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and Conflict in Colombia**

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## **AUTHOR:**

Ricardo Vargas

## **EDITORS:**

Amira Armenta  
Martin Jelsma  
Virginia Montañés

## **TRANSLATION:**

Barbara Fraser

## **DESIGN:**

Jan Abraham Vos  
Zlatan Peric, MEDIO  
Logo *Drugs & Conflict*:  
Elisabeth Hoogland

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## **CONTACT:**

Transnational Institute  
Paulus Potterstraat 20  
1071 DA Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
Tel: -31-20-6626608  
Fax: -31-20-6757176  
drugs@tni.org  
www.tni.org/drugs

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One of the greatest challenges for alternative development policy in Colombia's current situation is to be effective and meet objectives in the midst of war. In that sense, President Álvaro Uribe's strategy is substantially different from that of the two preceding administrations. In their policy statements on the issue, both Ernesto Samper and Andrés Pastrana understood alternative development as an emergency response to the problems caused by aerial spraying, an effort to neutralise the delegitimising effects of an operation that responded to pressures from Washington. Alternative development policy was based on individual agreements (Samper) or manual eradication pacts (Pastrana). Nevertheless, protests by peasant farmers in 1996 underscored the magnitude of the failure of the first scheme, while poor institutional management, which led to the elimination of PLANTE, the agency responsible for overseeing alternative development, revealed the crisis of the second.

Uribe Vélez has indicated that his alternative development policy is not an emergency plan and that its implementation is based on regional development. This apparently fundamental shift loses its lustre, however, when compared with the process actually underway.

The transactional model (early eradication of illicit crops in exchange for financing of local projects) implemented by USAID, which provides 92% of the funds for alternative development in Colombia, has nothing to do with Uribe's regional development scheme. On the contrary, it involves an agreement based on the commitment to eliminate illicit crops from a particular area in which the only indicator of the programme's success is crop reduction not "regional development," which would assume a much more complex process and agreements that would go far beyond the mere eradication of coca or poppies.

If the role of alternative development is complementary and the objective is to gain ground for the state in areas controlled by armed groups, it is doubtful that current drug policy, which goes hand-in-hand with the scheme

of democratic security, truly responds to a sensible perspective on drugs trafficking and a modern view of state legitimacy. Due to the many negative effects of indiscriminate aerial spraying on peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in the Andes, the Amazon and the Pacific, which have been verified by the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office and the Controller General's Office, state legitimacy is in serious difficulty. This is underscored by the worsening dietary situation, the increase in forced displacement, the crisis of local and regional governance exacerbated by war, and current drug policy.

While the production and trade of goods are important goals for policy success, the main debate about alternative development cannot be reduced to the economic sphere of alternative development. In theatres of conflict, the strategic question is whether alternative development is helping to create conditions in which human life and freedom are respected, whether local powers are truly exercising good governance, and to what extent communities are being strengthened and increasing their levels of democracy and participation.

Ultimately, what type of legitimacy is the state establishing? We strongly believe that aerial spraying and increasing the humanitarian crisis by drawing civilians into the war do nothing, politically or economically, to advance sustainable development. The question, then, is whether it is worthwhile to measure the supposed success of alternative development by the number of hectares eradicated when this simply makes the ground fertile for more violence and instability in regions where the state has no presence. Washington will look at the area eradicated as an indicator. Nevertheless, in the south it is the political and social context that tells us what is actually occurring. If that is not enough, we have only to consider what happened with the "Bolivian success." In Colombia, however, it is difficult to channel those frustrations in political terms as has occurred in Bolivia. Unfortunately, they serve instead as the breeding ground for more war.

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# ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND WAR IN COLOMBIA

The government of Colombia has declared 2002 a successful year for the eradication of coca crops. This conclusion is based mainly on figures from the SIMCI Project of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which indicate that Colombia reduced the number of hectares of coca crops from 144,807 in 2001 to 102,071 in 2002.

US anti-narcotics authorities have taken a more cautious approach. Their sources, mainly the CIA, show that Colombia dropped from 169,800 hectares of coca in 2001 to 144,450 in 2002.

According to the latter's figures, the overall area of coca cultivation in the Andean region, 204,850 hectares, showed little change (see Figure 1). This figure has remained relatively stable throughout the 1990s and the first years of the new millennium.

The reason for this relative stability is related to the situation in Bolivia, where there has been a growth trend from 14,600 hectares in 2000 to 24,400 today, a significant increase of 67% over the lowest point. Meanwhile, according to Washington, Peru has held steady at an average of 35,000 hectares.

First of all, given this panorama, Colombian authorities began a much more radical aerial spraying campaign in 2003, with the goal of spraying the equivalent of 200,000 hectares,

nearly twice the amount of existing crops, according to the SIMCI figures. In other words, as Figure 2 shows, the idea is to exceed the slight difference between the number of hectares of coca and the amount sprayed in 2002. Spraying an area that exceeds the 2002 figures reflects an effort to establish this trend more solidly.

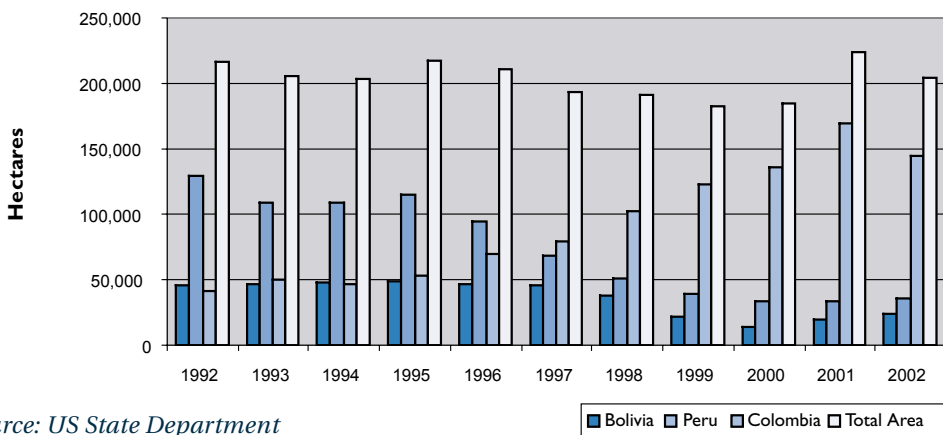
Secondly, the Colombian government's interest is focused on the need to "interrupt the finances" of insurgent groups. In the current phase of the internal war, this is the key consideration in President Uribe's decisions on national security.

Thirdly, in the international arena, efforts are underway to solidify a bilateral relationship with Washington based on analysis and armed solutions related to the intricate relationship between "Drugs and Terrorism," which more firmly establishes the usefulness of US aid within the Plan Colombia framework. This continues to create a need for greater involvement by the US administration in Colombia's internal war, which is, ultimately, Bogotá's strategic objective.

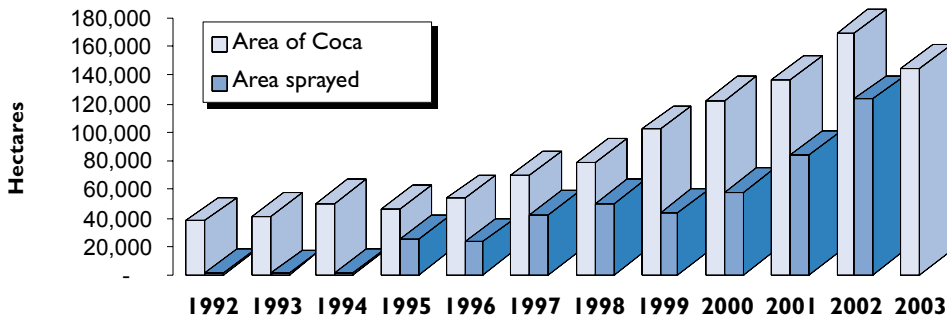
In this context, alternative development in Colombia faces serious challenges and uncertainties:

- Spraying as an instrument of war and Bogotá's efforts to obtain a greater commitment from Washington to a conflict-resolution

**Figure 1. Areas of Coca in the Andean Region (1992 - 2002)**



Source: US State Department

**Figure 2. Colombia: Area of Coca and Area Sprayed (1992 - 2003)**

Source: US State Department and Anti-Narcotics Police

model based on confrontation with the armed groups. One of the first steps is the expansion of Plan Colombia to include this area, which begins to create serious problems for alternative development programmes. These programmes are identified with a series of measures aimed mainly at re-establishing state authority and thus those who control most of the coca-growing areas consider them to be linked to the overall strategy proposal.

- The escalation in activity by the armed groups, which increasingly involves the civilian population, is turning the population of these areas into a military target. The armed groups establish control over the population to facilitate their control over territories that constitute strategic points for commercialisation and routes for illegal transactions (smuggling of drugs, arms and ammunition), creating a situation that severely undermines local political conditions (threats against mayors, local council members, the judicial system, etc.), increasing lack of governance and leading to greater uncertainty and a general sense of insecurity, which facilitates the strengthening of the armed groups.
- Seeking state legitimacy, the Uribe administration proposes an “alliance” with civil society. Both the form and the content, however, are based on a model that involves establishing an authority that emphasises the use of force over true consensus-building, the fundamental purpose of which should be to

overcome the serious economic, social and human rights problems in regions such as southern Colombia, Catatumbo or Arauca. The over-emphasis on insurgency as the cause of the regional social, economic and political crisis leads people to ignore more in-depth evaluations of the type of institutional structure and exercise of power that underlie the crisis of state legitimacy.

- In that sense, Uribe has established a one-dimensional view of state legitimacy that emphasises the use of force and establishes community relations on that basis. This is part of a model that accentuates the centralisation of power. Given this model for dealing with illicit crops, obligatory spraying and the denial of procedures that enable communities to develop consensus-based solutions through manual eradication that would be sustainable over the long-term create greater uncertainty in the producer regions. They remain trapped in a scenario of war fostered by both the state and the insurgent groups.
- The combination of addressing the problem of illicit crops from a standpoint that emphasises their importance as a strategic source of finance for the guerrillas and the obligatory nature of eradication to reduce the crop area, which in Washington’s view is the prime indicator of the programme’s success, affects the political weight of alternative development, entangling it in a complex symbiosis with the use of force. Significant factors

related to prevention and efficient management of the humanitarian crisis, guarantees of basic rights for the population affected by a war that has taken on geo-political importance in the coca-growing areas, and efficient development of governance and justice as the foundation of state legitimacy are phenome-

na that demonstrate very poor results at the social level and a high strategic cost for the central goal of legitimising the state. In other words, the anti-drug strategy itself limits the establishment of the basic political conditions considered key for attaining the socio-economic goals of alternative development.

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Source: UNDCP

# PLAN COLOMBIA AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

In 2000, Colombian President Andrés Pastrana launched the controversial Plan Colombia, an ambitious Marshall Plan that initially proposed allocating \$7.5 billion to stimulate the peace process. The plan was built around four goals:

- Negotiation with armed groups.
- Combating drug trafficking.
- Economic and social recovery.
- Institution-building.

The strategy for *combating drug trafficking* consisted of three components:

- Forced eradication
- Voluntary eradication
- Interdiction

*Forced eradication* is done by aerial spraying, using a special formulation of Roundup, using a special formulation of Roundup. The amount of glyphosate, the mixture's active ingredient, was increased from eight to 10 liters per hectare at the beginning of 2003 on the grounds that it would make the eradication more effective than earlier efforts.<sup>1</sup>

The Human Rights Ombudsman's Office and the Controller General's Office have repeatedly stated that the spraying violates existing legal and procedural norms. They have also pointed out that there has been a lack of research and evaluation of the true impact of the new formulation of Roundup used against illicit crops, despite the high number of complaints from affected communities. Acting on the precautionary principle, on various occasions the Ombudsman's Office has requested that the spraying be suspended until the degree of impact is determined and measures established to minimise those effects.

*Voluntary eradication* is part of the policy involving manual eradication pacts whose number and impact have been limited. It is estimated that 200,000 families depend on coca for a living, while only 37,000 families participated in the pacts, representing 18.5% of the total number of families involved in illegal production.

In the area of *interdiction*, the role of state security agencies has been strengthened thanks to the heavy weight of the military component of the Plan supported by Washington.

## THE POLICY'S OVERALL STRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION

### The central government perspective

A new entity called the *Fondo de Inversión para la Paz* (FIP) was created for the implementation of Plan Colombia.<sup>2</sup> FIP was joined by two agencies that had been set up before Plan Colombia, the *Fondo de Programas Especiales para la Paz* and the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Alternativo* (PLANTE).<sup>3</sup> Within the framework of Plan Colombia, however, it was FIP rather than PLANTE that established guidelines for alternative development programmes. FIP defined the characteristics of development projects, established the criteria for focusing them, set geographical priorities and established the projects' fields of action.

Productive projects were defined as instruments for creating sustainable conditions for development and income generation in regions affected by the armed conflict and illicit crops. Three types of projects were defined:

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 1065, issued on November 26, 2001, established a formula of eight litres per hectare. There are no known studies of the possible environmental and health impact of the increased amount.

<sup>2</sup> FIP was created as a special account of the *Departamento Administrativo de la Presidencia de la República* (DAPRE) without being legally established as an agency, and is managed as a separate system. See: Controller General's Office, *Plan Colombia Tercer Informe de Evaluación*. Bogotá, July 2002.

<sup>3</sup> PLANTE is another entity established under DAPRE. Created by the Samper administration under Decree 472 in 1996, until mid-2002 it served as the main authority for alternative development policies involving illicit crops.

**1. Projects for employment and income generation.** According to FIP, these were meant to take advantage of and serve as a catalyst for comparative and competitive advantages for the production of agricultural products in certain areas, targeting national and international markets.

**2. Food security projects.** These were to stimulate the diversification of production and the reinforcement of peasant production systems, making each productive unit and the region in which it was located more self-sufficient in producing fresh food staples and meeting the dietary needs of the families living in these areas.

**3. Projects for productive, marketing and/or technological alternatives.** These are mainly short-term, low-cost applied research projects aimed at removing obstacles to the implementation of promising projects for income generation, jobs and food security. According to FIP, such projects include those that define the products to be produced, those that define adjustments and improvements in systems for commercialising products, and those that define how these products will be produced.

This was the central government's perspective, particularly in the circles closest to the President, regarding the implementation of Plan Colombia to address the problem of illicit crops.<sup>4</sup>

## The local perspective

At the regional level, mainly in the case of the Lower Putumayo, especially Puerto Asís, people's views are based on their perception of the failure of alternative development efforts. As a result of the alternative development schemes implemented in the municipality of Puerto Asís (1994-1998) and the imminent threat of generalised spraying of illicit crops in this area, a local initiative was launched through the municipal office, particularly the *Unidades Municipales de Asistencia Técnica Agropecuaria* (UMATA).

First of all, this initiative coincided with the vacuum created in alternative development policy after the initial version of Plan Colombia was redesigned<sup>5</sup> when Washington agreed to finance the anti-drug component. Secondly, it was related to the selection of the Putumayo province as the target for the implementation of Plan Colombia. The region had been flagged as possessing more than 50% of the country's total area of coca crops, as well as the largest plantations.

The municipal office drew up a proposal that, unlike FIP's directives, centred on seeking different ways to address the use of force against illicit crops. The proposal led to the design of Manual Eradication Pacts based on three strategies: nutritional security in return for the voluntary substitution of illicit crops; medium and long-range projects based on re-conversion of the regional economy; and the establishment of a two-way marketing system

<sup>4</sup> Among the projects' characteristics, they should "be of a communal nature and be formulated through participatory, consensus-based processes with the community, which must play an active role throughout the project cycle; include actions for regional institution-building and organisational development, which are necessary for ensuring appropriate support for the project's operation and for catalysing processes of community-building; include actions and investments in physical and social infrastructure necessary for establishing an environment that will contribute to the project's goals." They should also "be aimed at directly benefiting small and medium-size producers, the indigenous population, landless peasants and, in general, the most vulnerable groups in rural areas; show themselves to be economically, technically, financially, environmentally and organisationally viable and sustainable; be consistent with land titling plans and development plans in the territorial units in which they are to be implemented; and located in the geographical areas and target the population groups identified as priorities by the FIP Board of Directors." See Republic of Colombia, *Departamento Administrativo de la Presidencia de la República, Fondo de Inversión para la Paz (DAPRE-FIP)*, Board of Directors, Agreement No. 03, issued in Bogotá in 2000.

<sup>5</sup> For the initial version of Plan Colombia, see *Presidencia de la República, Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz – Departamento Nacional de Planeación, PLAN COLOMBIA*, December 1998, Puerto Wilches.



(purchase and sale of products) to ensure the sustainability of these projects.<sup>6</sup>

## EVALUATION OF THE INITIATIVE

### The institutional problem at the central level

Until Plan Colombia began, formal alternative development policy centred on PLANTE. It was through this agency, as the national counterpart, that the first resources for the plan's "social component" began to be channelled by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Some experts saw this as a unique opportunity for the political re-launching of the Alternative Development Programme, which had been weakened by the policy's failure and how it was handled when the new administration of President Pastrana came into office. PLANTE, however, was unable to develop a solid national policy and there were administrative deficiencies in its initial actions as part of Plan Colombia.

PLANTE's situation seemed to worsen politically when FIP was established and began to handle the regulation, focusing and management of resources earmarked for alternative development. This established an unhealthy competition between the two entities, a negative situation that also had repercussions for alternative development intervention, especially in the south.<sup>7</sup>

Another entity, the *Consejero Nacional para la Seguridad y la Convivencia*, also appeared. While its functions are not clear, it has assumed responsibilities in the name of the central government in areas related to state commitments as regards the manual eradication agreements.

The *Red de Solidaridad* — a national public entity — is responsible for providing services to people affected by the aerial spraying, overlapping with areas in which FIP and PLANTE also have responsibilities.

The fact that so many parallel entities are operating from Bogotá has led to serious institutional disorganisation. In addition, PLANTE's management capacity was questioned. The problem has been aggravated by the absence of a true alternative development policy, short-sighted management and the improvised nature of the programme.

Added to this institutional disorganisation is a lack of co-ordination between the agencies responsible for aerial spraying and those responsible for alternative development. One of the most serious questions raised about the spraying is its impact on projects financed by international co-operation agencies and the Colombian government. Added to this is the weak presence of national and regional entities responsible for planning development for the regions (Corpoamazonia, Corpoica, etc.).

### The institutional problem between the central government and regions

Besides the weakness of institutions and the lack of co-ordination among national entities that assumed parallel or differentiated commitments in alternative development, there was a lack of opportunity for consensus-building and follow-up among national, regional and local authorities. In practice, the result was the disappearance of the concept of institution-building at the local level, which,



<sup>6</sup> See documents of the Municipal Office of Puerto Asís, UMATA, "Reconversión de la Economía de Puerto Asís – Sustitución voluntaria de cultivos ilícitos en Santana, Putumayo, Colombia," "Seguridad Nutricional para la sustitución voluntaria de cultivos ilícitos," and "Creación de una comercializadora de doble vía." Puerto Asís. August 2000.

<sup>7</sup> This does not include the administrative problems inherent in the FIP model, which were revealed in the Controller's Office report on Plan Colombia. FIP "has a staff of 17 professionals in DAPRE who are attached to this Fund, as well as 592 consultants of all types, with a cost exceeding \$9 billion [Colombian pesos] a year. ... [FIP] has become a highly complex organization that in some way is parallel to DAPRE, especially in the area of juridical review, evaluation and monitoring." Controller General's Office, *op cit.* Page 10.

given the state's loss of control or the absence of state control over territory, is fundamental for the establishment of its legitimacy.

According to an evaluation by the Controller General's Office (CGR), this problem was reflected as a structural characteristic of Plan Colombia because of an inequitable regional distribution of resources concealed by a supposedly neutral process for gaining access to sources of funding, based on "the regions' own capacity for presenting and obtaining approval for projects." This was in sharp contrast to an intervention based on real needs in the areas, according to the CGR evaluation:

"We see that in many cases, the regions with relatively greater development have obtained a greater share of the resources, to the detriment of those with greater problems related to drug trafficking and violence, the basic objectives of the Plan."<sup>8</sup>

This kind of inherent distortion meant that Plan Colombia ended up channelling resources to large cities and provinces other than those most affected by the armed conflict and the presence of illicit crops. It has also been characterised by other disadvantages:

- The weakness of institutions, aggravated, among other things, by a lack of academic and research support, which has made it difficult to design projects that meet the standards set by the central government.
- The weakness of social networks and structures created.
- The requirement for co-financing by local or regional entities, which are unable to provide such funding. As a result, resources allocated for social plans were chan-

nelled to regions far different from such provinces as Guaviare, Putumayo, Caquetá or Norte de Santander.

The contrast is especially sharp when we consider that these are the areas most affected by war and aerial spraying, which, along with the humanitarian crisis, lead to unemployment for producers and day labourers, as well as the loss of indirect employment, especially in the service sector. This is exacerbated by the crisis in Colombia's rural sector. According to the Controller General's Office:

"Even if we estimate optimistically that the area devoted to all legal products will increase by 10% over the next two years, or 5% annually, this would represent an increase of barely 80,000 jobs."<sup>9</sup>

The fact that Plan Colombia is focused on combating drugs and the resources approved by the US Congress are evaluated in relation to a measurable indicator of this goal has meant that areas where illicit crops are concentrated have been seen as more important and subjected to greater monitoring. Especially when the policy's results are evaluated, the elimination of illicit crops carries greater weight, so that the continuation of funding for the plan has mainly depended on the results of forced eradication.<sup>10</sup>

In summary, the implementation of the overall policy of Plan Colombia and its management clearly reflect the state structure in place in Colombia. This partly explains the situation that has been created by the Plan and the distortions resulting from its implementation. The most important elements include:

- The tension between the central government and the regions, which have been left on the margins of national integration.

<sup>8</sup> Controller General's Office. *Plan Colombia, Primer Informe de Evaluación*. August 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Controller General's Office. *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> On various occasions, Anne Patterson, the US Ambassador to Colombia, has indicated that "the point of departure for Plan Colombia is the spraying of illicit crops." See, for example, "Las nuevas relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Colombia" en *La Revista, El Espectador*, November 4, 2001, Bogotá.

- The disorganisation of central institutions, amid a complex and incomprehensible network of regulations which create entities that are unable to form part of a national strategy for integration and affirmation.
- The lack of clearly defined policy strategies for zones characterised by colonisation, whose greatest significance lies in their environmentally important and complex ecosystems.

### The international cooperation

PLANTE's lack of management capacity, the institutional disorganisation characterising the state's intervention in nutritional self-sufficiency, and the weakness of, and uncertainty about, medium and long-range projects led to a crisis in determining a counterpart for the USAID co-operation (see table).

In effect, USAID saw the crisis and the redefinition of its intervention in Colombia in the following terms:

*"The initial plan developed with Colombian Government counterparts was for USAID to focus on medium and longer-term income generation efforts while the Colombian implementing agency focused on delivery of short-term immediate assistance to farmers who signed coca reduction pacts with the Government.*

*"As it turned out, the demand for participation in these government pacts grew unexpectedly large, but it was politically difficult for the Government to limit its initial offer. As a result, some 37,000 families are reported to have signed 33 different pacts between December 2000 and July 2001. This large number exceeded the Colombian Government's capacity for delivery of immediate assistance. Complicating factors included the remoteness and difficulty of access to the areas where pact signers lived, and a series of security incidents generated by conflicts between FARC guerrillas and AUC para-*

*militaries in the region. These incidents resulted in the death of two Colombian alternative development workers last September. Colombian Government assistance is now being delivered to pact signers (about 8,500 are estimated to have been reached so far). The Government has given pact signers until July 27, 2002, to complete eradication of their coca. After this point, it intends to pursue aerial eradication of remaining coca fields."<sup>11</sup>*

As we can see, the crisis that ended up exceeding the government's capacity to respond led to aerial spraying being seen as the only solution, justified by the false argu-

#### USAID AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

On July 13, 2000, the US Congress approved \$869 million for Plan Colombia. Of this amount, \$123.5 million was earmarked for USAID Colombia, including \$42.5 million for alternative development programmes under Strategic Objective No 2, which called for "promoting economic and social alternatives to the illicit production of coca." According to USAID Colombia, the goal was to improve social and economic conditions in illicit crop production areas by assisting small farmers who voluntarily agreed to stop growing such crops. The \$42.5 million was allocated for this strategy under an amendment to an existing agreement with the Colombian government, the five-year Coca Alternative Development (CAD) programme. CAD was implemented under a contract signed on March 30, 2001 with Chemonics, which carries out the programme, providing donations and subcontracting to municipal governments, local and regional organisations of producers, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.



<sup>11</sup> USAID. *US Assistance to Colombia and the Andean Region*, testimony by Adolfo Franco, Assistant Administrator, USAID Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. Before the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, April 10, 2002.

ment that the peasants who had signed the pacts were responsible. Given the communities' irritation and the insecurity caused by the institutional crisis, the foreseeable result was a replanting of coca. USAID was also aware of the Colombian state vacuum and began to readjust its programmes through direct intervention, seeking to respond to the communities with medium and long-range programs. The mechanism involved an agreement on eradication in advance that did not depend on the disorderly scorekeeping into which the manual eradication pacts degenerated in the end:

*"An on-the-ground assessment carried out by USAID in October-November 2001 found that many pact signers were skeptical that the Government would complete timely delivery of immediate assistance or resume spraying after July 27, 2002, when President Pastrana's term of office ends. Many have replanted coca in areas that were previously sprayed. Nevertheless, other communities have volunteered to begin eradication immediately in exchange for provision of assistance through USAID grantees. USAID began adjusting its original plan last November to begin working directly with such communities under an 'early eradication' program."<sup>12</sup>*

In this way, the actions undertaken by USAID-Chemonics began in the context of an absence of a national alternative development policy and, in general, a lack of national priorities. The result was a kind of parallel management that avoided the entities that had formal responsibility for policy management and established its own rules of the game, through:

- The redefinition of the various programmes that existed or the creation of new ones based on the guidelines of USAID-Chemonics, whose exclusive interest was the rapid reduction of the area devoted to illicit crops.
- A transactional model of aid for immediate eradication, implemented through the private contracting of business-oriented NGOs, which undermined already precarious local and regional institutions.

Actions contracted with operators that acted as NGOs were marked by the following characteristics:<sup>13</sup>

- In general, the operators' experience was in areas very different from those related to illicit crops.<sup>14</sup>
- Operational strategies were inadequate in both territorial scope and the promoters' capacity, because these actions demanded knowledge and experience.
- There has been no effective monitoring and follow-up of the work of the NGO personnel.
- The management structure facilitates the proliferation of irregularities in the handling of resources.

As a result, because of the resources on offer, local and regional authorities and community organisations are responding to criteria established by outside entities, in this case USAID, which represents 92% of total alternative development funds (see Table I). Far from establishing consensus-based development dynamics, in the field USAID ended up settling for actions aimed at eradication.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> USAID, *US Assistance to Colombia and the Andean Region*. *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> These entities were considered "operators" and are recognized in DAPRE-FIP Agreement No. 01, issued in 2000, as follows: "Projects can originate in community organizations, territorial bodies, public entities or Non-Governmental Organizations, which must formulate projects with support from 'Project Operating Entities' recognized by the *Fondo de Inversiones para la Paz*, through which the projects will be presented."

<sup>14</sup> As the Controller's Office notes, the majority of these entities (NGOs) had experience with FOREC (the *Fondo de Reconstrucción del Eje Cafetero*). The Controller's Office stated that "besides some problems in the selection of the NGOs, which are being verified by the CGR, the mechanical transfer of this operational formula to areas of greater conflict, such as Magdalena Medio, Putumayo and Caquetá, was not advisable, because the social, political and economic conditions were not similar to those of the coffee-growing areas." Controller General's Office, *ibid.* Page 10.

<sup>15</sup> This is one of the consequences of the maxim that has taken root in these spheres: "Whoever provides the money determines the conditions."

This has led to even greater institutional disorganisation because international aid is not linked to local or regional development plans and because the response of the few, weak community organisations that exist (peasant and indigenous groups) centres on the demand for small amounts of funding for their areas, with no real reinforcement of local opportunities for consensus-building and without helping to establish them as representative community organisations or key players in regional development.

On the contrary, USAID has reaffirmed the need to play a complementary role based on the dissuasive nature of aerial spraying. The promotion of community organisation can only take place within the context of the ideological foundation of Washington's anti-drug strategy:

*"It is also important to repeat that enforcement programs such as aerial eradication are an essential part of the equation. There are no licit alternatives to coca and on-farm coca paste processing that can come close in terms of income generation for farmers. This makes enforcement efforts essential in achieving the goal of coca reduction."<sup>16</sup>*

For USAID, lessons from Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador demonstrate that management, more than income levels or poverty, is the key underlying factor that determines whether or not the coca industry will become established, or whether it will increase or decrease. Management, in this sense, includes a national government presence, local governments willing to provide public services and create incentives for alternatives to coca production, cohesive local communities and a system of values or individual beliefs that rejects the production of drugs as a means of livelihood.

In addition, USAID believed that if local communities worked together in a participatory manner and were supported by a visible national government presence, with a strong

commitment to eradicating crops aimed at drug production and a capable military presence, the illicit coca economy would be significantly reduced.

In conclusion, by restricting and fostering a lack of co-ordination among state entities responsible for planning and stimulating regional development the central government's de-institutionalisation of alternative development policy, sends signals that contradict rhetoric about building national sovereignty through increased state legitimacy.

This vacuum contrasts with the magnitude of the central government's commitments to the communities through the manual eradication pacts. The gap created by the failure to fulfil these commitments and the lack of a state policy has been filled by a policy that responds more to other strategic interests, related to drugs and security, than to those that could arise from a national political plan for Colombia. In practice, these agreements could be seen as a "transaction", but because of their content (early eradication and the "no replanting of coca" requirement as the basis of the policy), they represent no progress toward the goal of strengthening communities in these areas. Nor do they move toward a strengthening of the state's legitimacy, since they have decreased institutional power at the local and regional levels as their implementation fosters a model of privatisation.

Finally, the atmosphere of armed conflict — which centres on the fight for territorial control and, within this, control of the commercialisation of coca paste — also reflects the interests of particular groups because of the armed groups' lack of representative legitimacy. None of the parties to the conflict has on its agenda the expectation of playing a role in regional development. The focus on tactical manoeuvres for securing a military position to defend the *status quo* of power as an armed group or sector leads to managing territory as a theatre of war rather than a theatre of development.



<sup>16</sup> USAID. *Op cit.*

Table No. 1

## Resources received from International Cooperation

Source	Period	US\$
US AID	1999 – 2005	104.360.000
UNODC	1996 – 2002	6.500.000
CHINA	1997 – 1998	719.000
Japanese Fund IDB	1997	350.000
JAPAN – UNODC	2001	253.945
CICAD – OAS	1998 – 2002	491.000
COREA	1996	110.000
UNDP	1997 – 1999	200.000
FRANCE	1998 – 1999	66.250
<b>Total</b>		<b>113.050.695</b>

Source: DNE *La Lucha en Colombia contra las drogas ilícitas, Acciones y Resultados, 2001*

## The Negotiation and Communities in Southern Colombia Project

This publication summarises the results of the Negotiation and Communities in Southern Colombia Project, carried out with support from Novib (Oxfam-Netherlands) as part of the TNI and Acción Andina Drugs & Democracy Programme. The project was co-ordinated by Ricardo Vargas and carried out by Rodrigo Velaidez and Carolina Cortés. The research's main objective was to better understand the situation of the Social Pacts for Manual Eradication that were part of the implementation of Plan Colombia.

The first phase of the project, in the Lower Putumayo region, involved carrying out evaluations with the various actors involved in the development and implementation of the pacts, as well as the communities that participated in them. Primary documentation was reviewed, the implementation of the agreements was observed, field visits were made to key locations and a historical reconstruction was done of Colombia's alternative development policy under recent administrations, along with an analysis of this policy under the current government of President Álvaro Uribe.

The second phase focused on the Pacific region of Nariño, one of the areas most affected by the war and the intensive aerial spraying that began in 1999. Workshops were held with Afro-Colombian communities in the coastal area and the Pacific plains region. Meetings were also held with communities in the Middle and Lower Caguán region of Caquetá to evaluate their experiences with alternative development, the threats posed to the area by the aerial spraying and the breakdown of peace talks.

The final phase involved reflection with representatives of communities and institutions in the departments of Putumayo, Nariño, Cauca, Caquetá and Tolima about possible alternatives to illicit crops in a context of armed conflict.

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**T**he point of departure for the eradication pacts reveals the underlying problem with the model for these agreements, in which the dominant factors are a unilateral state decision and the demand that coca crops be eradicated in a short time (one year) as the criterion defining the policy's success.

Between December 2000 and July 2001, 33 pacts involving 37,775 families were signed in nine districts in the Putumayo region. Of these, 6,000 families lived in the district of Puerto Asís. In February 2002, parts of the food security project had been delivered to 1,800 of them, representing 4.8% of the total number of families committed to the pacts and only 30% of those in the pilot district (Puerto Asís). Considering that the first pacts were signed in December 2000, delivery to these 4.8% of the families occurred over a period of 14 months.

Independently of the mounting obstacles and the administrative problems that were regular occurrences from the outset, from a policy standpoint the undertaking reproduced the limitations of the alternative development model, whose basic and defining indicators were the degree and speed of the forced eradication. The emphasis on showing results that could be measured in those terms placed limits on all other actions. As a result:

- The point of departure for minimum investment in regional development — such as thorough studies of the region's biophysical potential, soil quality and the agricultural and environmental characteristics of each sub-region — was abandoned.
- By making the reduction of coca crops in the shortest possible time the priority, a zealous effort was made to establish a point of departure from which to calculate the starting date of the manual eradication and therefore ensure its dissuasive effect. When the issue of development was set aside, deci-

sions were conditioned by the eradication process. As a result, the strategy of strengthening communities as a step toward regional development and the creation of a culture of regional identity was abandoned. Above all, the need to build trust between the government and communities based on a vision of integral development was cast aside.

Communities and local authorities had seen dietary self-sufficiency as a necessary process in creating sustainable conditions for the region's population. It was considered a way to lay the foundation for a peasant culture that would produce consumer goods and strengthen basic social and economic networks, one pillar of which was a strategy that would lead to the establishment of a two-way centre for marketing products. This project sought to solidify joint efforts between local authorities and communities to achieve this basic level of subsistence and dietary sustainability.

The original idea was to ensure the marketing of surplus produced by the initial investment in dietary self-sufficiency (poultry farms, sale of milk and meat, subsistence products, fruits, etc.) to raise income to a level that would make it possible to sustain and reproduce activities in this area. Another goal was to provide the inputs, seeds and technical instruments needed for activities that would result in surplus production.

When the marketing entity failed to supply the required technical and financial assistance, the state cancelled a study that would have evaluated the potential for production, requirements for equipment and resources and, in general, technical planning for such a programme. An evaluation of the conditions necessary for ensuring access to and control over the production chain for marketing surplus products was also blocked.

*The emphasis on showing results that could be measured in eradicated hectares placed limits on all other actions.*

For the community, the basic problem was the design of long-term projects and, from there, the identification of the actions necessary to ensure dietary self-sufficiency. This followed from the recognition that the coca economy had led to distortions with regard to the high levels of importation of consumer goods for the region. This situation was leading to a dangerous dependence on coca as the only crop, undermining recognition of the potential of other products and socio-economic projects, including those related to the environment.

What was lacking was a concept of food security based on strategies designed to reinforce the community's organisational capacity, one of the key elements in ensuring the programme's sustainability. The lack of technical assistance that would ensure proper handling of the goods delivered, especially in the case of livestock and poultry, also reflected the absence of strategic planning in terms of state policy. This was related to an absence of policy guidelines for regional development on the part of the national agencies responsible for such strategies. The fact that there was a government plan, rather than an overall state strategy, meant that dietary subsistence eventually became a "delivery service". This distorted the original concept, which had taken into account the integral nature of the process and minimal requirements for sustainability.

The community eradication pacts are based first on establishing credibility between the communities and the state, and second on support for producers so that they can improve production of food for family consumption, produce a surplus using appropriate technologies and expand community participation. According to the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Alternativo (PNDA), "*The alternative development strategy consists of establishing a process for improving social, economic and environmental conditions for producers in the areas covered by the program, making possible the identification and consolidation of activities that provide an alterna-*

*tive to illicit crops.*"

As we can see, this involves a process to ensure that producers are actually able to create liquidity through the strengthening of the components of their production system, as well as by complementing it with other alternatives. A process requires attention to time frames, so as to take advantage of new techniques that supposedly have been validated in the region and the functioning of marketing chains that would provide an outlet for products with an eye toward business development.

## Community participation

Community participation in technical decisions is an element that should cut across all stages and activities in the implementation of the eradication pacts. This participation should be reflected in the formation of citizen oversight groups, the beneficiary families' capacity

for offering proposals and the active intervention of community organizations.

Nevertheless, the level of real, active participation in the design, implementation, follow-up and monitor-

ing of technical aspects has been low, partly because of a general lack of organisations capable of understanding and carrying out actions in the face of eradication, although there are a few exceptions, such as certain community councils and boards. If communities are to be active participants, they must also be provided with opportunities, strategies and basic training so that they can become involved in the work dynamics, make a contribution and make decisions about technical issues.

The stepping up of eradication goals expressed in hectares, in order to comply with US government demands, has decreased the possibility for communities to contribute their skills, experience and knowledge to enrich the technical proposal. This is aggravated by the implementing agencies' lack of knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of coca growers.

*Real, active community participation in the design, implementation, follow-up and monitoring has been low*

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The oversight groups became ineffective bodies that often defended personal interests and in which women had little opportunity to participate. Some organisations were established “on the fly” to facilitate the handling of certain collective components, such as livestock delivery, without having any real knowledge of their functions or clarity about procedures. As a consequence, they had limited results.

### Technical assistance and follow-up

In the technical design of the eradication pacts, it was proposed that technical assistance be holistic, specific and by objective, and that technical personnel focus on four factors: organisation, production, marketing and financial analysis of the activities. Assistance would also be provided to help peasants balance their farm production, thus ensuring food security for their families.

The technical assistance basically centred on two levels: the individual level, at which the vision and workings of the production system in all its dimensions are shared with the family, and a group level, at which experiences are shared and guidance is provided to the entire group about new techniques or improvements in production processes.

Because of gaps in this crucial component, the food security phase was not efficient. Among the problems:

- Due to a lack of training or education, most technical personnel lacked knowledge and the capacity to communicate with the communities.
- There was a lack of opportunity for technical feedback that would have allowed for discussion and contributions from the community and other institutions working in the area.
- The lack of implementation of a training plan that would emphasise local technologies, family labour, the use of materials available in the region (in the case of poultry and hogs) and the use of organic inputs produ-

ced by the peasants on their own farms.

- The farm has subcomponents that are usually interrelated; to maintain a balance, it is necessary to intervene in all areas simultaneously, though with different degrees of intensity.
- One key aspect is to gain a certain depth of knowledge about the culture of coca producers to make it possible to understand their social environment, their consumer habits, how they manage their time, etc. Becoming involved in understanding the dynamic of the coca production cycle would increase the possibility of establishing methodologies and time frames for the application of techniques to the production system.
- The technical proposal paid little attention to the Amazon region, with its variable climate, and the difficulties of establishing certain productive components there, such as mono-cropping, which requires bringing in a high level of inputs from outside. It also ignored such aspects as existing potential in the case of natural forest resources.
- Conditions related to public order have gradually worsened in the region, making it difficult to maintain ongoing contact with the beneficiary communities and define and reach agreement on operational elements.

### Technical analysis of the components

As part of the supply considered by the eradication pacts, animal husbandry was established as a food security option with the idea of using this activity to generate liquidity for the communities. The cultivation of basic food products, Amazon fruit in agro-forestry stands, fish farming, poultry, hogs and home gardens were also efforts to ensure food security and generate a slight surplus to complement the liquidity of the campesinos who eradicated coca within the one-year time frame specified in the agreements. Table 2 presents a more specific evaluation of the components.



Tabla 2. Evaluación técnica de los Programas de Erradicación Manual

COMPONENT	POSITIVE ASPECTS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS
<p><b>Sustainable Animal Husbandry</b></p> <p>Provision of up to 2 million pesos' worth of livestock (generally two head of cattle), inputs and tools for livestock raising.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Genetic improvement of breeds being raised in the region.</li> <li>- Coverage of the deficit in the number of animals per unit of area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pressure to deliver the animals so that people would eradicate immediately has led to a disorganised delivery process, jeopardising the beneficiaries because poor-quality animals are being delivered. The animals also suffer stress, because they are shut up in barns for as long as eight days without food. The process lends itself to a lack of transparency in management and in the benefits to peasants.</li> <li>- Secondly, the peasants did not receive training in handling the animals or in organisation, transformation and marketing of sub-products that could be produced.</li> <li>- No plan was designed for follow-up and evaluation after delivery of the livestock. The investment was made with no oversight, and it is not clear what will happen as the number of cattle in the region increases.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Poultry</b></p>	<p>Some families have taken advantage of the eggs, as well as cross-breeding with the local poultry type known as "criolla."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Failure to deliver the poultry to some families because the birds died while being transported from the interior of the country to Putumayo.</li> <li>- The type of poultry appropriate for the area was not considered.</li> <li>- The feasibility study was not taken into account for preparing peasants to make feed from their own farms available to shift the birds from concentrate to farm-raised feed.</li> <li>- Delivery of the birds irritated the peasants, who questioned the project's technical quality.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Subsistence crops (Rice, cassava, bananas, pildoro, etc.).</b></p> <p>The plan is for each family to establish at least one hectare of subsistence crops.</p>	<p>Some peasant families returned to growing subsistence crops to feed the poultry and small animals, something they would not have done without assistance from the pacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was no plan for providing education about the importance of food security in the global sense, understood as quality, quantity and independence.</li> <li>- There was a tendency to allow the community to choose the livestock "package" because implementation of the "food security" project was stricter and more detailed.</li> <li>- There was no real verification of the productive yield of these crops that would help link them with possibilities for transformation or conversion into feed for animals such as hogs, fish and poultry.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other production components</b></p>	<p>No significant progress.</p>	<p>There was no strategy for promoting and evaluating potential subcomponents for the area, such as fish farming or the raising of vegetables, aromatic herbs and hogs.</p>

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## Medium- and long-range projects

The government's commitment was to provide technical and financial resources for the income-generating projects over the medium and long-term and to build consensus on mechanisms and procedures for repayment of the resources in the form of revolving funds for producers.

Except for rubber and palm, however, there are no projects identified in this area. With regard to palm hearts, the project known as "The Development of an Agro-industrial Complex for the Cultivation of Chontaduro Palm" is being carried out by the Empresa Agropecuaria de la Amazonía (Agroamazonia) in the municipalities of Puerto Asís, where the palm hearts processing plant is located.<sup>1</sup> The plant has the capacity to handle the output of 1,300 hectares in five municipalities (Orito, San Miguel, Puerto Caicedo, Valle del Guamuéz and Puerto Asís). In early 2002, however, there were only 180 hectares in production and 250 planted. As a result, the processing demand is being met through purchases from Ecuador.<sup>2</sup>

*The lack of a longer-term income perspective is the aspect that the communities consider most pertinent in assessing the failure of the manual eradication pacts and alternative development in general.*

This is the aspect that the communities consider most pertinent in assessing the failure of the manual eradication pacts and alternative development in the region in general. The government had made a commitment to identify and finance integral development projects for the cultivation of rubber, provide support for

associations of banana producers, and implement the palm hearts project, the dual-purpose livestock project and a pepper project, all within six months.

As of March 2002, the livestock and pepper projects had not started. For the first three projects, an investment of \$3,741,440 was planned, of which only 11.8%, or \$441,220, had been dis-

bursed.<sup>3</sup> The Human Rights Ombudsman's Office has pointed out that even though these were already longer existing initiatives, the degree to which the projects had been carried out was extremely limited, which meant that the objective of generating income had been met only in a very precarious manner.



<sup>1</sup> Unfinished project of the Samper administration that ran well over budget before being terminated.

<sup>2</sup> The current low production is explained by a series of errors committed by the state in encouraging the planting of crops without having ensured that the plant would function. Many growers were left with a harvest for which there was no buyer.

<sup>3</sup> See Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, National Resolution No. 026, "Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in the Context of Armed Conflict and the Spraying of Coca Crops in the Department of Putumayo." Bogotá, October 9, 2002.

**P**resident Uribe's alternative development policy recognises the effects of the armed conflict on the areas where illicit crops are produced and is therefore included in the state security strategy. The national government has designed an "integral intervention strategy based on the creation of economically and environmentally sustainable alternatives for the development of areas in conflict."<sup>1</sup>

This shifts the focus from *emergency alternative development*, the view that prevailed in 1994 with the start of the PLANTE program, to the *ongoing regional development* proposed by Uribe. Based on community participation, "the strategy seeks to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of the state's actions in these regions, developing a competitive environment that ensures the sustainability of the interventions and replaces the concept of emergency aid."

This apparently substitutes a "carrot and stick" approach with another that recognises the symbiosis among armed conflict (versus democratic security), illicit crops (versus regional development) and the absence of state legitimacy (versus the establishment of state sovereignty).

In this way, alternative development is no longer to be seen as playing an "emergency" role in the face of aerial spraying, centring instead on empowering the state in producer zones by focusing on regional development. This implies two significant new elements:

- The focus on regional development.
- A differentiated, flexible criterion in the intervention strategy, adapted to specific conditions of conflict in the regions.

This dual perspective is implemented in three stages:

- Preparation. Definition of regional development objectives, with discussion and participation by the communities, and fos-

tering of opportunities for participation in the preparation of and agreement on projects for local economic development.

- Development. Priority is given to projects that offer advantages in the area of employment, income and strengthening of community organisation.
- Consolidation of programmes and projects aimed at making local and regional development self-supporting.

This approach acknowledges *a priori* the need for adjustment because of the armed conflict and seeks to diversify alliances with civil society organisations. In general, the strategy's goals are summed up in its name: *Institution-building and development in areas of conflict*. Its content is reflected in three components:

- Production and income-generating projects
- Institution-building and strengthening of communities
- Construction and improvement of physical and social infrastructure

The first component includes the proposal for forestry projects for 50,000 families involved in the cultivation of coca and opium poppy. A total of 150,000 new hectares of forest would be established for commercial uses and 120,000 for protection of watersheds and headwaters, along with plans for titling and management of nearly 1 million hectares of natural forest.

The institution-building and community-strengthening component aims at re-establishing trust in the state, increasing levels of acceptance and legitimacy and solidifying mechanisms for stimulating development and security.

The political basis of the development programmes is the establishment of security, which is understood to include community participation and institution-building. Underlying this view, however, is a deeper debate over the state and its real possibility for

<sup>1</sup> Departamento Nacional de Planeación (DNP), *Bases del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo "Hacia un Estado Comunitario."* Page 54 (Web version).

legitimacy in Colombia. Depending on how the current nature of the armed conflict is viewed, there are very different definitions of how to approach the problem.

- If one begins with the assumption that the groups participating in the armed conflict are powered solely by money from drug trafficking, it resembles a criminal activity that gains strength in areas where the state has not had a sovereign influence. In this case, security implies, above all, guaranteeing the armed presence of the state.
- If one recognizes that the armed conflict does not cover the wide variety of social and economic conflicts as well as conflicts of state legitimacy, this legitimacy would be based on acknowledgement of a diversity of local and regional demands, such as those of indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. The dynamic of state legitimisation then stems from recognition of, respect for, and affirmation of these processes of autonomy, not only in the ethnic and cultural spheres, but also at the regional level.

Methodology based on the second perspective varies considerably, because it requires affirming processes of civil resistance to territorial threats by armed groups and, in some cases, by representatives of the state. It also recognises the establishment of security based on autonomy, so that a central state does not impose conditions but reaches consensus with the communities through actions aimed at strengthening local institutions.

In that sense, decisions such as the indiscriminate aerial spraying of crops, an external condition imposed by the United States, become factors in dietary insecurity, forced displacement, the loss of income and health risks that do not reinforce the state's credibility.

Building consensus on development cannot be subject to security conditions imposed by Bogotá, but must be based on strengthening of and respect for social, economic and cultural demands as well as those related to security, reflected especially in an effective

judicial system that operates in and for the regions. To society, the armed groups represent a threat to freedom and rights because of pragmatism for tactical gains, the defence of private interests and the degradation of the war itself.

A thorough evaluation of overall drug policy and the re-establishment of appropriate terms for international sharing of responsibility would be a good starting point for more sensible decisions about ways to address the issue. This would require redefining the current, extremely distorted view of shared responsibility as a deal involving resources for the "war on drugs" in a producer country and tariff benefits or support for international loans. This arrangement does not take into account the serious social, environmental and economic costs and loss of legitimacy caused by this other war which adds to the one already being waged in Colombia.

These concessions also begin to represent an additional cost for Colombia and the Andean area, as in the case of the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA). This agreement is perceived as a unilateral trade concession by the United States in return for Colombia and the Andean area being a theatre for the war on drugs. Nevertheless, it has become the mechanism that Washington uses to argue against accepting equitable tariff terms, especially for rural areas of Colombia and the Andean region.

In conclusion, from the standpoint of security, alternative development faces political challenges that could constitute obstacles or lead to its failure. The main challenges are:

- The need to develop a sound institutional foundation based on the search for representation of the common good, rooted in an effective judicial system that ensures respect for the human and fundamental rights of the civilian population.
- The institutionalisation of security in areas such as those where illicit crops are grown or those that are strategic points for the drug economy, in which the security for-



ces play a key role, poses challenges to a commitment to defence of the common good.

- The redefinition of the function of the “carrot” of alternative development and the forestry projects as an emerging policy component are positive elements of the new strategy. The importance given to a regional approach also creates conditions for overcoming the deficiencies of alternative development.

Nevertheless, new challenges are arising that, if unresolved, could cause the breakdown of the new policy. Firstly, the linkage between aerial spraying or forced eradication in general and the overall strategy against illicit crops is not clear.



Secondly, the wisdom of acknowledging the differentiation in potential uses of land in areas where illicit crops are grown or could expand means nothing if there is not a policy for preventing the planting of these crops that takes into account the dynamics of state intervention and support in areas that do not yet have this type of economy.

Thirdly, the implementation of security and regional development plans must be based on recognition of existing local processes that, in general, are in the hands of community organisations. Imposing a strategy of war against certain armed groups and drawing the population into this strategy, even as informants, creates dangerous situations that jeopardise the life and social stability of the communities.

Finally, the National Development Plan proposes that the national government encourage forestry and agro-forestry projects aimed at repairing environmental damage caused by the armed conflict and the expansion of illicit crops. With the design of the “Forest Ranger Families” (“*Familias Guardabosques*”)

programme, however, the proposal has undergone a change of approach that tends to make the communities the beneficiaries of a subsidy policy rather than participants in a consensus-based process. Each family would receive 5 million pesos a year “*in return for carrying out forest ranger activities in areas related to the recovery and conservation of ecosystems, through various alternatives of forest restoration.*”<sup>2</sup>

The approach of institution-building and community-strengthening aims to re-establish confidence in the state, increase its levels of acceptance and legitimacy and more solidly establish models that stimulate development and security. The type of linkage that exists between the “Forest Ranger Families” programme and President Uribe’s “democratic security” strategy could create a symbiosis between these communities and the context of confrontation spearheaded by the central government.

In this context, the communities cannot play a passive role as counterparts who receive a payment of 5 million pesos to act as forest rangers, with no regard for the problem’s social and economic complexity, especially in the case of highland ecosystems where illicit poppy crops are grown. What is needed is an integral process that, while acknowledging the environmental problems caused by poppy crops, also attempts to design proposals that respond to the complexity of the problem.

These include localised agrarian reform policies that are part of integral plans. More than a vague idea of reforestation or “Forest Ranger Families,” the problem must be seen in the context of the need for an ecological restoration strategy. It must be based on the recognition that forests are part of the country’s biodiversity. “*Activities aimed at ecological restoration of Colombia’s forests should be framed within the Convention on Biological Diversity.*”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See *Presidencia de la República, Departamento Nacional de Planeación (DNP), Bases del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, 2002 – 2006*, Bogotá,

<sup>3</sup> See Cristian Samper, “Ecosistemas Naturales, Restauración Ecológica e Investigación” in Fundación Alejandro Ángel Escobar, FESCOL, Foro Nacional Ambiental and GTZ, *Restauración Ecológica y Reforestación*. Bogotá, August 2000.



Efforts at ecological restoration assume a detailed knowledge of the complexity of these life systems in the areas where the forests serve or used to serve specific functions. These restoration processes would operate on a scale that could correspond to watersheds or natural regions and time frames that could take decades.

With the inclusion of the “Forest Ranger Families” in the nefarious transactional approach to illicit crops (I pay you, you eradicate), a unique opportunity for launching a state policy for ecological restoration, with all the benefits that this could represent for the country and for humanity, has been lost.

Proposals offered by the regions must be based on previous experience and integrate the communities into a process that will strengthen community organisation. Otherwise, they could become commercial plantations uninterested in creating the social dynamics needed to reinforce their organisations.

With regard to a regional view, it is necessary to plan ecological restoration actions based on a more realistic analysis of the principal ways in which the forests and ecosystems most characteristic of each region have been affected. A cost/benefit analysis is needed to determine the financial feasibility and technical viability of ecological restoration for recovering environmental services and the intrinsic value of each ecosystem in each region.

While reforestation as a productive activity should be included, other proposals based on the area’s environmental potential are also indispensable, paving the way for the implementation of protective plantations and good management of natural forests. The idea is to create new environmental protection systems that include plans complementary to dietary self-sufficiency, such as environmental services, basic research, education and improvement of infrastructure.

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## USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.alternative-development.net](http://www.alternative-development.net)

[www.ceudes.org](http://www.ceudes.org)

Corporación Unidades Democráticas para el Desarrollo

[www.ciponline.org/colombia/aid](http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/aid)

Center for International Policy

[www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org)

Latin American Working Group

[www.mamacoca.org](http://www.mamacoca.org)

Mama Coca

[www.tni.org/drogas](http://www.tni.org/drogas)

Transnational Institute

[www.unodc.org/colombia/index.html](http://www.unodc.org/colombia/index.html)

UNDCP Colombia

[www.usfumigation.org](http://www.usfumigation.org)

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Washington Office on Latin America

One of the greatest challenges in Colombia today is how to meet alternative development objectives in the midst of war. “Alternative development” refers in this context to the creation of alternative livelihoods for illicit crop farmers. In theatres of conflict, the debate centers not simply on the economic sphere, but on whether alternative development helps to create conditions in which human life and freedom are respected; whether local powers are truly exercising good governance; and the extent to which communities are being strengthened, people’s possibilities for participation are increased and democracy is enhanced.

President Álvaro Uribe has defined his current alternative development policy as being framed by a strategy for regional development, a conceptual shift in the history of Colombian alternative development. This vision is, however, belied by *the process actually under way*. The work of the main funding agency, USAID, is based on a transactional model whereby early elimination of illicit crops is rewarded with finance for local projects. Such an approach is short-term and success is measured solely on the basis of hectares eradicated. Coupled with indiscriminate aerial fumigations in coca and opium poppy-producing areas and a strategic focus on illicit cultivation as a source of guerilla finance, the strategy only serves to make the ground fertile for more violence and instability. This bears no relationship at all to Uribe’s ostensible vision of regional development, which should be a necessarily long-term and complex process. The contradictions, which include a worsening dietary situation and increased forced displacements of people, plunge the Colombian state, in many parts of the country, into an even deeper legitimacy crisis. In this briefing, it is argued, that it is the anti-drug strategy itself that limits the establishment of the basic political conditions necessary to attain the socio-economic goals of alternative development.



Founded in 1974, TNI is an international network of activist-scholars committed to critical analyses of the global problems of today and tomorrow. It aims to provide intellectual support to those movements concerned to steer the world in a democratic, equitable and environmentally sustainable direction.

Since 1996, the TNI Drugs & Democracy programme has been analysing trends in the illegal drugs economy and in drug policies globally, their causes and their effects on economy, peace and democracy.

The Drugs & Democracy programme conducts field investigations, engages policy debates, briefs journalists and officials, coordinates international campaigns and conferences, produces articles, publications and briefing documents, and maintains a daily electronic news service on drugs-related issues.

The aim of the project and of the Drugs and Conflict series is to stimulate a re-assessment of conventional prohibitive and repressive policy approaches and to argue for policies based on principles consistent with a commitment to harm reduction, fair trade, development, democracy, human rights, environmental and health protection, and conflict prevention.