

*perspectives in common property: Accompanying change within Borana pastoral systems.* Securing the Commons number 4, IIED, London

Weiser 1998, *PRA field exercise and training report*. Borana Lowlands Pastoral Development Project, GTZ.

- <sup>1</sup> This situation is relevant for the entire Borana Lowlands.
- <sup>2</sup> The word new should be interpreted as an integration of tradition and modern management systems.
- <sup>3</sup> In order to depict relationships the participants used different lines (straight, double, broken etc) to indicate their relationship (strong, weak, conflict, etc.) with a specific group.
- <sup>4</sup> Madda is a Borana traditional territorial unit of area. It is roughly equivalent to the Government peasant association (PA) land division.

illegal crops and subsequent militarization of parts of the legal system. Rather, all these elements arise and operate in a socioeconomic environment shaped by the volatile combination of the first two conditions. The foci of violence were, until recently, restricted to sparsely populated regions that are rich in energy sources, fresh water, biodiversity, timber, and minerals. What these regions lacked, and continue to lack, can be broadly defined as social capital; political clout, infrastructure, and local systems capable of mediating and resolving disputes. There is no dearth of local organisations throughout rural and forested Colombia, but even the most determined and organised community cannot overcome the systematic marginalization and lawlessness of the frontier.

### 3. LATIN AMERICA

#### COLOMBIA: THE MANY FACES OF THE WAR

By María D. Álvarez

Many hypotheses have been put forward to explain the protracted, unresolved violent conflict that has engulfed Colombia's forests for more than two decades. Two are critical to understanding the conflict: 1) the inexistence or decline of justice adjudication and state legitimacy, particularly acute in rural and forested areas, and 2) a stunning abundance of natural resources. This does not detract from the many studies that have sought to document the effects of state-sponsored development policies, multilateral trade agreements, or the political economy of

The direct social and environmental effects of armed conflict throughout rural and forested areas of Colombia range from abandoning forest exploitation, associated with armed stalemates, to the mass displacement of frontier *campesinos* (smallholders) and replacement of their agroforestry systems by cattle ranching. Most of the evidence for the former is anecdotal, while the decline of smallholders and subsequent consolidation of estates growing pasture (and other perennials) purchased with laundered currency is well documented by social scientists. The latter process is key to understanding the forced displacement of several million *campesinos*, the decline of agricultural productivity, food insecurity and, ultimately, urban unemployment. Deforestation associated with illegal crops, a frequent correlate of armed conflict, is estimated to encompass more than half the total annual forest clearing. This unsustainable fragmentation is most

damaging to the Andean habitats that support many endemic species, provide ecosystem services to several major cities, and have already lost most forest cover in the last 200 years.

It is more difficult to assess the indirect effects of the conflict: the changes in the relationship between costs and benefits that arise from the uncertainty of economic outcomes where violence is chronic. Given the natural wealth of Colombian forests, the most long-lasting effects of conflict are the marginalization and eventual displacement of the local communities. Without these, the interests of commercial exploitation are not brought to the national attention, and go completely unfettered. Large-scale mining of oil and minerals in vast regions of the Chocó, Magdalena Medio, and Putumayo takes place in the midst of acute armed conflict, with minimal environmental oversight. The corporations that profit from these resources are often party to the conflict through paramilitaries and other private contractors.

With the exception of industries that can afford private armies, such as oil exploitation and the processing of illicit crops, most markets suffer in the midst of conflict. This restricts the range of economic activities available to communities struggling to survive. Conservation and management take a back seat when survival is at stake. Armed conflict hampers the kind of intervention (logging bans, education programs, etc.) necessary to reduce deforestation and prevent the loss of endangered species. A few critical areas are off-limits to both government and private conservation efforts. At the same time, the public and private protected-area system has been growing despite the war. Whether

or not this has had an effect on conservation on the ground is debatable.

The last decade has seen the creation and growth of semi-governmental institutions designed to study, catalogue and design plans for the sustainable use of biodiversity. These institutions have succeeded in making biodiversity, among other natural resources, visible in the context of peace negotiations (timber, oil, and illegal crops figure prominently in their own right). They have also established community networks for conservation and disseminating the data they have collected. The decentralization of plans for natural resource use through *corporaciones autónomas*, regional planning and resource management authorities, is another relatively recent process. Because the conservation programmes affiliated to these new institutions are often linked to the political involvement of an informed and organised citizenry and technical knowledge of the local resource base, areas where armed conflict prevails are neglected, or receive plans that were developed without local consultation. Decentralization has resulted in greater political participation, but the environmental benefits of this policy (if any) are not fully documented. Conservation professionals have become the target of violence in recent years; several biologists are currently hostage, activists, birdwatchers, park-keepers, and even hikers have been kidnapped and/or murdered. These incidents have made Colombian forests the least desirable of tourist destinations. Domestic tourism, never too focused on forests, has grown in relatively safe rural areas where income from agro-tourism has partly replaced falling coffee revenues. The opportunity costs of insecurity for both international and domestic ecotourism are unknown.

Recent studies on decision-making among Colombian *campesinos* in areas where illicit crops are prevalent (all in the forested frontiers) suggest that the switch to legal crops is more closely related to the improvement of the institutional environment than to price signals. The credible threat of justice adjudication coupled with government services is more effective than declines in local illicit crop prices, or increases in alternative crop prices. Cross-country studies on illicit crops noted that violent conflict is a strong predictor of increase in illicit crop production between 1986-2001. International trade in agricultural commodities, often blamed for replacing legal smallholder crops in Colombia, shows no clear pattern of correlation with illicit crop production across the 10 largest producers. The results of these studies are complementary and point to possible solutions to the conflict.

The favoured policy to eradicate illicit crops in Colombia, aerial spraying of the herbicide Round Up, had no effect on overall production of illicit crops over the period studied, does not involve local actors, and does not improve the institutional environment of smallholders. The development of infrastructure aimed to integrate local economies may be more effective, provided it is accompanied by similar investment in government services ranging from schools to justice adjudication. At present, infrastructure development in conflict areas seems focused on opening roads to facilitate development (e.g., Putumayo), with little regard for local community needs, or environmental protection. The current government, headed by president Alvaro Uribe, is generally perceived to be credible in its threats to bring illicit growers, traffickers, and insurgents to justice. This has helped reduce illicit crop

production after decades of ineffectual air fumigation. The long-term results of this current trend will depend on the capacity of the government to deliver on both threats and promises. Peace negotiations with guerrillas came to a halt almost three years ago, but an amnesty (thought to favour paramilitaries) has recently been proposed. These efforts to persuade low-rank armed actors require credible measures of justice for all sides to stop the cycle of retribution that dates back more than 50 years.

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### COLOMBIA: WAR AND FORESTS

*By Manuel Rodríguez Becerra*

To what extent have environmental factors caused the war in Colombia or have they favoured or hindered that war? What consequences does the ongoing conflict have for the environment? How have illegal crops, a business closely linked to armed insurgency, affected our environment? Can conservation and sustainable use of the environment become assets to attain social stability and peace? These are but some of the questions raised in "War, Society and the Environment" (*Guerra, Sociedad y*