributed to the reconfiguration of the American legal system through the use of informants and plea bargains, culminating in the largest per capita incarcerated population in the world.[6]

Within the US, poor women of color particularly feel the impact of these policies. Drug offenses bring additional penalties, including ineligibility for student loans and many forms of public assistance, including public housing, and draconian parole regimes. Family members can be removed from public housing; the government can seize collective family resources such as real estate by claiming that it is related to drug trafficking. National hysteria over the negative effects of cocaine consumption reached its zenith in the panic over "crack babies," hypothesized to be an "emerging biological underclass" resulting from drug use by pregnant women. Despite numerous later studies demonstrating that "crack baby" syndrome did not exist, the prosecution of pregnant women for their drug use continues.[7]

US efforts to break down the major trafficking organizations, and sever their ties to coca-growing Peru and Bolivia, shifted coca cultivation and cocaine transport routes into new regions. The Coast Guard, Customs agencies and the DEA focused on interdiction, interrupting shipments abroad. Beginning in 1989, with the "Andean Strategy," U.S. funds, equipment, logistical support, and personnel played a leading role in counternarcotics operations in Colombia. Colombian police working hand-in-glove with US agencies killed Pablo Escobar in 1993; the heads of the Cali Cartel were largely captured or surrendered by the end of the following year (Bowden, 2002). Their replacements vertically integrated trafficking organizations, seeking more Colombian sources for their coca paste (Kenny, 2008). At the same time, the U.S. began targeting the flights that brought coca paste from Peru and Bolivia into Colombia. Through the "Air Bridge Denial Program," the U.S. provided equipment and intelligence to help the Peruvian and Bolivian authorities to shoot down the planes. U.S. officials point to the significant declines in Peruvian coca prices as their primary achievement; critics, however, argue prices in Peru fell because the buyers had all left for Colombia (Transnational Institute, 1999). Little data is available on the number of flights or how much cocaine was transported via plane compared to other routes, new transport technologies, or the increase in corruption.[8] What was clear was that as coca production declined in Peru and Bolivia, such farming in Putumayo skyrocketed. While the amount of coca grown in Putumayo has declined, most of Colombia's coca is now being grown in Nariño, Putumayo's neighboring state. Cultivation in other conflictive areas is also on the rise. Decreases in Colombian cultivation are offset with more crops in

[6] See Alexander, 2012; Becket and Herbert, 2009; Wacquant, 2009; Natapoff, 2011; Simon, 2009.

[7] Fitzgerald, 2013; Fleck, 2013; Paltrow and Flavin, 2013 and Siegal, 1997.

[8] The program was suspended after the 2001 death of a U.S. missionary and her baby in a plane shot down by the Peruvian air force using U.S. intelligence from a CIA contractor.

Peru and Bolivia. At the same time, hundreds of millions of dollars spent on aerial fumigation and ill-fated development schemes have left behind only further accusations of state maleficence from the farmers they intend to transform. As Mexican trafficking organizations grew in strength, drug related violence in Mexico has grown, just as new shipping routes through Central America and the Caribbean increased corruption and violence in those countries.

Militarization as a form of shadow power

In the 1990s, the US war on drugs went from being a metaphor to a real war, involving combat helicopters, military advisors, and dedicated army battalions destined for Latin America. The zero tolerance paradigm that the U.S. embraced domestically in the 1980s provided the ideological architecture for the subsequent militarization of domestic drug policy abroad. While rooted in the long history of the regulation of drug consumption that has targeted particular marginal populations, zero tolerance emerged as a dominant policy apparatus during the Reagan administration. This paradigm viewed all illegal drugs as irreparably damaging to white middle class youth. The overwhelming force of the military was required to prevent these commodities from passing through U.S. borders, or to ensure its physical destruction during production and transit. Militarization and zero tolerance of drug use emerge from and employ the same set of cultural logics based on a totalizing ideal of overwhelming force and control. Both rely on conjuring dystopian futures through imagined threats. Both create new social relationships based on exclusionary visions drawing boundaries around enemies and allies, demanding allegiance and signaling traitorous betrayal at the sign of any opposition.

At the same time mandatory minimums were written into law, drug consumption was defined as a national security issue requiring a militarized response. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan issued National Security Directive 221, formally declaring drugs a national security threat. The Fiscal Year 1989 National Defense Authorization Act gave the Pentagon a legislative mandate for counternarcotics operations for the first time — an important precedent for Plan Colombia that would take shape ten years later. The 1989 Omnibus Anti-Crime Bill dramatically expanded domestic drug enforcement bureaucracy, creating the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The bill also made the Department of Defense the lead federal agency for interdiction efforts in support of law enforcement agencies. In August 1989, President Bush, Sr. issued National Security Directive 18, which "specifically directed the military to assist law enforcement agencies to halt the flow of drugs as part of the national counterdrug effort." That same year, Bush declared that the "gravest domestic threat facing our nation today is drugs." The US would expand funding for "source country" operations, prioritizing interdiction (the capture of illegal drugs en route) and the destruction of drug production facilities and cultivation. In a September press conference, Bush promised U.S. funds, equipment, logistical support, and personnel from the DEA, the CIA, and other agencies as part of the "Andean Strategy."

Framed as a national security threat, the counternarcotics mission represented an ideological raison d'etre for the military just as their primary adversary and principal imagined threat had disintegrated without the opportunity for direct military engagement. "Drugs represented the 'Communism' of the 1990s," according to retired colonel Richard Downie (1998) in his assessment of counternarcotics doctrine. Drug consumption, like Marxism, was amorphous and insidious, corrupting American values from within, while drug traffickers enjoyed boundless resources and military weaponry, a view promoted by U.S. counternarcotics agencies and military officials.

In the absence of the Soviet threat and the possibility of nuclear annihilation, US national security experts focused on "non-specific threats," which required reconceptualizing the logics of military deployment and technologies (Lakoff, 2007). US military doctrine at the time developed what became known as MOOTW, clumsy shorthand for "military operations other than war," which included peace-keeping and humanitarian missions, terrorism, immigration and drug trafficking. The drug war was a means to stave off lowered military budgets. During the budget cuts and military downsizing in the immediate post-Cold War era, new missions were a bureaucratic imperative. Defense contractors began to play an expanding role in developing counternarcotics and law enforcement hardware in the post-Cold War era in what a Wall Street Journal article called the "Cold War of the '90s" (Thomas, 1994). Major U.S. military research centers, including Los Alamos laboratories, began including counternarcotics technologies as part of their agenda; weapons makers and other corporations sponsored national conferences on the issue (Andreas y Price, 2001: 40). During my interviews, a senior Defense Department official called the drug war a "public check book." SouthCom officers actively pursued these resources, lobbying Congressional offices and the media.

The financial power of defense contractors and military institutions has played a major role in shaping drug policy throughout the hemisphere. Governmental agencies lobby for increased funding for military programs; military contractors played a direct role in generating support for the military assistance to Colombia, including hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign contributions. Many of the official supporters of these programs go on to well-paid positions at corporations producing military hardware for these efforts. These militarized police forces, and military forces conducting counternarcotics operations, are responsible for human rights abuses in many countries, as documented in many of the chapters in this volume.

Governance by Shadow Powers and Local Resistance

People involved with shadow powers exercise governance in many regions throughout Latin America; these shadow powers are frequently referred to as drug traffickers, organized crime, criminal networks, gangs, *maras*, criminal bands, and can include groups with political pretensions including insurgents and paramilitary forces. They use violence and threats but also regulate public space, individual comportment, and interpersonal relationships. They order community members to

perform collective work, such as street cleaning. Commanders intervene in local disputes, regulating domestic violence and punishing thieves. In many neighborhoods, they charge local businesses "taxes," called extortion by others, as well as percentages of all government contracts. These groups even set up roadblocks, interrogate residents, and eliminate all community leadership. Gang leaders and traffickers also call local officials to meetings, forcing them with implicit threats of violence (and sometimes overt attacks), requiring them to submit budgets and development plans, as well as pay kickbacks. While often brutal, governance exercised by organized crime groups varies over time and according to the whims of individual commanders.

The chapters in this study offer an important contribution to understanding the gendered dimensions of the impact of these shadow powers (Campbell, 2008 and 2009). These forces have restructured economic opportunities for family economies, as well as influenced changing gender norms, life trajectories, child rearing practices, and educational and economic aspirations. Through their central role in reproducing family domestic life, women play a central role within community reaction, negotiation and in many cases, recreation of these illicit economies and illegal armed groups.

The idiosyncrasies of local commanders opened up an extremely limited space for local residents, primarily women, priests, or other community leaders, to attempt to lobby for particular programs, the release of detained friends and family members, or the opportunity to retrieve their bodies for burial. These efforts are not always successful and exposed women to greater violence, particularly sexual abuse. However paradoxically, mobilizing existing gender ideologies and exclusions has become a central tactic for women attempting to intervene with organized crime structures and protect their families. Women are often viewed as inherently non-political, imagined as part of the domestic sphere and exclusively focused on family welfare. Men constitute the vast majority of the forces involved in the violence as well as their victims[9]. This view of women's roles allows them greater mobility to move between and among communities.

Even while confronting the repressive strategies of shadow powers, local inhabitants face generalized criminalization. Precisely because of the presence of these illicit economies, government authorities frequently condemn all members of a given population, whether defined by skin color, generational status or location. Local residents in areas with entrenched illegal economies are frequently described as criminals willfully retreating from the state, ensconced in regions characterized by state absence. While frequently participating in the profits of the illegal drug trade, local residents reject public officials' categorization of them as outlaws. Rather than criminals seeking to avoid the law, residents in such regions consider themselves to be farmers, merchants, and families seeking a better life.

[9] The "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia" FARC-EP was somewhat of an exception; an estimated 40% of their forces are girls and women, although women are not proportionately represented within the command structure.

Women must face resistance from both shadow powers and state officials as they struggle to create accountability in local governmental institutions and establish autonomous political space in which to articulate political claims.[10] They demand the rights and services of citizenship while charging the state with failing to provide security, services, and economic infrastructure. Anthropologists working in marginal and criminalized regions have documented similar dynamics, as local populations articulate their "longing for the state": as Diana Bocarejo describes in the case of coca growers in northern Colombia who feel the presence of the "phantom state"; or as Daniel Goldstein found in urban Bolivia, where state violence is experienced as constituting law even while violating it; or as Richard Kernaghan writes about Peru[11]. They use a range of tactics to pressure state response, including protests, creating community networks and lobbying local officials. However, they face many barriers. These efforts are limited by the violence deployed by these "shadow powers" which results in constant encounters with violent actors, checkpoints, detentions, surveillance, coercion, harassment, rape, and torture (Nordstrom, 2004). Remote rural areas or urban shantytowns are distant from centers of power, with travel to municipal centers costly and time-consuming. Many residents lack the formal education that is required to navigate governmental bureaucratic processes.

Most significantly, these people are not considered legitimate political actors, but stigmatized as criminals whose views should be excluded from policy debates. The presumed and real criminality of these communities makes building political coalitions and alliances more difficult. US and Latin American officials are frequently accused by critics of militarized drug policy and supporters of these communities with sympathizing with drug traffickers and criminals.

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[10] Scholars examining the particular challenges of community-based public political life in the context of organized crime and corruption include cases of urban Brazil (Arias, 2006), Nigeria (Smith, 2008), Italy (Schneider and Schneider, 2003) and southern Colombia (Ramirez, 2011).

[11] Bocarejo, 2012; Goldstein, 2012; Kernaghan, 2009.

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REVISION OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION RELATED TO DRUG POLICIES AND TRAFFICKING. THEIR EFFECTS ON THE LIVES OF LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN.

Tania Correa Bohórquez / Urgent Action Fund of Latin America

Drug trafficking is a recurrent theme in the mass media, political discourse, academic spaces and even everyday conversation. However, mention of the ways in which the dynamics of trafficking specifically affect women's lives does not occur with the same frequency. The following article proposes to answer the question: what information has been produced about the effects of drug policies and trafficking on the lives of women in Latin America? And the starting point is a bibliographic and documental revision of published research.

In the first instance, the document outlines the legal framework contextualizing interventions related to drug policies at the international level, as well as by country. Secondly, existing information about the context and the dynamics of shadow powers in relation to women takes four dimensions into account: women as consumers, women involved in drug trafficking, detained women, and associated problems.

Drug Policy: International Legal Framework

Different types of licit and illicit drugs have been part of daily, world-wide reality for many decades; however, upsurges in the international trade of certain drugs at specific moments and the appearance of new substances has transformed the phenomenon into a theme of international interest and into a global reality in which geopolitical interests, public health concerns, and other illegal economies such as arms and human trafficking, intermingle.

The first international treaty related to drug control was the International Opium Convention signed in 1912, which emerged in response to the increasing export and consumption of opium at the global level, especially in countries of the East.

Following upon this, came the United Nations' Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 1961 (amended in 1972), the objective of which was "to limit the use of narcotic drugs to medical and scientific purposes and to establish permanent international cooperation and control in order to achieve said purposes and objectives"(preamble to the Convention). This Convention regulated the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances and urged that measures be taken to prevent the cultivation of plants that contain narcotics such as opium poppy, coca, and cannabis. However, synthetic substances were not considered, and as a result, the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 was elaborated. It took into account psychoactive and other psychedelic drugs and was important for the controls established over the production and trade of substances which can be used for medicinal purposes.

Years later, the United Nations created the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 which included recommendations related to the entire narcotrafficking chain, money laundering, and the extradition of narco-traffickers.

In 1998, there was a special session of the United Nations General Assembly to discuss the global drug problem, the result of which was a policy declaration of international cooperation for demand reduction of drugs until 2008; the following year a follow-up meeting was held and a new plan to diminish the use of illicit drugs until 2018 was approved.

As far as the panorama in Latin America is concerned, drug policy has a very influential actor: the United States. Illicit drugs are a concern for the governments of the countries of the Americas, in which millions of dollars are invested. Costs, plans and policies against drug trafficking began to increase after the declaration of US President, Richard Nixon, in 1971, who for the first time used the term "War on Drugs", and launched a plan against narco-trafficking which had repercussions at different levels in the other countries of the Americas.

Drug Trafficking and "Shadow Powers": a transnational reality

Drug Trafficking is understood to be global problem and has been considered a threat to international security by different governments. The role of the United States in consolidating the "War on Drugs" is undeniable, as is its influence over the national policies of the governments of South and Central America.

"The first anti-drug criminal laws in Latin America evolved more or less in the twenties. One of their main characteristics was that very few behaviors related to narcotic drugs were criminalized; and at the same time, sentences were measured". (Uprimny, Guzman y Parra, 2013: 20). This situation changed with international pressures and the very dynamic of trafficking, the effects of which became more intense.

The countries of the Andean region turned to production, while those of Central America were used as transit corridors for drugs to enter the United States, the main consumer. Concern for the consumption of drugs as a public health issue turned into a concern for the violence generated by the production, transport, and trading of drugs.

With the implementation of prohibitive policies, the drug business became extremely profitable and an arena of dispute for territorial power. In addition, given that it is an illegal economy, it remains outside State regulation; thereby weakening the limits of what is permissible in the entire commercial chain and leaving the business in the hands of narcotraffickers who consistently use violence to maintain their power.

The production of plants from which drugs are processed already represents higher profits vis-a-vis other crops in cultivation zones; the value increases during transport; and the main profits are produced in consuming countries. The Organization of American States (OAS) illustrates this process in the case of cocaine, using as a base, data from the United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United States State Department:

> *In order to produce a kilo of base paste of cocaine hydrochloride, between 450 and 600 kilos of coca leaves are required. Since a Colombian farmer receives on average 1.3 dollars per kilo of coca leaves, it can be estimated that a kilo of base paste in the Colombian jungle represents a cost of between 585 and 780 dollars. In the same Colombian jungle area, the kilo is sold for approximately 2,700 dollars. At the country's ports, the price now increases to between 5,500 and 7,000 dollars. In Central America, the same kilo fetches around 10.000 dollars. At the northern Mexican border, the price can go as high as 15.000 dollars. In the United States, after crossing the border, the kilo is sold to the wholesaler and the price rises to 27.000 dollars or more. At some moment during the trajectory, the kilo of original base paste went through chemical alterations that generally allow for a duplication of physical*

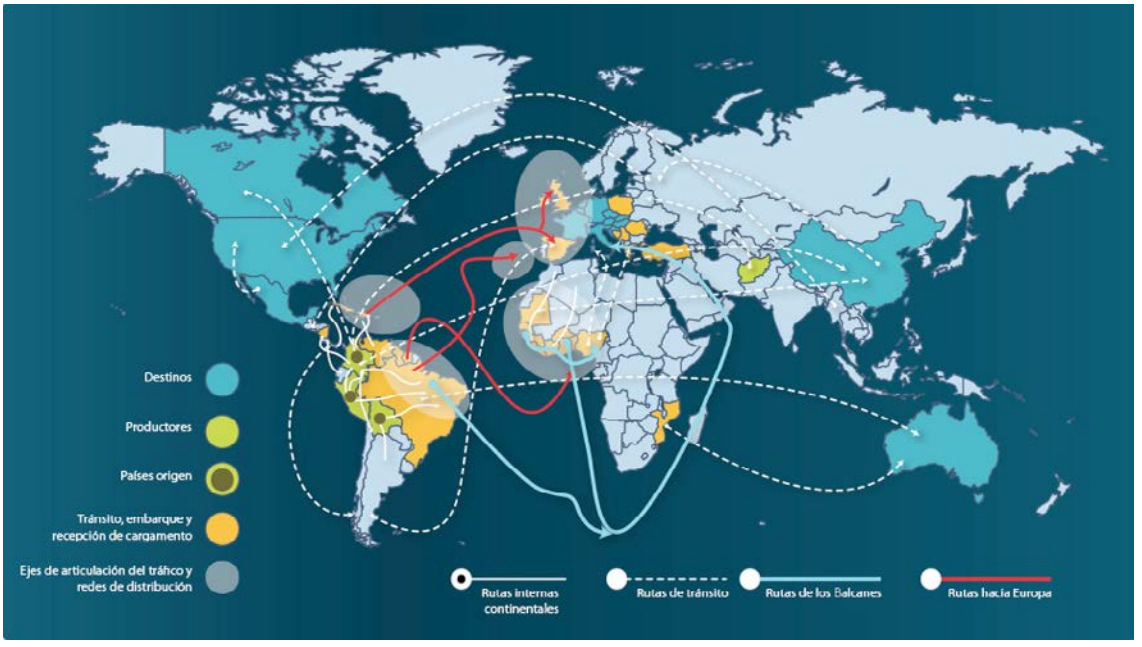
volume and, as a result, the original kilo was transformed into two. A gram of refined cocaine reached a price of 165 dollars in the United States in 2010. As a result, the original kilo, at an average cost of 650 dollars (between 585 and 780) was transformed into two kilos for a total retail sale value of 330.000 dollars. This means the value of the product increased about 500 times as it travelled through the value chain. (OAS, 2013: 57)

This economic chain is what converts cocaine into coveted transnational[1] merchandise, one in which all market forces are not clearly identifiable and which generates "shadow powers". These powers exert domination from an "almost invisible" space outside State regulation, permeated by daily violence, corruption, and infiltration of the institutions of our countries.

"Everything indicates, however, that even if levels of violence in the main consuming countries are relatively low, including European countries, in comparison with those designated as transit countries, it is precisely the demand that stimulates violence throughout the rest of the chain. What happens in Mexico, Central America, the Andean Region countries, and the Caribbean cannot be understood without taking this relationship into account". (OAS, 2013:80).

In each country, the situation varies, according to its function within transnational trafficking and to other characteristics such as: internal armed conflict, State territorial presence, corruption, public policies, etc. Even though the problematic is hemispheric in nature, each country has specific conditions.

Graphically, the Colombian Drug Observatory presents a good summary of global trafficking routes, where the division of roles for each country within the business is clear.



Source: Ministry of National Defense in (Colombian Drug Observatory, 2014)

[1] To understand cocaine as merchandise in the global goods chain, see Wilson and Zambrano, 1995.

The international security policy of the United States has been closely linked with the "war on drugs", even when the discourse was transformed (from 2001 on) to a "war against terrorism", when terms like "narco-terrorists" appear.

The main security programs, revealing USA influence in Latin America, include the struggle against drugs as an objective and are based on a strategy of militarization: in Colombia, Plan Colombia, in force since 1999, concentrates a large portion of the budget on anti-narcotics struggles and military assistance; in Mexico, through the Merida Initiative, the United States has designated more than 1,900 million dollars since 208 to anti-narcotics policies; in Central America, the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) (since 2008) has a broader focus on crime and security, but also considers drug trafficking; and in the Caribbean, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative came into effect in 2009.

In addition, during the decade of the 2000s, economic support was maintained for each country, as can be observed in Graph One, elaborated by the author with data from the State Department (International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports (INCSR), 1999-2014.

In addition to the programs financed by the United States, each country has invested resources in anti-drug policy and has modified its legislation with the goal of restricting trafficking and illicit drugs consumption.

During the XX century, Latin American governments gradually augmented the number of laws penalizing drug-related offences and increased punishments. "Different from the decade of the 20's, the characteristic of today's laws is to penalize a high number of drug-related offences and

to enforce severe punishments. The Colombian case is a very good example: while the first anti-drug laws demanded only pecuniary sanctions and for only two drug-related offences, the current Criminal Code includes 50 governing categories related to this type of offence and contemplates sentences of up to 30 years in jail which can be increased in incidents of an aggravated nature". (Uprimny et al. 2013: 19).

A study undertaken by a group of male and female thematic experts and coordinated by the Transnational Institute (TNI) and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) (2010), substantiated data concerning the increased number of laws sanctioning substance consumption and augmenting punishments[2] in eight countries involved in the study: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. The research group concludes that even if there are differences in local contexts, there are also several common elements that:

- Laws have hardened in the last decades, becoming extremely punitive and contributing to an increase in incarceration rates and overcrowding in jails.
- In general, legislation does not differentiate between levels of involvement; for example, between small vendors and large narco-traffickers.
- Regulation related to preventative detention increases the number of inmates with an undefined situation; they have no access to alternative sentencing which does exist for other types of offences.
- Male and female inmates pay disproportionately high penalties in jails that do not meet minimum international standards for prisoners.
- There is a lack of quality information about individuals being investigated for drug trafficking.
- An increasing number of women, known as "drug mules" or drug couriers, and foreigners are being detained for drug offences. (Metaal & Youngers (eds.), 2010: 99)

Legislation governing drug-related offences in Latin American countries is disproportionate, including when compared to other offences such as homicide, violent sexual intercourse, and aggravated theft which are punished less severely than offences related to narcotics, even when they are of a non-violent nature. In other words, "in Latin America trading illegally in cocaine for eventual sale to a willing consumer is more serious that raping a woman or willingly killing a neighbor". (Uprimny et al. 2013: 5)

As a manner of illustration, in the Colombian case, "in 1990 the maximum sentence for drug trafficking reached 133% in relation to one corresponding to a crime of homicide; while in Bolivia, this percentage reached 250%."(Uprimny et al. 2013: 39)

In Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Brazil the maximum penalty for drug offences is considerably higher than one for sexual violence. "In Mexico, the percentage

[2] For detailed information on each country's legislation, see Comparative Chart of Legislative Changes in Metaal & Youngers (eds.), 2010: 102-106.

comparison reaches 179%, followed by Bolivia at 167%, and then Colombia and Brazil with 150%."(Uprimny et al. 2013: 45)

The effects of drug policies on Human Rights violations have become an important topic on the agendas of organizations investigating the issue from a civil society perspective. Even government entities have indicated the need to re-direct drug policies, as seen in the Regional Report, "The Drug Problem in the Americas", presented in 2013 by the Organization of American States and which includes an *Analytical Report* that synthesizes studies related to the topic and a *Scenarios Report* that evaluates what "could be", depending on the policy route chosen. Four possible scenarios until 2025 are compared, their variances related to the understanding of the "drug problem":

- Together: "The drug problem is part of a larger insecurity problem, with weak state institutions unable to control organized crime and the violence and corruption it generates".
- Pathways: "The problem is that the current regime for controlling drugs through criminal sanctions (especially arrests and incarceration of users and low-level dealers) is causing too much harm".
- Resilience: "The drug problem is a manifestation and magnifier of underlying social and economic dysfunctions that lead to violence and addiction".
- Disruption: "The problem is that countries where drugs (especially cocaine) are produced and through which they transit are suffering unbearable and unfair costs". (OAS, 2013: 23)

Another important milestone occurred when the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for the first time held a hearing to analyze the impact of drug policies on Human Rights. This hearing, which took place on March 25, 2014, was requested by 17 organizations which presented their testimony in a regional diagnostic[3] in which the following facts, among others, were highlighted:

- Militarization, which has defined anti-drug policy, has generated increased violence
- Campaigns of forced eradication have not been successful in eliminating crops and instead have affected growers, made up to a large extent by poor agriculturalists living in areas of weak State presence. Eradication reconfigures territorial struggles and the presence of armed actors, putting the civilian population in a vulnerable position and generating instability and violence.
- Criminalization of consumption has led to the stigmatization and penalization of many drug users who are accused of trafficking or possession, even when they have only a personal dose. In addition, criminalization prevents the use of drugs for medicinal purposes.
- Rulings on drug use do not follow the principle of proportionality

Drug policies have increased the incarcerated population, generating prison overcrowding.

- There is no clear differentiation between the seriousness of the offence and the sentence.

[3] "El impacto de las políticas de drogas en los derechos humanos en la región de las Américas. Testimonio antes de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos de la Organización de Estados Americanos". March 25, 2014. Available at: http://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/Drug%20Policy/FINAL%20CIDH%20Testimonio%20-%20El%20impacto%20de%20las%20pol%C3%ADticas%20de%20drogas%20en%20los%20DDHH.pdf

- The drug problem affects women in specific ways.
- Criminalization of drug use renders access to health care difficult for consumers. State care is limited considering the multiplicity of private institutions offering treatment of addictions.

A few signs of slow change regarding drug policy were seen in the most recent meeting of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)[4] of the Organization of American States (April 29-May 1, 2014). The number of thematic sessions and independent experts increased. According to Coletta A. Youngers, Principal Consultant for the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and Representative of the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC), the biggest change in the discourse in comparison to previous meetings is that "for the first time the United States government- the main force behind the drastic drug laws in the region- sent a powerful message concerning the need to re-establish justice, proportionality and integrity to the penal system regarding drugs policy". (2014:1).

Drug Trafficking and the Situation of Women

Similarly, the situation of women in relation to drug trafficking and its effects has not been a visible theme in civil society studies, nor in national and international policies. However, the debate has begun to position itself and there have been important efforts to systematize existing information.

One document reflecting the importance of positioning the theme in arenas of political advocacy is: "Women and Drugs in the Americas: a Policy Working Paper" (CIM/IACW[5], 2014), prepared at the request of the Members States of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the OAS, who organized a first roundtable on the topic at the 43rd Regular Session of the General Assembly of the OAS (Guatemala, 2013). In the first part, the diagnostic lays out the existing legal framework in relationship to women, and in a second section, synthesizes available information by country. Commentary on the legislation concludes that:

> *Still absent from the current legal and policy framework is any consideration of the nature of women's participation in the question of illicit drugs, the differential impact of current drug policies on women, from a gender and human rights perspective, or the real and potential harms that may result from the incarceration of women for drug-related crimes, and the effects that this can have on families and societies at large. Nowhere in the conventions and international agreements are there mandates or commitments relating to understanding the global crisis of controlled substances and their commercialization through the lens of gender and human rights. The conventions concentrate their efforts on channeling security strategies*

[4] CICAD for the name in Spanish: Comisión Inter-Americana para el Control del Abuso de Drogas

[5] In most OAS documentation, the Inter-American Commission of Women is usually referred to as CIM for its name in Spanish: Comisión Inter-Americana de Mujeres. In this document the acronym CIM will be used.

and organize their policy recommendations around punishing those involved rather than taking a more pragmatic, "harm reduction"14 approach that many research institutions in the fields of health and human development have promoted since the 1990s. (CIM, 2014:17).

The relationship between drug trafficking and women can be discussed from different perspectives, and in the following section, the information that was collected is presented with reference to: 1. Women as drug consumers; 2. Women and drug trafficking; 3. Women in jail for offences related to drugs; and 4. Other problematic issues related to drug trafficking.

Women as Drug Consumers

The percentage participation of women in drug consumption is not clear, although it is known to be less than that of men. World Drug Reports elaborated by the United Nations do not discriminate by gender, so it is difficult to follow the evolution of women's drug consumption.

According to a study undertaken by Julia Kensy, Camille Stengel, Marie Nougier, and Ruth Birgin, "women represent 40 percent of the people who use drugs in some parts of Europe and the United States; 20 percent in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Latin America; between 17 and 40 percent in certain provinces of China; and 10 percent in other areas of Asia". (Open Society Institute Public Health Program (2007), taken from Kensy et al; 2012:5)

In another study, coordinated by the Latin American Observatory on Drug Policy and Public Opinion (OPDOP)[6] and *Asuntos del Sur* (ADS), data provided by the Observatory for 2012 indicates that "men are bigger consumers than women. The differences are wide when it comes to the consumption of other drugs, although the widest margins can be perceived in alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana consumption, even doubling statistics of female consumers of such drugs as cocaine, LSD, and crack cocaine". (Vergara and Machado, 2013: 13). It is to be noted the study takes licit and illicit drugs into account.

In the same document, conclusions from a survey undertaken in Bogotá, Colombia; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mexico City, Mexico; La Paz, Bolivia; San Salvador, El Salvador; and Santiago, Chile of 3,893 people between the ages of 18 and 34 showed that "about 55% of Latin American women declared they were able to get access to drugs because they were offered free. The highest rate was found among women interviewed from Bolivia where the rate was 72%". (OPDOP and ADS, 2013:3). In terms of the patterns of consumption, one finds differences in the attitudes of men and women: "while 63% of the male consumers had attended classes while under the influence of an illicit drug, in women this rate was 46%. About 74% of the women declared they had never gone to work drugged versus 63% of the men". (Vergara and Machado, 2013: 3).

[6] Known as OPDOP for the Spanish name: Observatorio Latinoamericano de Políticas de Drogas y Opinión Pública

Women and Drug Trafficking

From a first look at the dynamics of trafficking, it is clear that the majority of the big drug dealers are men, and that only in a few historic cases have they been women (like Enedina Arellano Félix, from the Tijuana cartel and Sandra Ávila Beltrán, alias "the queen of the Pacific"). A revision by Maher and Hudson of fifteen different studies on drug trafficking (quoted by Kensy el al., 2012:5) showed that "although the studies varied in terms of place, time and the methods used, the majority clearly identified the hierarchical nature of the drug economy where women occupied subordinate or peripheral roles".

In a context of labor instability and sexual division of labor that centers women's work in non-paying jobs in the home, their participation in the drug chain is seen as an economic alternative, although it does not take the place of home-based tasks. In the production of crops destined to the illicit drugs market, women play an important role, and the same is true of transport. "Even though it is acknowledged that participation in drug production can lead to greater economic independence and increased power, in the majority of cases, there is no significant distribution of power because of women's participation in the global drug economy". (Kensy et al, 2012:3)

Researchers Lilian Paola Ovalle and Corina Giacomello (2006) undertook fieldwork with trafficking networks with the goal of mapping the levels of women's participation in the "narco world". They constructed a typology of the roles that women play in such contexts, providing a synthesis of feminine participation in trafficking:

- Stigmatized wives, mothers and daughters: in a role that is played up by the mass media, women with direct family ties to narco-traffickers are socially discriminated and marginalized
- Trophy women: "The woman appears as just one more object through whom the narco-trafficker communicates to society and with whom he acts out his success in terms of wealth and social power". (Ovalle and Giacomello, 2006: 305). Because of the very logic of narcotrafficking and its illegality, these women are more vulnerable to sexual violence.
- Working women: "despite the fact that in recent years transnational narcotrafficking networks have witnessed a change in roles and women's participation in more prestigious and responsible jobs within their organizations, it is clear that the common denominator for women who join narcotrafficking labor ranks is that they occupy the lowest positions on the division of labor chain. Activities reserved for women in the narcotrafficking world, besides being the riskiest, are also ones that the great god of profit of the drug business is nothing more than a mirage". (Ovalle y Giacomello, 2006: 310)
- Women prisoners: Being the lowest links in the chain, means women are more vulnerable to getting caught as is witnessed by the increasing number of women detained for offences related to drug trafficking.
- Women victims of physical violence: The illegal dynamic of trafficking does not permit regulation and control over the use of violence and it is used as a recurring logic in which women have no means of protection.

Women in prisons

In general, there is a deficit in public information systems about the prison population, which include a clear picture regarding the situation of detained women. The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights presented a report concerning detained persons that collected State-reported data in relationship to preventative detainment, with a cut-off date of 2012. According to this report, the prison population continues to be mostly men with a high percentage of the total being detainees who have not been charged (see the case of Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela, for example).

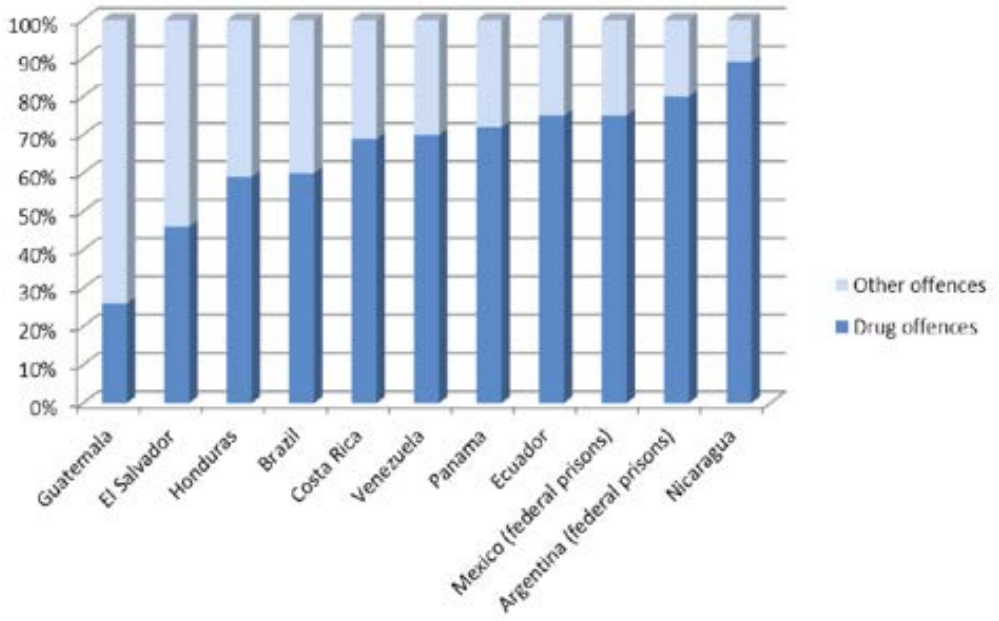
Country	Detained Persons			Persons in preventative detention		
	Total Detained Persons	Women	Men	Total number of persons in preventative detention	Women	Men
Bolivia	13.654	1.724	11.930	11.410		
Brazil	549.577	36.039	513.538	191.024	10.986	80.038
Chile	53.171			10.823	1.317	9.464
Colombia	113.884	8.497	105.387	34.571	2.457	32.114
Costa Rica	13.017			3.248	211	3.087
El Salvador	26.883			6.459		
Ecuador	19.177	1.562	17.615	9.409		
Guatemala	14.635	1.220	13.415	7.357		
Honduras	12.407	457	11.950	6.064		
Nicaragua	9.168	450	8.718	1.127	31	1.096
Panamá	14.521	1.021	13.500	9.443	698	8.745
Paraguay	7.901	528	7.374	5.780	401	5.379
Peru	58.681	3.719	54.962	34.508	2.318	32.190
Uruguay	9.330			6.065	477	5.588
Venezuela	36.236			18.735	937	17.798

Source: Prepared by the author with data base from the IADHR (2013: 20-24)

Before referring to existing data on women detained for drug offences, it is necessary to point out how situations of poverty and the lack of State presence become motives for their association with trafficking, rather than it being a freely chosen option. "Peoples' participation- and sometimes, that of entire families- in the production, trafficking and/or consumption of drugs is, on many occasions, the result of different acts of coercion, often driven or provoked by poverty and the lack of social protection". (Kensy et al., 2012:51)

The number of imprisoned women in each country varies; however the proportion detained on drug-related offences is considerably higher in most; and in Ecuador, Mexico, Argentina and Nicaragua, more than 80% of the total number of incarcerated women is drug-related.

Figure 1. Proportion of women in prison for drug offenses in Latin America



Source: (Giacomello, 2013:13)

In the section on legislative frameworks, the manner in which the disproportionate nature of drug laws increases the number of detained has already been mentioned. This increase has also happened with the number of detained women, a rate which has been going up in the last few years. "For many people detained on drug charges, legal procedures are slow and the majority of those to be found in prison are in preventive detainment, waiting for court proceedings for many years before being brought to trial. During the last few years, the population of women inmates in Latin America has grown exponentially from an estimated 40.000 women in 2006 to 74,000 in 2010. The majority of these women is in preventative detention due to drug-related crimes". (Tomasini, 2012, quoted in OEA, 2013:32).

This increase in the prison population can be explained in part by the hardening of the drug wars, and is also related to the kinds of roles played by women in the trafficking business. "The increase in the number of women incarcerated on drug charges not only reveals their increased involvement in trafficking, but also is the result of a focus on criminal persecution. That is to say, women not only would be participating more in the selling and transporting of drugs, but that these activities are being increasingly pursued by the authorities". (Giacomello, 2013: 2)

Another factor is the use of preventative detention for those suspected of drug–related offences which prolongs detention time without resolving the situation and contributes to prison over-crowding.

The truth is that the situation for women in prison is not the same as that of men, since the former suffer specific forms of discrimination. According to Giacomello, "women in prison for drug-related offences are affected by three levels of exclusion that, in prison, translate into triple sentencing. First of all, the same factors of discrimination that are found outside prison walls associated with the permanent nature of discriminatory practices and asymmetric power relations between men and women in public and private spaces, are also to be found within. Secondly, like men who participate in drug offences, women are submitted to disproportionate sentences. And thirdly, they suffer specific forms of discrimination within penitentiary walls." (2013:17).

The Inter-American Commission of Women has indicated its concern for the situation of incarcerated women and recognizes incarceration for drug offences as an increasing phenomenon requiring control in order to guarantee Human Rights. In the words of Carmen Moreno, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women, Organization of American States: "if we treat those who have historically been unequal, as equals, we are only perpetuating discrimination and inequality. Gender differentiation is imperative in the struggle for justice and human treatment for detained women, or at risk of becoming prisoners for drug-related offences." (2013:1)

In official records, generally, a de-personalization of the reality of drug offences and incarceration occurs. One exercise that helps to illustrate the problem, by recording personal histories, is to be found in the video series done by TNI and WOLA, "The human cost of the war on drugs"[7]. The series presents the stories of women incarcerated for drugs in eight Latin American countries and the disproportionate sentences to which they are submitted.

Associated Problematic Issues

One effect of drug trafficking related to the direct intervention of "shadow powers" is the increase in violence against women in territories defined by the presence of criminal networks and the production and trafficking of narcotic drugs. Such contexts, by their very nature of illegality, or in the shadows, means they are more difficult to map out. It is complicated to determine that the violence is caused directly by trafficking; however, the relationships between drug trafficking, feminicide, and violence against women are clear.

The *Regional Feminist Articulation for Human Rights and Gender Justice*, in a communiqué to the Sixth Summit of the Americas, requested a revision of anti-drug policies, arguing that: "Recent studies related to feminicides show how the homicide rate for women has increased to almost triple that of men in those countries in the region most affected by narcotrafficking, as well as the increased levels of cruelty which with such acts are committed. This increase is related directly to

[7] Available at: http://www.wola.org/es/informes/el_rostro_humano_0

new regional contexts and dynamics characterized by the presence of mafias and criminal networks associated with the drug trade, which far from diminishing their activities as a result of State policies created to confront them, have actually strengthened their business and have allied themselves with traditional social actors (politicians, military, and business men), thereby guaranteeing the impunity of the acts". (Articulation, 2012)

In countries where the narco-trafficking cartels are concentrated or which serve as drug corridors, like Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico, the numbers for feminicides has increased in the last few years and are the highest in the world. (Geneva Declaration, 2011:120).

The data is alarming:

- In Honduras, feminicides increased 257percent between 2002 and 2010.
- In Mexico, feminicides have increased 40 percent since 2006 in the context of the war against drugs, which has left more than 50.000 people dead, 250,000 displaced, and thousands submitted to forced disappearance. The Mexican border state of Chihuahua has a females homicide rate of 34.73 per 100,000- fifteen times higher than the global rate.
- In Guatemala, 685 women were assassinated in 2010, in comparison to 213 in 2000 (JASS and the Nobel Women's Initiative, 2012: 10).
- In El Salvador, feminicides have decreased (628 in 2011, 329 in 2012, and 215 in 2013 according to the Observatory on Citizen Security for Women), but it is still one of the countries with the highest rates of feminicide and impunity.

These situations of generalized violence also cause the displacement of people. In Colombia, the internal armed conflict, the internal logic of which also embodies drug trafficking (it serves to finance illegal armed actors), has left more than 5,5 million victims of forced displacement, of whom 51% are women (2,846,715 according to the Unified Registry of Victims); in Mexico, violence attributable to the drug cartels has forced 160,000 people to leave their land; in Guatemala 242,000 people have been displaced; 150,000 in Peru; and in Honduras the figure reaches 17,000 (NRC[8] and IDMC[9], 2014:40). Concerning the refugee situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, the number for 2012 was 491,245. Although the data is not disaggregated by sex, according to estimates from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "half (49%) of people of interest to UNHCR were women and girls, a percentage that has not changed since 2006. Women and girls represented 48% of the refugee population in2012". (UNHCR, 2012: 34).

Another concern, related to drug policies, that directly affects women, is aerial crop spraying. Coca and poppy crops are affected but so are other crops. Colombia is the only country

[8] NRC- Norwegian Refugee Council
[9] IDMC- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

in the Andean region that accepted aerial fumigation and this has brought consequences for the health and way of life of the families who live in the fumigation areas, many of whom are small agriculturalists. In terms of manual eradication, one direct consequence was an increase in the use of landmines by armed actors.

Conclusions

Drug policies fostered in Latin America by the United States has influenced legislation in each country, and this is reflected in the increased number of laws and the classification of offenses. However, these policies did not produce the expected results and the "war on drugs", far from putting an end to narco-trafficking, had other negative effects such as increased violence and the consolidation of transnational criminal networks.

Legislation in Latin American countries is disproportionate in relation to offenses associated with drugs, including a comparison with other crimes such as homicide and sexual violence.

Prohibitive policies increased the drug business's profits and generated an increase in violence in areas with a presence of actors associated with trafficking, both in producing countries as well as in those serving as drug corridors to the United States.
The connection between the powers associated with trafficking and how women are affected is a topic that has traditionally been rendered invisible, although recent research illustrates how drug trafficking affects women's lives in different ways.

Drug policy affects the weakest links in the chain of the trafficking structure, referring to the people involved as carriers or mules, and in retailing, and these are the jobs assigned to women. Latin American States regulate disproportionate sentences for these offenses vis-ŕ-vis more serious crimes (that involve violence, for example).

Prohibitive policies increase the profits of the business, generating powerful forces inside trafficking structures. Since it is illegal, the use of violence turns into a daily occurrence in trafficking.

Female consumers are stigmatized; the social sanction for them is more severe than that applied to men.

Violence against women is used by narco-traffickers as a way of demonstrating power and has increased in countries that function as trafficking corridors. Feminicides, displacements, and different forms of violence continue in a state of impunity.

Differentiated policies to guarantee women's rights in prison do not exist; the same is true for women consumers and for the prevention of women's involvement in trafficking.

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BIENVENIDO
A

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION FOR WOMEN IN ECUADOR IN RELATION TO DRUG POLICIES AND TRAFFICKING

Karina Sarmiento / Asylum Access Ecuador

The following information is based on the experience of Asylum Access Ecuador (AAE), an Ecuadorian foundation promoting legal strategies to ensure respect for the rights of persons who have taken refuge in the country. Information from secondary sources, as well as information based on our experience in working with testimonies of individuals forced to flee, especially from Colombia, has been used. Ecuador is one of the principle reception centers for Colombians requiring international protection, and receives the greatest number of persons from Latin America requiring refugee status.[1]

Laws or programs related to current drug policies in the country.

- Law to Control Asset Laundering, Official Registry 127 of October 18-2005- Last modification: December 30, 2010.
- Law on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Official Registry Addendum # 490. 27-12-2004. General Regulations regarding the Law to Control Asset Laundering, Executive Decree 1328. Official Registry 256, 2006.
- Regulation for the application of the Law on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Executive Decree 2145. Official Registry Addendum 637.1991.

[1] According to statistics from the Ministry of External Relations and Human Mobility (MRREE), beginning in the year 2000, Ecuador has received 165,550 requests for refugee status and has granted refugee status to 55,327 persons. When the country of origin of these 165,550 requests is analyzed, 89.17% correspond to people from Colombia, followed by Peruvians (4.77%) and Cubans (3.54%). Of the total, 55.8% of the requests have been presented by men and 44.2% by women; with 19% corresponding to children and adolescents (people between 0 and 17 years of age). http://www.mmrree.gob.ec/refugiados/estadisticas/indice.html Statistics provided by the Directorate for Refugees. Web site consulted on August 31, 2013.

Country Context Overview in relation to Drug Trafficking and Shadow Powers

Ecuador is a transit country for illegal drugs. Cocaine and heroin trafficked from Colombia and Peru by land across borders are destined for distribution in the United States and Europe. Transnational criminal organizations from Mexico, Colombia, Nigeria, Russia, Italy and China, including the Zetas, and the Sinaloa and Gulf cartels, among others, operate actively in Ecuador. The country is also an important transit route for the chemical substances required for processing illegal narcotic drugs. Traffickers trade contraband ether (also known as white gas), gasoline, and other chemical substances in huge quantities from Ecuador to Colombia and Peru for the processing of cocaine.

Drug consumption is on the rise and public treatment facilities are insufficient to deal with the approximately 15.000 to 20.000 addicts throughout the country. The 2008 Constitution classified drug abuse as a public health problem and gave the government the mandate to respond to the situation.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicated in its Global Report on Drugs in 2013 that significant coca crops were not found in Ecuador; although there is small-scale cultivation of coca and poppy mainly along the northern border, the police and army have immediately eradicated plants when detected. In 2013, the government eradicated 15,748 coca plants, 562,146 poppy plants, and 3,695 cannabis plants.

The Main Effects on Women

Andreina Torres (2008) points out in her research, *"Drugs, Jail, and Gender in Ecuador"* that "the crime of drug-trafficking is the main cause of incarceration among women in the country". At the same time, Sandra Edwards (2010) indicates that 80% of all imprisoned women in "El Inca", the largest jail for women in the country, are there on drug charges, pointing out that this tendency has been a constant for the past 15 years. According to the Antinarcotics Unit, women are linked to micro-trafficking mainly as "mules" for transporting drugs.

Women Refugees: Drug-Trafficking and the Armed Conflict

For several decades, the internal conflict in Colombia has expelled thousands of people seeking international protection- people fleeing from persecution and Human Rights violations committed by armed groups disputing political and economic control over territory and drug-trafficking

(International Displacement Monitoring Centre - IDCM, 2014). Control over drug corridors to the Pacific has caused an intensification of the armed conflict in the Valle del Cauca, especially in the city of Buenaventura where new paramilitary groups restrict peoples' movements, recruit children and adolescents, and are responsible for terrifying acts of violence against any person who opposes their interests (Human Rights Watch - HRW, 2014). At the same time, in Tumaco, in the department of Nariño, an exponential increase in assassinations, disappearances, sexual violence, recruitment, and forced displacement, among other abuses, as well as impunity, has been registered (HRW, 2014a). Within the framework of this scenario of violence, women, the majority of whom are Afro-descendent women, are victims of gender-based violence, including sexual violence used as a "weapon of war" and as a systematic and generalized practice by the armed groups.

At the same time, the border area of the department of Putumayo represents one of the major cocaine-producing regions as well as a strategic corridor where paramilitary groups and the FARC-EP confront each other in the struggle for territorial control (InSight Crime - ISC, 2012). The presence of these groups generates high incidences of displacement among peasant women, and especially indigenous women, who are obliged to work in coca production or are forced to collaborate with the armed actors: they are victims of threats, extortions, physical and psychological abuses.[2]

The AAE's Experience in Healing and Justice among Women Refugees

For many women refugees, flight from their country of origin does not mean the end of violence, since it is reproduced in Ecuador. A situation of vulnerability, combined with the lack of guarantees for their rights, implies women are taken advantage of and this means processes of integration and reconstruction of their personal life projects (ISC, 2012) are more difficult. The Asylum Access Foundation of Ecuador (AAE) has been implementing a program with refugee women since 2008, a program focused on Integrated Justice, the goal of which is to promote access to formal justice as well as to offer tools for the enforcement of rights, beginning with a personal and collective process of empowerment.

The goal is for women, the majority of whom has suffered from some form of gender-based violence, to assume a more active role as well as collective responsibility for moving out of circles of violence and for overcoming the infringement of their rights. This is accomplished by using techniques that allow women to heal both corporally and emotionally from past experiences of trauma. They are assisted to transform the connotation of "victims" and to see themselves as

[2] Asylum Access has been operating in Ecuador since 2007, providing services of legal assistance to persons seeking refugee status. This analysis is the result of the recompilation of testimonies from women refugees directly affected by this situation.

"survivors", valuing their own capacities, strengths, and resistances when faced with impotence and stigmatization. During this process, the construction of safe spaces permits the breaking down of silences as well as the re-articulation of a sense of personal integrity.

Certain testimonies highlight the importance of psychosocial accompaniment: *"I could not accept being in Ecuador; when I arrived, I arrived in bad shape. But with the encounters, everything changed. Because I got to know other people, I listened to other stories. This has really helped me. Today I am very thankful to Ecuador". "Being here with you has helped me to open my eyes and to gain other perspectives on life".* Other women mention that they feel stronger and more empowered after having felt the sisterhood within the group. *"We are not alone. Together we are stronger. We need to stand together in order to ensure our rights, considering everything that has happened to us and that is still happening". "As women, we are strugglers and we have to leave behind the notion of feeling like victims". "We need to create networks of empowered women in order to strengthen each of us and to live the kind of life we want and dream about".*

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COLOMBIA: US POLICY, SHADOW POWERS AND WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Winifred Tate / Colby College

Transnational drug policy contributed to the move which some critics of drug policy call the "balloon effect" in which pressure on production and trafficking in one region simply pushes it into another, much as a balloon squeezed on one side will expand on the other. Within Colombia, landless peasants without recourse to state services along the agricultural frontier welcomed the profitable coca crop, and the country soon produced more than 50 percent of the world's total. Putumayo reigned as the epicenter of coca production for the global cocaine trade between the late 1980s and mid-2000s. For local farmers, this meant economic opportunity and empowerment as well as exclusion and violence. The country's oldest and largest guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia[1]- (FARC-EP) began taxing coca production by traffickers, but in the 1980s began charging *gramaje* – a per gram surcharge - on the coca paste produced by small farmers, using this money to more than quadruple their forces by the end of the 1990s, and in the process building substantial urban militias. At the same time, paramilitary groups began a brutal campaign to take control under the umbrella of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia[2] (AUC), transforming themselves from regional renegades into a powerful military and political force. Money from the drug trade allowed them to grow from small groups linked to local military commanders to private armies. The fusion of counterinsurgency ideology and illegal narcotics revenue produced one of the most lethal fighting forces in Latin America, attacking suspected guerrilla sympathizers, leftist political activists, and Colombian authorities that tried to investigate drug trafficking.

U.S. and Colombian national policies played a determining role in creating the conditions for Putumayo coca cultivation. U.S. counternarcotics policy generated new trafficking and production routes, in large part the result of changes in enforcement strategies. The interdiction of coca grown in Peru and Bolivia encouraged the vertical integration of the Colombia narcotics industry, bringing cultivation into new areas of southern Colombia. At the same time, Colombia land policies and

[1] In Spanish Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo
[2] Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia

economic development strategies privileged large landowners and commercial agriculture, while encouraging invasive settlement of ownerless lands, the *tierras baldias*. Despite the resulting mass colonization, limited access to markets, credit and other sustaining support for small-scale production prevented peasant farmers from producing agricultural goods beyond subsistence level. Coca emerged as a market-driven solution to these structural challenges. As the population grew and local knowledge of its cultivation and processing spread throughout the region, capital circulated and an alternative vision and practice of (illegal) economic development took root. The production and trafficking of illegal products was not in spite of official policies, but (in large measure) created by them; this trade was not separate from the regional agricultural economy but central to it.

Beginning in 1994, the United States sprayed thousands of acres of Colombia with glyphosate, a commercial herbicide that kills a wide range of plant life. Farmers in Putumayo complained that this fumigation destroyed food crops, caused respiratory illness and skin problems, and eliminated their only means of support, while coca cultivation simply moved into new areas. Thousands of people attempted to register complaints with local ombudsmen in an effort to claim compensation for destroyed legal crops, to no avail. At the same time, millions of dollars were spent on alternative livelihood projects that were abandoned or left no trace in the local economy except farmer frustration. Such projects include the more than $2 million animal feed plant that was sold off as scrap three years after it opened (Isacson, 2006). Or the infamous chicken project, in which thousands of chickens imported from the United States, requiring expensive chicken feed, were unable to weather Putumayo's climate, and were left to starve or made into soup. Thousands of heads of cattle were distributed, millions of dollars in seed, credit and agricultural support spent. Today in Putumayo these programs appear to have simply melted into the landscape with no effect on agricultural production, much less on coca growing. Anthropologist María Clemencia Ramírez's exhaustive study of local development efforts found that USAID programs undermined state legitimacy and eroded public confidence in the state, the exact opposite of their stated goals (Ramirez, 2011). Even a 2009 Center for Strategic and International Studies report that praised Plan Colombia admitted, "aerial eradication is not an effective state presence and, by itself, will not promote a transition to legitimate government control over an area." (Mendelson, McLean y DeShazo, 2009:57). Residents of Putumayo did not equivocate in naming fumigation a regional calamity. Fumigation decimated not only coca and food crops but also pastures, forests and waterways.

The FARC's economic relationship to the coca trade transformed over time, at first focused only on building their political base. As the extravagant resources of the coca trade became more widely known, however, the FARC-EP expanded their "taxation" system to include coca, first on the middlemen and traffickers, and then on the peasant farmers themselves. This tax was known as the "*gramaje*" — a price per gram of coca paste, and nowhere did the gramaje come to dominate local economic relations as it did in Putumayo. The dramatic profits available to the FARC-EP were the product in part of US counternarcotics policy, as interdiction efforts targeting the small planes bringing coca paste from Bolivia and Peru into Colombia contributed to the dramatic increase in coca growing in Colombia – much of it in areas that were historic FARC-EP strongholds.

US officials labeled the guerrillas *narcoguerrillas*, a label that obscures and misrepresents events in the regions that are policy targets. The narcoguerrilla moniker had deep roots in Washington political discourse about Marxist opposition movements in Latin America. Then-U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Lewis Tambs is widely credited with coining the phrase in the mid-1980s. Widely used during the final years of the Cold War, such labeling discursively linked Communist groups with criminal drug trafficking elements. Government officials warned that insurgencies throughout the region were using drug trafficking to finance their operations. The label delegitimized such movements' political claims by categorizing them as criminal organizations, and justified escalating military aid to their opponents by alleging their access to the nearly limitless resources of the drug trade. By the end of the decade, the rise of the brutal Shining Path in the coca-producing regions of Peru brought the focus on narcoguerrillas to the Andes. The 1980s posturing about narcoguerrillas as a central threat to U.S. interests in Latin America was revived in reference to Colombia in the 1990s, specifically focusing on the FARC-EP. First, the label denied the political logic of the FARC-EP as a guerrilla insurgency. Second, the moniker erased the actual existing structure and actors within the evolving drug trade. Finally, the narcoguerrilla narrative overestimated FARC's military strength, exaggerating the threat the group posed to the state. These elements were critical in the policy debates as a justifying apparatus for militarization. The narcoguerrilla label allowed policymakers to circumvent debates about the appropriateness of counterinsurgency and counternarcotics programs; by definition, all counterinsurgency operations were counternarcotics operations if the enemy was both a trafficking and insurgency organization.

While drug profits clearly financed the FARC's military expansion and their escalating attacks, the vast majority of the exorbitant profits of the drug trade were going not to the FARC-EP, but to the Northern Valle Cartel and other trafficking organizations. The initial cocaine boom had been dominated by two sprawling networks, based in Medellín and Cali, labeled "cartels" despite the fact that they did not control price through a monopoly. After the leadership was killed or jailed in the mid-1990s, a new generation of mid-level capos now organized new trafficking structures, most notably the Northern Valle Cartel. Their vertically integrated illegal operations employed new and constantly changing shipping routes through Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean for moving cocaine. Their political affiliations were not with left-wing guerrillas but rather with right-wing paramilitary forces.

These paramilitary forces, operating under the umbrella of the United Self Defense Forces (AUC) from 1997 until their partial demobilization in the mid-2000s, expanded their power, carrying out more than 900 massacres, thousands of assassinations, and dominating life in small towns throughout the country. When drug trafficker and paramilitary warlord Salvatore Mancuso boasted in 2005 that he controlled 30% of the Colombian Congress, most analysts viewed the claim as wishful thinking. Only one year later, Colombian journalist Claudia López's analysis of electoral records revealed "atypical voting patterns" linked to the collusion of paramilitaries and politicians, launching widespread investigations known collectively as the *parapolitica* scandal (López, 2010). By 2011, more than 120 former members of Congress – approximately one-third -- had come

under investigation for paramilitary ties, and more than 40 had been convicted. Approximately one third of Colombia's mayors, governors, and congressmen have been implicated. Investigations remain ongoing as of this writing (López, 2010 and Romero, 2007).[3] Testimony by demobilized paramilitaries has implicated hundreds of members of the armed forces and thousands of private citizens. Paramilitary groups also used bribery and intimidation to influence the judicial system, including so-called "corruption by fear," the pervasive threats, intimidation, and physical attacks faced by the Colombian judiciary (López, 2010: 461).

Neo-paramilitary forces, frequently labeled "criminal bands" (BACRIM) by the Colombian government, remain significant shadow power forces throughout Colombia. They engage in violence, extortion, and black market operations. Colombian clientalism is in many regions the foundation of the relationship between citizens and the state, in which personal relationships with politicians and their advisors are the primary channel for access to state resources, including health care, educational opportunities and contracts, as well as material rewards in the form of money, food and other supplies. Many women community leaders lament the ways in which political control of specific state institutions – including education, health and justice agencies – prevent them from gaining access to state services. At the same time, some of the actors controlling the institutions through which clientalism is practiced have shifted. Emerging criminal groups that have come to dominate many regions in the post-AUC era now practice fraudulent contracting, election rigging and extortion as a means of maximizing profit alongside their other criminal enterprises, what I am calling criminalized corruption. Illegal groups that engage in other forms of criminal activities (such as drug trafficking, extortion of private individuals, and other forms of contraband) are employing corruption as an additional rent-seeking activity. These groups are linked to the previous generation of paramilitary forces in various ways, through the personnel employed (many of whom were mid-level commanders or *cabecillas*). These groups are also able to deploy the extensive experience with the extreme violence of the previous groups in order to inspire terror and compliance, using graffiti, *volantes* (photocopied threats that are distributed within specific neighborhoods), and rumors.

In addition to their deep and lasting influence on the Colombian political system, Colombia economic life has been transformed by paramilitarism as well. Paramilitaries appropriated land to increase their wealth and security, repopulating it with people loyal to them while creating sanctuaries for their business interests, including drug trafficking and ranching. Redistribution efforts have been complicated by threats and assassinations against people attempting to reclaim their land. Establishing ownership histories of many properties is very complex because of their occupation by multiple families through displacement and armed resettlement, and the intentional destruction of land titles by burning land registry offices in several regions (Reyes, 2009). Land tenure, and the return of land stolen by such groups, has become a major priority for the Santos Administration (2010-2014). At the same time, the transformation of the agrarian sector through legislative and financial incentives (including USAID sponsored programs in some areas) to privilege

[3] Colombian investigative journalists with international funding have compiled investigative reporting on the website Verdad Abierta (The Open Truth, http://www.verdadabierta.com/).

agribusiness monocrops like palm oil has contributed to the conservation of paramilitary structures of land ownership and rural economic relationships (Ardila, 2011 and Ballvé, 2012).

The Women's Alliance of Putumayo

Putumayo is a small state along the Ecuadoran border that is well known as an epicenter of political violence and the illicit drug trade.[4] Between 2000 and 2005, the region was an intense conflict zone, disputed between Colombia's largest and oldest guerrilla forces, the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC-EP) guerrillas and newly-arrived paramilitary forces working with local military commanders. At the same time, the region reportedly produced 80% of the world's coca paste, a precursor of cocaine, to the international market, attracting migrants from neighboring regions fleeing political violence and searching for economic opportunity. Putumayo was also the centerpiece of Plan Colombia, a US$1.2 billion dollar aid package passed in 2000. The bulk of the initial package - $600 million - was destined for the "Push into Southern Colombia," used to train and equip three new counternarcotics battalions of the Colombia Army and fund aerial fumigation programs.[5] Stigmatized as violent criminals, intent on personal enrichment through the drug trade, *Putumayenses* are considered throughout Colombia as one of growing population excluded from inclusion citizenship and human rights claims because of their assumed criminality. Despite these tremendous challenges, women in Putumayo have organized to protect their communities and work towards a sustainable future in the department through the work of the Women's Alliance of Putumayo: Weavers of Life.

The Alliance was created in the early 2000s as a loose Alliance of women community leaders.[6] The Alliance's first retreat was held in November 2003, where the group adopted three central themes to guide their work: women, human rights and armed conflict; women's history and political participation; and women and social and economic development. Scrabbling for funding from a range of national and international allies, the Alliance held a series of workshops, forums, and meetings in a retreat center in neighboring Neiva, in Bogota, and throughout the department. The Alliance also provides support for women under threat by using contacts with national and international NGOs, and attempts to connect women working with specific community development projects with funding possibilities.

Fatima, one of the founders of the Women's Alliance, tells the story of the founding of their group as a gradual, collective realization that women in the department were facing increasing challenges as political violence escalated. As a supervisor in the education department, she met with teachers in many rural areas, as well as knowing women throughout the region. She and other founders of the Alliance argue that women were left to deal with their families and communities,

[4] For more on the history of Putumayo, see Ramirez, 2001.
[5] For more information, see Ramirez, 2010.
[6] The author would like to thank the women of the Alliance for their invaluable assistance during the research for this article.

and as the heads of households left when men were recruited, killed, disappeared, or displaced; as residents of hamlets occupied by armed factions; and as survivors of combat operations or targeted violence against their families.

Gender ideologies operating in the region were exploited by women in their organizing efforts.[7] Women in the primarily peasant region are viewed as non-political, drawing on imaginaries of women as fundamentally associated with the domestic sphere, universally focused on family welfare as mothers and wives.

Paradoxically, this allowed women greater mobility during times of conflict. Women were the only ones who could move between and among communities and from rural areas into town without being targeted as possible spies. Local women capitalized on their domestic roles and greater mobility to carry out humanitarian missions, intervening with local commanders to plead for the release of family members and neighbors. Women's Alliance founder Amanda called women in this role "defenders of life," recalling that "it was always the women who went to *reclamar* to the people who took them." In some cases, women took over community leadership roles in direct response to targeting of male leaders. For example, Emilse Bernal Bastidas became president of ACSOMAYO, the Peasant Association of Southwest Putumayo,[8] after previous president Luis Melo was killed by paramilitary groups in Puerto Asís.

Women have not been immune to attack, however. One of the most infamous cases in the region was the assassination of Marta Ca*ń*on, from the indigenous reservation of Puerto Guzman, following her attempt to negotiate a pact with the guerrillas to prevent them from entering indigenous lands and recruiting youth. Women's Alliance leaders reported that she was killed in front of her husband and children, and the guerrillas refused to allow her body to be buried. Women staged an impromptu protest in response. One Alliance founder told me, "*she was an entire week in her house and they wouldn't let us bury her. We all went to the park and went to [*departmental capital*] Mocoa. We came out with our mouths covered as a symbol, to show that they wouldn't let us communicate*." In another instance, following the 2003 protest march described below, local leader Luz Marina Benavides was assassinated. One ACSOMAYO leader called the attacks on women a "change," noting that "*now they say the bullets like women too, and they calls us guerrilleras, but … I think it is an advantage to be a women for developing strong work with communities*."

The members of the Women's Alliance, as individuals and as part of this and other collective organizing processes in the region, draw on these national and transnational linkages for material and symbolic resources. The Catholic Church has played a central role in regional organizing efforts, in particular a charismatic Catholic priest who influenced several generations of women. Father Alcides Jimenez worked for more than 18 years in the Puerto Caicedo parish and made social justice

[7] For additional such examples, see Giles and Hyndman (eds.), 2004.

[8] The group represents 73 local advisory committees (Juntas de Acción Comunal), 5 indigenous cabildos, and 2 Nasa reservations.

ministry in the community his focus.[9] He was particularly interested in promoting gender equality and the central role of women in development, creating special courses for leadership and training for local women, leading to the creation of a municipal women's association in 1987. Women participating in these programs could take advantage of the national and international resources originating from the Catholic Church. One example of the transnational reach of the parish's women's program was participation of three local women in the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. Upon their return, they shared their experience networking with women activists from around the world in local workshops. Many of the women who worked with him and their daughters played a central role in community organizing throughout the region, including the founding of the Women's Network.

One of the largest and most visible women's organizations in Putumayo is the regional chapter of the Women's Path to Peace, known as *la Ruta* (*la Ruta Pacifica de Mujeres*), a member organization of the Women's Alliance. The national organization was founded in 1996 as a nation-wide feminist, pacifist, anti-militarist alliance of 300 organizations, including many of the most important feminist groups in Colombia Their slogan "*Ni guerra que nos mate, ni paz que nos oprima*" (no to a war that kills us, No to a peace that oppresses us) encapsulates their holistic critique of economic inequality and exploitation as the root cause of conflict. In 2003, they organized a "Journey of Solidarity with Women of the South," bringing 3,500 women in 98 buses from all over the country to Puerto Caicedo, Putumayo, calling "For the demobilization and recovery of civil life." A central demand was the end to US-sponsored fumigation campaigns in the region and support for voluntary coca crop substitution programs. The slogan featured on posters and banners proclaimed "*la fumigacion = la miseria*" (fumigation equals misery), making an end to the US-sponsored aerial spraying of chemical herbicides over the region a central demand. The use of ecofeminist imagery and discourses opened political space for a legitimate critique of US counternarcotics policies, positioning the women as not defending drug traffickers (a frequent charge from officials following such protests) but as defending mother earth. The march highlighted the centrality of counternarcotics policies in political claims in the region, as a source of injustice, suffering, state repression and abuse.

School teachers connected to national and international networks through the Ministry of Education and the teachers' union has played a central role in the Alliance. Department of Education supervisor Fatima was inspired to found the Network following workshops in rural conflict areas in which teachers and parents pleaded for support. She called teachers a "*pańo de lagrimas*," literally the community's handkerchief for tears, as community members turned to them for support. In many rural areas, teachers are the only connection to a distant state, as well as the only community residents with a regular salary, high school (sometimes more) education

[9] The Colombian Catholic church is known throughout the continent as one of the most conservative. Liberation theology played a comparatively small role here, but priests and nuns, with some support from the hierarchy, including the head of Social Ministries, support a grassroots social justice approach. There were a number of priests in the region who passionately defended social justice and worked to organize their communities; however, many were forced from the region by violence and others reassigned, replaced by a new generation of priests who view their role as primarily ecclesiastical and limit their role in community development.

and regular links to the urban centers and the national educational infrastructure. Many women teachers from Putumayo described attending Catholic boarding schools for rural girls without access to high school education, where the focus on social justice inspired by Liberation Theology contributed to their later activism. Teachers in Colombia also have one of the strongest unions in the country, whose national coordinating body, FECODE, has been active in public policy debates. The Putumayo branch, the *Asociación de educadores del Putumayo* (AESP), also served as a network connecting and supporting women teachers, providing political analysis and education workshops and providing a national platform for political participation.

Other groups that have provided support and training for the women of the Alliance include the Women's Initiatives for Peace (IMP), emerged out of the union movement in 2001, when the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA, sponsored a ten-day workshop, "Colombian Women's Conference for Peace." MINGA, a human rights group based in Bogotá but with two staff members who travel frequently to the region, has played a central role in supporting the Alliance, as well as individual women. International humanitarian organizations also have developed program work in the region, including Oxfam and the International Red Cross. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has an office in the region, and the Organization of American States verification mission also makes periodic visits.

Resisting Shadow Powers in Putumayo

The women of the Alliance use symbolic politics and the public performance of rituals of mourning as a central strategy because of their insistence of the importance of memory. These actions draw on symbolic repertoires of the Women in Black movement, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo of Argentina and political street theater produced in Bogota. Founded in 1987, the original Women in Black group consisted of Israeli women protesting the occupation by dressing in black and holding periodic public vigils. Since then, the movement has grown into an amorphous network of women around the world with distinct political agendas – general pacifism, shifting focus depending on the political moment and location, no coordinating body, spontaneous development. These women deploy themselves as iconic figures in public spaces, using ritual silence and mourning attire to disrupt daily life. The iconic Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo also walk in silence, while frequently carrying visual representations of their loved ones and employing distinctive dress – kerchiefs – to mark their status. In Bogota and other major cities, youth groups have employed techniques of *teatro efímero* (ephemeral theater), including the use of specific make-up and costumes, symbolic performances and commemoration practices to bring hidden and silenced suffering into public spaces.

As the levels of political violence in the region have decreased, *La Ruta* members have resumed some of their public symbolic acts, including public presence, dressed in black and silent, to mark their resistance to violence. A new Catholic youth group in Puerto Caicedo, inspired by *La Ruta*

and the legacy of Father Alcides, has also staged periodic public events. In Putumayo, public ritual displays have included empty chairs set up along the main road with crosses and black shrouds with concrete blocks carrying the names and dates of someone killed or disappeared; display of a large quilt made up of blocks with the names and dates of the dead and disappeared; silent protests of women walking in single file or by twos, carrying pictures of Father Alcides or in T-shirts proclaiming "*No mas*" (no more, the Latin American-wide slogan against political violence). In one such protest, women laid along the edge of the street wrapped in white shrouds, in reference to the "false positives" scandal, when it was revealed that military officers had disappeared young peasant men, killed them and then presented them to the media in guerrilla uniforms as combat kills. For the Women's Alliance, these symbolic claims to public space are intimately connected to political claims about the right to life, history and collective memory.

The Alliance also promotes women's participation in political life. The relationship between the members of the Alliance and the local government highlights the complexity of local power dynamics. The state's repressive apparatus was widely understood to be supporting the paramilitary groups, as military and police officers openly colluded with paramilitary forces. Yet civilian state officials in many instances provide some minimal support, both political and logistical, to the Alliance and other progressive initiatives. *Personeros (local ombudsperson)*, mayors and other government officials frequently provided transportation resources, food and other supplies during Alliance activities. Being recognized as a politically powerful force, and being able to participate in local political debates, is widely recognized by Alliance members as an important objective. Alliance Vice President Amanda told me, "I am proud of the Alliance, that we are recognized. If I go to the mayor's administration- *alcaldía-,* and I speak in the name of the Alliance, people notice, they pay attention within the government." An explicit part of their feminist and political agenda is to play a more active role in designing local policies, particularly those that impact women such as ensuring the enforcement of Colombian legislation safeguarding women's rights. They also hope to gain material benefits from the state, including a building and lot to serve as their permanent office.

Women in the Alliance face the ongoing shifting forms of violence emerging from the reorganization of shadow powers. Paramilitary forces known as "*los Rastrojos*" have established presence in the region, focused on drug trade operations. Demobilized and other paramilitary forces also continue to target the local population. The FARC-EP continue their activities in the region, despite the loss of several top commanders and significant military setbacks over the past decade. During fieldwork conversations in January 2013, teachers from rural areas reported that the guerrillas were calling community meetings, threatening forced recruitment and military action. Fear, and the reality of ongoing political violence, continues to deeply affect the women's Alliance. At the same time, they continue to focus on rebuilding the social fabric and strengthening the local, national and transnational ties that sustain them.

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WOMEN AND DRUG-TRAFFICKING IN MEXICO

Laura García / Semillas

In Mexico, the fight against organized delinquency was a major issue on the national agenda during the last, six-year Presidential term (2006-2012), and yet all the statistics point to the fact that it had been the most violent in the country's recent history. According to a study undertaken in 2012 by the Organization, *"México Evalúa" (Mexico Evaluates),* the country's homicide rate registered an increase of 36% during the government of Felipe Calderón over the previous administration. The study also points out that at least 50% of intentional homicides could be attributed to organized crime (México Evalúa. 2012).

Women's participation in this scenario is increasing. The National Women's Institute *(El Instituto Nacional de Mujeres)* declared in 2009 that during the last ten (10) years, the number of women in Mexican jails had increased by 200%, a reflection of their greater participation in organized delinquency and drug-trafficking. However, this problematic continues to be covered up and is only rarely dealt with by the relevant institutions (CIMAC and Friedich Ebert 2009).

Accordingly, it should be pointed out that this increase, due in part to reasons of a diverse economic and social nature, is also related to the lack of treatment and prevention policies when dealing with the female population. In addition, the lack of a gender perspective in strategies employed by the federal government in the fight against drug-trafficking is a significant factor. At the same time, one must also take into account the fact that the treatment of women in the criminal justice system is disproportionate compared to men, given that a wide percentage of women are more severely judged for the same crimes (Guerrero, 2013).

Although women's participation in drug-trafficking in on the rise, the positions they occupy within the networks are, to a large extent subordinate, of little strategic importance, and high risk. This is reflected by the fact that the greatest incidence of women imprisoned for drug-trafficking is due to cases of crimes against health; for the most part drug distribution, storage, and transport.

Women's motives for getting involved in drug-trafficking are also different from those of men. Some of the main ones relate to drug addiction, economic hardship, and the search for ways to sustain their families, given the lack of opportunities offered by society. In addition, there is an important component of affectivity and emotional dependence involved, given that, for the most part, the women who end up becoming part of the networks tend to do so by way of their life partners and/or children.

> *It is a minority of women who occupy high-level and visible positions in the drug-trafficking organizations, since the largest percentage is to be found on the lowest rungs of the hierarchy. This situation of subordination situates women in the most vulnerable positions and requires them to assume the costs of the drug-trafficking business, something that does not happen with other groups that actively participate and enormously benefit from this illicit activity. The punitive disparity for this type of crimes is extreme, since in the majority of cases, it is recognized that what is criminalized is addiction, poverty, and emotional dependence, framed by gender-biased ways of thinking. (Segura, 1997 quoted by Carrillo, 2012: 71).*

For this reason, it is important for governments to include preventative actions in their anti-drug policies that have a gender perspective. The problem needs to be intercepted from the root, with the realization that poverty and the lack of opportunities create the main breeding grounds for the creation of these networks.

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THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN RELATION TO DRUG POLICIES AND TRAFFICKING IN GUATEMALA

Network of Non-Violence against Women REDNOVI[1]

The situation for Guatemalan women regarding the policies and measures to counteract drug trafficking is complex, given that specific, urgent, and structural problems affecting women have been rendered invisible from the perspective of government policies. Instead, measures have been promoted which, far from guaranteeing the defense of their rights, have accentuated the sexual division of labor and reinforced the stereotypes of sexual roles, while at the same time, criminalizing and blaming these same women for the violence unleashed against them, even to the point of making them appear responsible for their own deaths. However, despite these facts, there is no analysis regarding the situation, conditions, and contexts in which women are living; the same is true for policy decisions taken by governments to counteract drug trafficking and organized crime.

Guatemalans can access a legal and public policy framework related to drug policies at the national and international levels. The country is a signatory of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America, which establishes several commitments that countries must follow in order to "consolidate the region as a space of peace, liberty, democracy, and development". Later, at the regional level, the Central American Security Strategy-ESCA[2] was designed, setting out as its objective "to establish the components and activities required to strengthen the security of individuals and their belongings in the Central American region" [3]. This strategy has four defining components[4];

[1] REDNOVI- acronym corresponding to the name in Spanish: Red de la No Violencia contra las Mujeres

[2] ESCA- acronym corresponding to the name in Spanish: Estrategia de Seguridad Centroamericana

[3] Taken from the Central American Security Strategy, approved April 8, 2011.

[4] a) Combating crime: Organized Delinquency, Combating Drug Trafficking, Deportations of those with criminal records or ex-convicts, Gangs, Homicide. Combating illicit arms trafficking, terrorism, corruption, other policing issues and legal concerns. b) Prevention: of youth violence, armed violence, gender-based violence, illicit trafficking of migrants and human trafficking, of drug consumption, prevention starting at the local level and regional security and climate change. c) Rehabilitation, reinsertion and penitentiary system security; and d) Institutional strengthening and coordination and follow-up on the regional strategy.

however, even though some incidences of violence against women have been recognized, from the moment of its elaboration the task is still to strengthen the strategy in order to respond to, prevent, and sanction such violence.

In 2012, the President of the Republic put a proposal on the international agenda to "reform global drug policy", and as a result, in 2013, the Organization of America States- OAS- adopted the Declaration of Antigua, Guatemala "For an Integrated Policy to Respond to the Global Drug Problem".

At the national level, Guatemala defers to the Framework Law of the National Security System, Decree 18-2008, according to which the National Security Council is established, and which, between 2012 and 2013 developed a series of initiatives such as: a) the Strategic Security Agenda, b) the Strategic Security Plan, c) the National Security Policy, and d) the Agenda of Risks and Threats[5]. From this framework, the Pact on Security, Justice, and Peace is elaborated (security agenda of the government in office). It is based on the implantation of a focused strategy: safe home, safe community, safe municipality, safe department, and according to which, from the first instance, the issue of the violence confronted by women was annulled, since it was limited only to a concept of intra-family violence. As a result, there are serious limitations for promoting activities directed to the eradication of gender-based violence. In addition, through this strategy, the roles of care, service and the non-paid work of women continues to be re-enforced.

Guatemala is principally a drug-transit country, due to its geo-strategic location and to conditions that benefit the presence of parallel groups and organized crime, such as high levels of impunity, criminality and violence, as well as the presence of organized "shadow" groups, institutional weakness, and State cooptation by de facto powers operating in the country. All of these elements further cover up systematic and structural violence against women.

After more than two decades of efforts by women's and feminist movements to position, theorize and problematize the phenomenon of violence against women, finally it was included in the national agenda as a human rights violation and as an issue of public safety. Based on this logic, specific mechanisms, laws, plans and public policies have been created to respond to the need for awareness, prevention, and sanctioning of violence against women, all of which should also be taken into consideration within the framework of implementing an anti-drug policy. Without this, what has resulted is a weakening of the mechanisms favoring women's advancement, as well as setbacks and the violation of rights enshrined in national and international legislation. The end result is an increase in violence against women.

At different times, security and justice institutions have indicated they are overwhelmed due to the increased number of registered complaints, and statistical information provided by the institutions backs up their affirmation. According to data provided by the Guatemalan Women's

[5] According to the Second Government Report. (2014) Guatemala.

Group (2014), ordinary courts of law with national-level presence registered 37,919 complaints of violence against women in 2013, of which 19,555 were entered by justices of the peace. In addition, 46,207 complaints were registered as intra-family violence, these being appeals lodged by women whose aggressors, for the most part, were men well known to them, acquaintances with whom the women maintained relationships of confidence, or family members. Within the implementation framework of the Law against Femicide and other Forms of Violence against Women, these complaints should have been classified as violence against women.

Between January and June, 2014, the Judicial Body-OJ[6] registered 12,527complaints of violence against women and 38,131 of intra-family violence. In addition, between 2010 and 2013, the OJ registered 16,870 individuals affected by sexual offenses, 93% of the victims being women. Of this figure, one third refers to girls and adolescents, information pointing to the impending increase of complaints for offenses of a diverse nature related to violence against women. In addition, difficulties at the level of the justice system increased when specific and existing laws referring to the issue were not applied.

In terms of violent deaths among women, "Guatemala has the fifth highest rate of homicides with 39.9 per 100.000 inhabitants for the year 2012, after Honduras, Venezuela, Belize and El Salvador. At the global level, two thirds of the deaths, where women are the victims, have been committed by intimate partners or family members (Global Study on Homicides 2013, UN Office on Drugs and Crime). Added to this is the fact that deaths among women are descending at a slower pace in comparison with those among men.[7] According to information provided by GGM[8]-Guatemalan Women's Group -, in the year 2013, 748 women died violently, and between January and July of 2014, 426 cases of violent deaths among women have already been registered, 80% of which was perpetrated with firearms. Besides, a "general pattern showing signs of extreme cruelty has been identified, a common occurrence in at least a quarter of the cases of women who have died" [9].

The preceding data points to the increasing violence against women, as well as to the naturalization and invisibility of the problem, all of which bring devastating consequences to women's lives. To the extent the problematic is not acknowledged, actions undertaken by the security and justice systems end up being devastating for women and impacting negatively on their lives. Instead what it promoted is the "fear to circulate freely, as well as obstacles to participation in social life, the lack of autonomy, the perception of an exterior threatening and dangerous world, serious effects on physical and psychological health, and sentiments of responsibility" [10].

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[6] OJ- from the Spanish term, "Organismo Judicial".

[7] Information taken from the presentation by the Guatemalan Women's Group: "Situation of Violence against Women in Guatemala, Guatemala, October, 2014.

[8] GGM- Acronym from the Spanish name "Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres"

[9] Striated from the document by the Guatemalan Women's Group (2014): Analysis of violent deaths against Women in Guatemala, Guatemala, October 2014.

[10] Taken from the document, Women's Sector (2013). Women's Security Agenda.

For these reasons, women have developed diverse survival strategies and have decided, even in conditions of extreme violence, to continue living with their victimizers, remaining silent, restricting their movements, reducing their social life, depending on the protection of (other men) or on electronic systems, isolating themselves, and not taking their own decisions, among other strategies.

In a context like that of Guatemala, where violence against women is considered a public security concern, it is imperative that the entire State apparatus recognize the existence of the problem as such and as a priority issue. To continue to construct anti-drug and national and regional security policies, measures, and strategies without bringing to light the damage caused by this type of policy to women's lives cannot be allowed. It is necessary to recognize the different affectations of violence, insecurity and the anti-narcotic struggle in men and in women.

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Familia

EXERCISING POWER THROUGH FEAR: STRATEGY OF ORGANIZED CRIME AND/OR GOVERNMENTS TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER THE POPULATION?

Lorena Zelaya / Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos de Honduras

Violence[1] and impunity are factors that have contributed in substantial ways to the consolidation of a culture of fear among the Honduran people.

Fear, as a way of exercising control over the population, has facilitated the assassination and kidnapping of men and women- for the most part, youth-, individually and collectively, with increasing force during the last decade of the XXI Century. There are obvious cases of tortured bodies and/or with horrifying messages attached, thrown into public roadways at any time, day or night. The media reports on them with blood and gore. Faced with this situation, the government responds with militarization and extreme vigilance; and the people respond by imposed self-confinement, equal to incarceration in homes, neighborhoods, work places and entertainment sites, and surrounding themselves with high walls, road-blocks, closed neighborhoods, and private security. None of these measures has improved citizens' lives- violence expands and fear deepens. This strategy is used by organized crime and drug trafficking; and to a certain extent by the country's governments in order to immobilize people working to defend their rights.

[1] The most violent country in the world for three (3) consecutive years. See Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (Observatory of Women's Human Rights), 2014._

In an attempt to clean up, given the evident state of decomposition within the police-corruption and association with delinquency-, laws granting hegemonic participation of the military were decreed, in the name of combatting delinquency, organized crime and drug trafficking. Eight (8) national public order entities were created. Initially a test of confidence is applied: to the police, and then to civil servants of the Public Ministry, the Attorney General's Office and the Supreme Court of Justice- all of these institutions intervened months after the police. The Armed Forces have been granted supremacy in public matters, replacing the role of the police and reinstating the militarization of the State with the consent of the population, faced with extreme levels of violence.

Legal dispositions validating extradition were established, and as a result, on March 27, 2014, Carlos Lobo is captured and on May 9th extradited to the United States, accused of drug trafficking, a charge which he accepted.

Other laws were approved in 2014: limitations were placed on mobile cell phone services in penitentiaries throughout the country, sites where extortion and certain forms of hired killings are managed; in addition, the Law of Rewards reforms the law against the crime of asset laundering.

2013: The State of Emergency in Security is extended; the Armed Forces, the Constitutional Law of the National Police, and several articles of the Criminal Code are reformed; the National Intelligence Law, a special law governing the interception of private communications, the banning of carrying more than one person on motorized transport, a special law for purging the police, and the law of emergent availability of confiscated goods are all approved

2012-2011: The National Anti-Extortion Force, the Inter-Institutional Force-FUSINA-, the Morazán Operation, and a security tax are created.

The overall context of the country is characterized by generalized violence, the collective assassination of youth, women, journalists and lawyers, and by extortion and displacement. Given this situation, people migrate from one house to another, one neighborhood to another, one municipality to another, one department to another, and as a last resort, to another country. It is not only because of the need for jobs or due to poverty that we saw the exodus of girls and boys, mostly Central Americans, to the United States during the first semester of 2014. Honduras was initially a transit country for drugs; however, it is has also become a small consumer country and consistently increasingly dependent on the structures that drug trafficking and organized crime have been building at the local level and in the territories where they are settling in (taking control).

Given the lack of government response for guaranteeing peoples' basic needs, and taking into account the lack of employment and increased violence, proposals from organized crime and drug trafficking represent an opportunity for resolving the problems of daily life. As a result, the governments lets go of territory and loses control over areas. There are examples of this throughout the country.

It is also important to point out the association of local authorities with organized crime. Some examples include the cases of Choloma in the department of Cortés and in Yoro in the department of Yoro where the mayors appear to have accumulated fortunes from unknown sources; in addition, properties they own in different places have been confiscated. The mayor of Yoro, Arnaldo Urbina Soto, has been linked directly to drug trafficking and organized crime; at this point he is being tried and is in jail for crimes associated with drug trafficking and hired assassination. The mayor of Choloma, Leopoldo Crivelli, is accused of corruption and of being a straw man. He also has had several properties confiscated.

The Ways in which Women Are Affected

Every 18 hours a woman is assassinated (Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, 2014); the human trafficking of women, linked to the drug trade, is not documented, but from the moment there is an increase in women's involvement in activities of organized crime and drug trafficking, it can be assumed that the human trafficking of women has increased. Internal and external migration has become a response for entire families, and according to Juan Orlando Hernández (President of Honduras) during a news broadcast, 70% of the people who leave the country do so for reasons of violence.

According to the authorities, the involvement of women in illicit activities such as extortion, assault and assassination has increased; 80 women were captured between January and June of 2014, the majority involved in extortion. In other cases, they were directly associated with hired killers.[2]

Frequently women move from being victims to perpetrators[3]; they are abused, "used" and "discarded" (assassinated)[4]

In 2014, seven (7) Human Rights defenders, three (3) of whom were women (a peasant leader, and two attorneys), were assassinated; the murderers shot them innumerable times and to date it is not known who the material and intellectual authors were, nor the causes behind their murders. In addition, 700 women are implicated in legal processes for their involvement in land struggles (CESPAD, 2014).

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[2] See: López, Edwin. (June 3, 2014). Van 80 mujeres detenidas en San Pedro Sula durante el 2014. La prensa. Retrieved from: http://www.laprensa.hn/Sucesos/Policiales/715429-98/van-80-mujeres-detenidas-en-san-pedro-sula-durante-el-2014

[3] Proceso Digital. (August 11, 2014). Mujeres protagonistas, pero también víctimas del crimen en Honduras. Proceso Digital. Retrieved from: http://www.proceso.hn/component/k2/item/85433.html

[4] Ávila, Jennifer y Pérez, Lolani. (May 11, 2014). De víctimas a victimarias: mujeres en maras y pandillas de Honduras. Recuperado de: http://radioprogresohn.net/~rprog/index.php/comunicaciones/reportaje/item/510-de-v%C3%ADctimas-a-victimarias-mujeres-en-maras-y-pandillas-de-honduras

Women's resistance

Women's resistance Emanates from the collective. One example is the struggle of the Garífuna people in the community of Vallecito in the department of Colón (Atlantic Coast), where the Fraternal Organization of Black People, OFRANEH (2014), coordinated by a woman (Miriam Miranda), defends territory against organized crime and drug trafficking. Men and women are involved in peaceful struggle in which the participation of women is decisive. They are present in tasks of cultivation and they form part of the spirituality that accompanies the defense of territory, implementing ceremonies and self-defense.

In one of the most conflicted areas of the country, also on the north coast, another form of resistance is that displayed by the Forum of Women for Life with their campaigns, mobilizations and training programs against all forms of violence. It is not specifically nor openly against shadow powers, but it is against the violence and impunity they generate against women. In addition, there are organizations working among conflictive sectors where the "*maras*" or "*pandillas*" (gangs) exert territorial control, in an attempt to foster a culture of peace.

Spaces of women's resistance can also be observed in certain trusts where they attempt to maintain minimal levels of security in urban neighborhoods and colonies, trying to keep their sons and daughters away from drug use, as well as from trafficking; and above all alive.

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FEMINICIDE: A TRANSNATIONAL CRISIS AND THE "WAR ON DRUGS", A WAR AGAINST WOMEN.

Mercedes Hernández
Asociación de Mujeres de Guatemala

Feminicide is a violation of women's Human Rights. It is a crime with misogynist and sexist motivations for which the State, as legal guarantor, is responsible either through direct action or omission. What we are dealing with is a continuum of violences committed by perpetrators ranging from those located within contexts familiar to the victims to one of total depersonalization of the gender-based crime. It is indeed a crime of the State, but feminicide is also a language: a pedagogy of political violence.

The geo-strategic position of the Central American Northern Triangle composed of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, through which 80% of drugs and other illicit substances transit on route to the USA, favors the growth of a criminal economy promoted by mafias, past and present. Thousands of women and girls are converted into merchandise for human trafficking networks; into collectors of war taxes established by combatants; into smugglers of drug and arms- those making the journey to the South-; into money launderers; the sexual property of various armed groups; as well as into girl-child soldiers destined to become contract killers.

While in drug-importing countries like Spain, the GDP will increase up to 4.5%[1], in part due to profits from this trade, from Colombia y Mexico, what rises is the rate of violent death. Repression and criminalization have been the answer from Latin American States in the name of a supposed reduction of violence associated with trafficking, even though evidence shows that what

[1] According to the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadística): from September on, when the calculation will include the benefits of drugs and prostitution.

is happening is exactly the opposite. Prohibition has favored intervention in production or transit countries, while at the same time widely promoting the stigmatization of people who have no consumption problems, and tossing off those who indeed do need help into clandestine conditions. As a result any possibility for health care is eliminated: the problem is one of health, the paradigm is that of war.

Feminicide[2] in Central America: a crisis of global concern

In a time of peace, the Northern Triangle is the most dangerous region of the world for women: more that 17 million women and girls live under the threat of feminicidal violence in this part of Central America. A high percentage of the feminicides results from power struggles among criminal groups. These mafias, formed by various combatants emanating from the new armed conflicts taking place in the region, show their lethal strength by destroying women's and girls' bodies: according to official statistics, between 2008 and 2013, in Guatemala, there were 4,385 feminicides; 2,815 in Honduras, and 2,713 in El Salvador. In total, 9,913 women and girls were assassinated by familiar or unknown perpetrators during this period.

The mapping of transnational delinquency points to the increasing complexity of criminal movements in the area, as well as to the synergy created between trans-border groups and local organizations, all taking place within a context of high levels of impunity. The role of the isthmus as a mere channel for illegals has changed to one of a producing, storage, distribution, and consumption area for drugs. It is an arms provider, as well as a source of people for labor and sexual exploitation, both for numerous countries of the rich one-third of the world as well as for their own local criminal actors.

The war on drugs reinforces policy related to feminicides

The war paradigm has transformed women's bodies into an extension of the battle-field- a historic reality: the body-territory binomial continues to be part of the dispute among contenders. In addition, it has facilitated the translation of a health problem (consumption) into the language of national security, and under its prism, intervention in certain countries is justified: Plan Colombia

[2] I won't go into the debate here (both germane as well as enriching) about the use of the terms feminicide or femicide, considering that most definitions related to both terms are convergent and sufficiently complementary for this short analysis.

(2000-2005)[3] shored up by the Patriot Plan (2003-2007)[4], and the Merida Initiative (from 2008)[5] provides ample evidence. Such initiatives have favored USA interference in the internal politics of these countries, accentuating (para) militarization and opening new doors to the arms trade and the privatization of the war; naturalizing the presence of the USA as a supposed and essential ally in the war on drugs.

The projection of these plans over Colombia and Mexico goes beyond the geography of the two countries; it is regional and has a pincer effect on Central America. The Central American governments, under USA pressure, and using the excuse of the regionalization of the war against narco-trafficking and terrorism, are adopting the same repressive policies. Former General Otto Pérez Molina, president of Guatemala, provides an example: he has gone as far as to request the USA to execute a specific plan to combat violence and narco-trafficking in the Central American region, in the same way as Plan Colombia or the Mérida Initiative, and which is already referred to as "Plan Central America"[6].

Within this framework, the recruitment of women and girls is becoming more frequent. Destined to augment segments on the lower rungs of criminal networks, the new female members of organized crime have been forced, not only by the undisputed feminization of poverty, but also by innumerable forms of coercion, to become drug transporters, to the point of using their own bodies; in sellers, since they are more likely to go unnoticed by the police; in hoarders, turning their homes into storage facilities….and a long list of etcetera of roles involving them in circles of organized crime from which it is nearly impossible to escape.

This recruitment of women by criminal groups has generated another consequence for them-jails. According to the Transnational Institute report, *Overloaded Systems: Drug Laws and Jails in Latin America*: "while 48% of Latin American women are in prison for infractions related to drug laws, the relationship is only 15% for men". Research by the European Union related to detained women, undertaken in six countries (England and Wales, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and Rumania), shows

[3] Plan Colombia had five thematic foci: 1) To assist the government to take control over the South of Colombia (considered to be an area of drug cultivation currently under guerrilla control); 2) To increase the capacity of Colombian authorities to intercept cocaine shipment); 3) To increase crop eradication; 4) To promote alternative crops and employment; 5) To imporve the protection of Human Rights.

[4] The Patriot Plan (Plan Patriota) was promoted by Álvaro Uribe, then-President of Colombia, who tried to consolidate new forms of territorial control in Colombia and project this control to neighboring countries like Ecuador and Venezuela. Based on its orientation, the Patriot Plan is a political-military proposal imposed from Washington, with consent from Bogotá, that includes the whole of the Andean Region.

[5] Distinct from previous proposals, the Mérida Initiative (Iniciativa Mérida) is designed with the objective of combating "drug trafficking" or "organized crime", enemies of a diffuse nature, which have been brought together under the label of "narco-insurgency". Its four theoretical pillars are: To diminish the operational capacity of organized crime (through the provision of equipment, technology, air strike capacity and training); 2) To Institutionalize the capacity to maintain a State of Law; 3) To create a border infrastructure of the XXI century; 4) To build strong and resilient communities (through the creation of a culture of respect for the law and a reduction in the seductive qualities and power of organizations engaged in drug trafficking.

[6] See: "Presidentes centroamericanos piden a EE.UU. desarrollo como freno a emigración", july 25, 2014. Retrieved from: http://www.bluradio.com/71144/presidentes-centroamericanos-piden-eeuu-desarrollo-como-freno-emigracion

that "the social profile of the detainees coincides in each of the countries studied: a high percentage of the accused women had no economic security before their detention; they had never worked or had worked at poorly paid jobs with no social security; they lacked secure housing; in general they had low scholastic levels; they were foreign-born or from an ethnic minority; and they had been victims of physical and/or sexual violence exercised by family members or outsiders. In addition, the fact that in several cases, the women had been induced to commit an offence by the man responsible for acts of violence against them was highlighted" (Giacomello, 2013: 10).

Legal misogyny, as well as the infiltration of the entire justice system by organized crime, condemns women to disproportionate sentences, while at the same time, guaranteeing impunity for major narco-traffickers. Additionally, "women who are arrested for participating in narco-trafficking activities can be easily replaced by the cartels, resulting in almost no impact on their networks or on drug distribution" (Vergara y Machado, 2013: 5). In the USA, two thirds of women detained in federal prisons have been accused of non-violent infractions of the drug law. And the number of women is increasing in all of Latin America. Meanwhile, in Spain, the number of foreign women condemned for so-called crimes against public health doubles the number of men: men represent 19.84% while women represent 37.76% of the detained population.[7]

In terms of consumption, because social ostracism is higher for women, they end up being pushed into to clandestinity, meaning further isolation- even more than males,- from the health care they require for cases of problematic consumption. The risk of being submitted to forced prostitution; of being captured by human trafficking networks; or of being transformed into drug sellers or transporters, increases, due to debts acquired from consumption.

The institutional response to crimes attributable to narco-trafficking re-victimizes women. Central American States have responded with repressive models akin to military dictatorships from the recent past, involving the army in protagonist roles related to public security intervention. The re-militarization of society is evident "not only by the visible action of soldiers in urban and rural patrols, but also in the naming of military officials in institutions to guarantee a type of vertical and coercive centralism" (Equipo, 2012 quoted by Yagenova, 2013: 33).. In places with a military presence, women are victims of sexual harassment and aggression by armed men who, in addition, embody State authority. But there is one more factor with regard to the military that is equally as important and which terrifies Central American women, reducing their autonomy and increasing their perceptions of insecurity, and that is: "in several countries in the region, now considered post-conflict societies, members of the national armies were the major actors responsible for the violences against, and the rape of, women. So it is very obvious what the emotional impact would be on women at having military brigades or patrols in their territories once again, obliging women to live in their midst" (Yagenova, 2013: 34).

Definitively, thousands of Latin American women are victims of sexual harassment, assassination, and other forms of feminicidal violence carried out by different groups of organized

[7] According to the National Institute of Statistics. Data from 2012.

crime. Women are reduced to the category of merchandise for the human trafficking networks involved in labor and sexual exploitation, and they are led along the same corridor through which drugs are moved. They are extorted and forced by the same or similar networks that traffic them, to traffic in drugs and arms or to move money for the purpose of laundering. All of these are methods for maintaining a transnational economy of violence and a war that is not only against drugs but also against particular groups of human beings destined to become "target population".

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