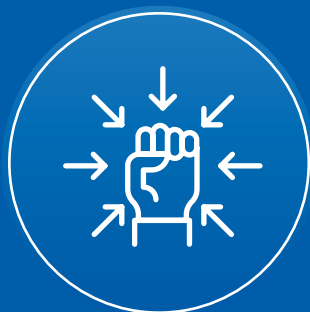


# RESILIENT RECOVERY

of rural indigenous  
communities in the  
face of the crisis



Una alianza de:



# Presentation



This policy brief is part of a series of three documents developed by the [Alianza Latinoamérica Sostenible](#) (ALAS, by its Spanish acronym), based on the systematization and monitoring of various community experiences during the year 2023 in Colombia, Chile and Mexico. These projects were accompanied by ALAS thanks to funding from the Ford Foundation, with the explicit objective of exploring **sustainable recovery** processes<sup>1</sup> in the face of the crisis generated by COVID-19. Special emphasis was placed on aspects that help build resilience.<sup>2</sup> The findings reported in these policy briefs seek to provide feedback for policies, programs or strategies to **promote just transition<sup>3</sup> and resilience in the face of the multiple crises humanity faces, such as climate, biodiversity and health crises**, at the local scale and, in particular, together with the communities of Latin America. To this end, these documents address three themes: rural indigenous communities, women and green jobs.

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- 1 Recovery strategy that promotes measures that reflect the interdependence of the economy, health and society with the environment to increase social inclusion and well-being of people, especially the most vulnerable.
  - 2 Resilience is understood as the “conditions that enable people to anticipate and respond to change, minimize the consequences of crises, recover, and seize new opportunities. It is not simply a matter of having the necessary resources at hand to do so, but also the willingness and ability to turn those resources into effective adaptive action” ([Cinner et al., 2018](#)).
  - 3 Just transition is that which aims at decarbonization, taking care that the changes that this implies and that generate negative effects on vulnerable populations are addressed in such a way that these groups are compensated and supported and no one is left behind. In addition, the aim is to ensure that the opportunities offered by the transition can be seized and maximized for these populations.

# 01

## Introduction



This paper reflects on how to build community resilience in rural indigenous communities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in the face of future crises. Community resilience is understood as the conditions<sup>4</sup> and processes that enable collectives to respond to adversities, strengthening or developing new resources. In order to achieve this, we explore how these communities have been affected by the pandemic and how their indigenous and/or rural condition has exacerbated these effects. It also identifies some challenges and opportunities for building resilience, based on the systematization of the experience of two community projects in communities in Mexico and Colombia.

These projects were developed in the first semester of 2023 with the objective of addressing part of the problems generated or intensified by the pandemic and promoting a sustainable and resilient recovery.

In the case of Mexico, work was carried out with six Nahua and Totonaca communities in the Sierra Norte of the State of Puebla to strengthen capacities in three areas: **1.** Productive strengthening; **2.** Food security; and **3.** Community savings. The project was developed in collaboration with the Instituto Poblano de Pueblos

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4 Three components can be recognized among these conditions: cultural knowledge, social capabilities and organizational strategies.

## Resilient recovery

of rural indigenous communities in the face of the crisis

Indígenas (IPPI by its Spanish acronym) and was implemented by the Agencia de Desarrollo Rural de la Sierra Norte. In the case of Colombia, the work was carried out with 30 indigenous youth from *Resguardo el Refugio* in the municipality of San José del Guaviare, capital of the department of Guaviare in northern Amazonia. The project sought to: **1.** recover an indigenous *chagra*;<sup>5</sup> **2.** expand a shed for laying hens; and **3.** develop skills in good environmental and marketing practices. It was implemented by the Asociación

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5 The *chagra* in the indigenous communities of the Colombian Amazon is a space provided by the communities for cultivating crops, and its main function is to provide food. This space is not only a pantry of products, since it fosters ecosystemic, social and spiritual relationships. The *chagra* management process integrates knowledge, know-how and practices that differ but also complement each other between women and men. Families in a community usually have several *chagras*; in most cases, a minimum of three *chagras* are managed according to the ecological calendar: one that has just been planted, one that is bearing fruit and a stubble field. [Gaia Amazonas, 2019](#)

de Autoridades Indígenas (ASOPA-MURIMAJSA by its Spanish acronym) and was monitored by the Instituto de Fomento Económico of Guaviare (IFEG, by its Spanish acronym).

Based on the reflections on the implementation of these two projects, recommendations were formulated emphasizing relevant aspects for the construction of public policies that promote community resilience.

Thus, these policies should consider a logic in which decision-making power is delegated to the communities, respecting the context and needs of each one; they should also adopt a flexible medium and long-term approach, explore areas of opportunity in the coordination of government levels and key stakeholders, as well as incorporate youth and women to ensure aspects of sustainability, innovation and inclusion.





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# 02

**What is the reality  
of indigenous  
communities  
in Mexico and  
Colombia?**



Mexico and Colombia have significant indigenous populations located mostly in rural areas. In Colombia, the 2018 Census counted 115 indigenous peoples comprising approximately 1.9 million people, or 4.4% of the country's population; 79% of which are located in rural areas. In Mexico, 68 indigenous peoples are recognized, comprising 23.2 million people, or 19% of the total population. More than 70% are located in rural areas.

Indigenous peoples have been the victims of discrimination since colonization, as their self-determination, culture and systems of government have been ignored and scorned. Until a few decades ago, States had refused to recognize ethnic plurality,<sup>6</sup> to create conditions to preserve it and to allow its full development. On the contrary, assimilation policies have been implemented to incorporate indigenous peoples into unifying national projects, imposing, for example, Spanish as the country's official language in the case of Colombia.

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6 In Colombia, cultural plurality was not recognized until the 1991 Political Constitution. Mexico, for its part, was recognized as a multicultural state in 1992.



**Indigenous peoples  
have been resilient**

for several centuries and have managed to overcome the adversities of colonization and coloniality. Future social, environmental and climatic crises of this century may present unprecedented challenges, such as the case of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Governments have assumed a paternalistic and welfarist role in which, through unilateral policies, they promote development projects that do not match the worldview and dynamics of indigenous peoples and, therefore, are not sustainable.

The failure of these policies has led indigenous communities to social marginalization, with significant deficiencies in terms of health, education and other public services. Opportunities for decent jobs are scarce and productive activities, particularly in agriculture and livestock, are carried out on a small scale, mainly for self-consumption or to generate a minimum income

for the family economy. Likewise, in several regions of both Mexico and Colombia, they face problems of insecurity related to organized crime groups, including drug trafficking. This context causes temporary or permanent migration to urban areas far from their communities or even to other countries.

Over time and thanks to the ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples, they have achieved recognition of their culture as part of pluricultural national identities, as well as their right to self-determination. However, in practice, they continue to face various structural barriers to

accessing better living conditions and their rights. This creates a scenario of great vulnerability for these peoples in the face of external shocks and crises, putting their survival as culturally unified peoples at risk. Therefore, recognizing the different challenges and conditions that cause this situation of greater vulnerability is key to setting and prioritizing policies that generate resilience in these communities in the face of future crises.

Although it is undeniable that indigenous peoples have been resilient for several centuries and have managed to overcome adversities of colonization and colonialism, the future social, environmental and climatic crises of this century may represent unprecedented challenges, as shown in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this sense, it is necessary, on the one hand, to place on the governmental agenda the development of public policies with a focus on resilience to face future crises; and, on the other, to emphasize that these types of policies should prioritize the populations that could be most affected by these contingencies, such as indigenous peoples. In addition, it should be clear that policies should be constructed by delegating decision-making to the communities and considering their needs and worldview so that they are relevant and sustainable.



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## Recognition of intersectionalities<sup>7</sup>

The creation of public policies for indigenous peoples must consider the intersectional dimension. In this way, those populations in the most vulnerable situations are identified in order to prioritize them and generate proposals in accordance with their needs. In the case of indigenous people in rural communities, they face daily challenges associated with their ethnic

condition and geographic location, in addition to other characteristics such as gender, age, disabilities, socioeconomic level, among others, which aggravate their conditions. The following are examples of two of these populations: young people and indigenous women.

### Indigenous women in Mexico

Indigenous women in rural areas are one of the groups that face the greatest challenges to their socioeconomic development, as they face more systemic disadvantages and discrimination than the general population. The [burden of unpaid work at home](#) and in the countryside, the patriarchal system where they live, and the fact that they do

<sup>7</sup> Intersectionality is a category of analysis to refer to the components that converge in the same case, multiplying disadvantages and discriminations. This approach makes it possible to look at problems from a holistic perspective, avoiding simplifying conclusions and thus, the approach to this reality.



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not own land, are among the main limitations to their economic self-sufficiency. They also face major barriers to participation in decision-making. Thus, even when they become landowners, they are not considered in community assemblies because they are women.

This translates into worse living conditions than people not impacted by these oppressive systems. A clear example of this is that in Mexico [in 2022, the poverty level of rural indigenous women was 73.1%, while that of non-indigenous men in urban areas was less than half, at 30.2%.](#)

### Indigenous youth in Colombia

In Colombia, the identity bases of indigenous peoples have been transformed and they are closer to urban areas and farther away from their original spaces, due to the mixture with “white” western customs, religious syncretism, the lack of protection of languages in schools, violence and the climate crisis, a situation that is aggravated by not having adequate protection of their customs by the State.

Indigenous youth in Colombia are mostly affected, either by recruitment by illegal armed groups or by economic necessity, since many of them migrate to urban areas where discrimination due to their ethnic and rural condition, as well as precarious access to quality services and unemployment, lead to problems such as drug use and identity crises that jeopardize the social cohesion of their communities.



The indigenous youth population has a high inactivity rate [of 62.5% for 2018, and an overall participation rate<sup>8</sup> \(OPR\) of 38%](#). Regarding the employed population, which among indigenous youth is [30.6%, 54% of them are self-employed, 17% work without remuneration<sup>9</sup> and 20%](#) are employed in companies. The differences with the non-ethnic youth population are significant, since for this group, [the OPR was 57.3% and the employment rate was 46.1%](#) which represents 15 percentage points above the indicators for the indigenous population in the country.

8 In Colombia, it is the percentage ratio between the economically active population working or seeking employment and the working-age population -which in rural areas is that over 10 years of age. This indicator reflects the pressure of the population on the labor market. [DANE, glossary of terms.](#)

9 This may correspond to those young people who are engaged in household chores or in agricultural and hunting activities within their reservations. [ILO, 2023.](#)

# 03

**What did indigenous communities face during the pandemic?**



There is little official information on what has happened in indigenous communities in the context of the pandemic. The testimonies and consultations carried out in the communities within the framework of the community projects (Sierra Norte de Puebla in Mexico and Department of Guaviare in Colombia) provide an overview of some of the most serious problems.

### Physical and mental health

At the beginning of the pandemic, the rural and isolated location of indigenous communities served as a barrier to contain the virus. However, the deficient conditions of public services in these populations increased the likelihood that once the virus entered their territories, care would be more precarious and the consequences more deadly.

In this context, family members who were working elsewhere lost their jobs and began to return to their communities of origin, which led to an increase in the number of contagions. The low access to quality medical services, added to the fear of entering hospitals due to the pandemic, led, in the case of Mexico, to a COVID-19 [case fatality rate of 11.8%](#); which is more than double the national average of 5.5%.



In the case of health expenditures, Mexico has an aggravating factor: in fact, in recent years, the coverage of public health services has been reduced, going from a rate of lack of access to health services of 16.2% in 2018 to 39.1% in 2022, representing 30.3 million people. Among them are people in the most vulnerable situations, such as indigenous people.

In the Sierra Norte de Puebla, the population remained incredulous during the beginning of the pandemic regarding the existence of the virus, which led to low adoption of health measures. With the increase in the number of contagions, this disbelief was reduced, which led to a high participation of the population in the vaccination campaigns.

In the case of the department of Guaviare, it is estimated that a total of 5,589 people were infected, of which 300 were indigenous (5.4% of the contagions). Less than 30% of the total population of the department was vaccinated. There is no information on the cause of this low percentage; it could be due to the lack of vaccines in the department, to difficulties in the process of delivery to the population or to the population's distrust of vaccines and of the health system in general.

In addition to the health effects related specifically to COVID-19 infections, the confinement generated effects in other aspects, since life in these communities is much less sedentary than in the cities; people are accustomed to walking and carrying out outdoor activities. When they were unable to do so, they reported feeling emotional discomfort and even problems of excess weight due to the lack of physical activity.



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## Reduced incomes and food insecurity

Local economies were strongly impacted by the slowdown in economic activities. In the case of the Sierra Norte de Puebla, people were unable to work in the countryside, sell their products or provide services. As mentioned above, several members of the indigenous communities are seeking employment outside their localities due to unemployment and, as a result of the confinement, many had to return to their communities of origin. This caused additional pressure on the family economy and generated an oversupply of labor in the communities.

In the department of Guaviare, family incomes were also reduced. In addition, the isolation of the *resguardos* made it difficult to access basic necessities and food security was severely impacted, as many of the ethnic territories do not produce all the food or provide the services that these populations need; a situation that led some people to beg in urban centers. The departure of young people to urban centers, where they are exposed to crime and drug addiction, has also intensified, as well as their participation in illicit activities, such as coca leaf scraping.



### **The challenge of online education**

Education is another critical area whose conditions have deteriorated in the context of the pandemic. In Mexico, the virtual education policy established meant that many indigenous children and young people were unable to continue their studies because they did not have the necessary technological resources or advice on how to use them. This led to school dropouts or a reduction in learning.

Similarly, in the case of Colombia, measures were established to provide virtual education through the Internet, a situation that highlighted the inequality in educational access of the country's student population. Indeed, the proportion of the indigenous population between the ages of 6 and 24 that does not have access to the Internet, according to the last census of 2018, was [95.5%](#); thus, virtual education further opened the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

## Indebtedness

In financial terms, the pandemic caused impoverished families to incur unforeseen expenses, such as the purchase of devices for virtual education, payment of Internet plans, medical expenses, among others. This situation led them to take out loans or buy what they needed in stores that operate deferred payment schemes, in both cases with high interest rates.

In the case of health expenses and given the proportion of the cost in relation to family income, these expenses can become catastrophic<sup>10</sup> or

even impoverishing.<sup>11</sup> Mexico has an aggravating factor: in fact, in recent years, the coverage of public health services has been reduced, going from a rate of lack of access to health services of 16.2% in 2018 to 39.1% in 2022, which represents 30.3 million people. Among them are the most vulnerable people, such as indigenous people.

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10 Health-related expenditure [greater than 30% of a household's ability to pay](#). The ability to pay is defined as the household's effective surplus of resources, which is measured by deducting from total household expenditure the subsistence expenditure, measured through food expenditure or a poverty line, and tax-financed health expenditure.

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11 Refers to a [health expenditure that causes a family to fall below the poverty line](#).

# 04

**How did these communities cope with the crisis?**



Faced with this adverse context, indigenous communities sought ways to address the problems they faced. The Alianza Latinoamérica Sostenible had the opportunity to accompany two of these initiatives in Mexico and Colombia. Both cases are presented below with a brief description of the territorial context in which they were implemented and the components they consider.

### **Case of the Sierra Norte de Puebla in Mexico: community resilience**

The Sierra Norte de Puebla is the region with the largest number of Nahuatl speakers in the country, being the most spoken indigenous language in Mexico. This region is also inhabited by Totonaca, Tepehua and Otomi people. The communities in this region are several hours away from the state capital, although they are close to some small urban areas. In general, these communities have high rates of marginalization, social deprivation, few employment opportunities and, in some cases, significant problems of insecurity.

The economy of these villages is mainly focused on primary activities of traditional crops for self-consumption, such as corn and beans, while coffee is the main commercial product. Production is

diverse and small-scale. Within the communities, handicrafts are made and sold and tourism services are offered. Because production is small-scale, there are no value chains. Crops are sold to intermediaries at a low price, leaving a minimal profit for the producers. This, coupled with the lack of other job opportunities at the local level, pushes the inhabitants -mainly men- to migrate temporarily or permanently to other cities or to the United States.

The project developed in Mexico seeks to respond to three of the main problems that arose and/or worsened as a result of the pandemic: income reduction, food insecurity and indebtedness.

Thus, the project had three main lines of action:

- 1. Productive strengthening:** through training in the production of agro-fertilizers and agro-pesticides, cultivation techniques, processing, transformation and marketing. The aim is to enable the inhabitants of indigenous communities to improve the quality of production, presentation and sale, so that they receive a better price for their products.
- 2. Food security:** with the promotion of backyard gardens, crop diversification and improved techniques. The aim is to ensure that families have the basics for their diet. In addition, we



**The project developed in Mexico seeks to promote backyard vegetable gardens, diversify crops and improve techniques. The aim is to ensure that families have the basics for their food supply.**



promoted traditional cuisine based on local inputs to encourage a diet compatible with production.

- 3. Community savings:** through training in financial education and the creation of community savings banks. It is expected to strengthen family finances and community savings, investment and trust. The resources saved will help families to be better prepared for crisis situations and to avoid having to resort to high-interest loans.

The project was developed in collaboration with the Instituto Poblano de Pueblos Indígenas (IPPI, by its Spanish acronym) and implemented by the Rural Development Agency of Sierra Norte. The Agency is a civil society organization with members of indigenous origin. It was created in 2005 with the objective of contributing to the development of the Nahua and Totonac peoples and communities in the region, mainly through training and the management of financing for local projects. Its main areas of work are: food security, strengthening the social fabric and productive projects oriented to the main production chains in the region (pepper, vanilla, cinnamon, coffee, citrus and corn).

### Case of the department of Guaviare in Colombia: rescuing ancestral knowledge

The department of Guaviare, gateway to the Colombian Amazon, is one of the most ethnically diverse territories, represented by approximately

16 indigenous communities. In this region, the indigenous population is highly threatened, as its jungle has been the scene of colonization and economic activities, particularly agriculture and livestock farming, which have devoured countless natural territories that are fundamental for the survival of the ethnic peoples and, as a result, have reduced the number of communities and eroded their language and traditions. To date, the indigenous peoples that remain in this region are trying to survive and conserve these areas.

It should be noted that the coca boom of the 1980s in the territory intensified land conflicts and increased the population's dispossession. As a result, children and young people today face greater marginalization and discrimination than their parents, as they do not live in their original territories,<sup>12</sup> do not have quality education or decent job opportunities, while their languages and customs are blurred in the context of illicit activities and the growth of urbanization.

In Colombia, the project with the indigenous community of the *Resguardo* El Refugio in

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12 It should be noted that the possession of land in Colombia by indigenous communities is of a collective nature and can take the form of a *resguardo* or other indigenous territorial entity. Several of these *resguardos* are not currently located in the same municipality from which the ethnic communities originate, due to episodes of violence that pushed these populations to flee from their territories -which at some point they were originally from and where their ancestors come from. In the case of the young people living in the *Resguardo* El Refugio, they belong to ethnic groups that are originally from other parts of the Amazon.



**The community of the resguardo assigned an area of land to 30 young people to encourage practices typical of their culture, such as the indigenous chagras, with which they seek to instruct the young people in fundamental knowledge in the cultivation and harvesting of crops.**



Guaviare was promoted by young people through youth leaders. Before the pandemic, there was an initiative to promote knowledge recovery processes to compensate for the effects of violence and the consequent loss of traditions. In the wake of the pandemic, and in a context in which the youngest members of the ethnic communities have abandoned their *resguardos* and homes in search of income, this initiative became even more relevant.

Thus, the project had three components:

**1. Recovery of ancestral knowledge:** The community assigned an area of land to

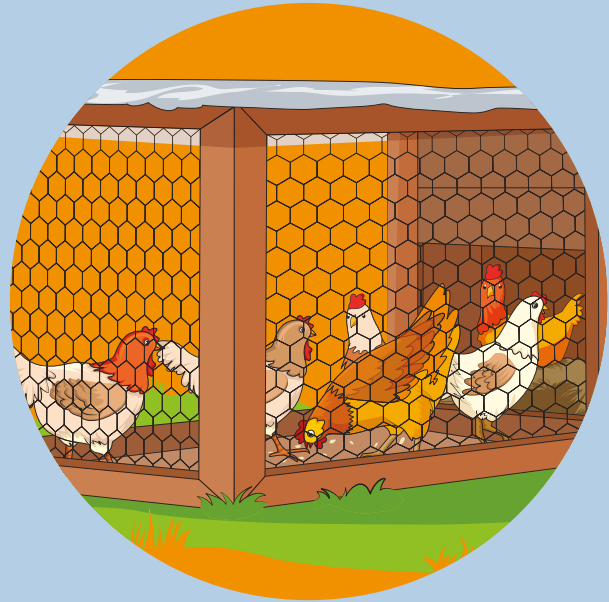
30 young people to encourage community practices such as the indigenous *chagras*, with which it seeks to instruct the young people in fundamental knowledge of cultivation and harvesting, in addition to leaving this space for production and thus increase food security for the young people and their families,

**2. Entrepreneurship and economic development:** Through the allocation and expansion of a shed with 200 laying hens for the production of eggs for households and external sales, the aim was to create economic opportunities to attract the young

population that had left the *resguardo* in search of income, and

- 3. Training and installed capacities:** Through training in sustainable practices and marketing channels, the aim is to strengthen knowledge for the management of the *chagra* and the shed, but also to understand how to promote the products they generate and promote them in commercial spaces.

The project presented here was led by the Asociación de Autoridades Tradicionales Indígenas - [ASOPAMURÎMAJSA](#), which represents four indigenous reservations located in the capital of the department of Guaviare, which bring together more than 10 indigenous peoples, including the Tucano, Piratapuyo, Desano, Cubeo, Yuruti, Guanano, Barasano, Siriano, Bara, Tuyuca, Carapana and Tatuyos ethnic groups. The Association was formed in 2007 by a group of mothers seeking the recovery of their culture following episodes of violence, dispossession and loss of traditions, thus triggering a reflection on their indigenous identity and the cultural elements that have been lost.



**In Colombia, project with the indigenous community of the *Resguardo* El Refugio in Guaviare was driven by young people through youth leaders. One of the components was the design and expansion of a 200 hen laying hen house for the production of eggs for households and external sales, aimed at creating economic opportunities to attract the young population that had left the *resguardo* in search of income.**

# 05

Reflections on opportunities and challenges for building resilience.



This section presents some reflections on noteworthy elements and challenges for the construction of community resilience in indigenous communities that seek to nurture the development of other projects or strategies that share the same objective.

### **Strengthening food security**

One of the great challenges -and also a major concern- in crisis contexts is to ensure food security. In this sense, rural populations have a great opportunity in terms of the production of basic crops for their diet, which is not a viable alternative in the cities. Although many families are accustomed to growing some crops for their own consumption (corn, beans, squash and other vegetables), this is usually considered a non-priority activity and lacks planning and technical elements to ensure that production is diverse, of high quality and can be considered as one of the main resources for meeting food needs.

Thus, production for self-consumption is usually considered as a sporadic complement to the family's diet, rather than as a strategic mechanism for its resilience. In recent years, in fact, and according to the testimonies of the people interviewed, this type of production had been reduced, while the consumption of products from outside the community had increased. However, the pandemic was a reminder of the importance of this type of practice in ensuring food security in times of crisis.

In other words, the pandemic served as a catalyst for renewed interest in production for self-consumption and in learning new techniques to

improve it. It also had an impact on a renewed enthusiasm for local gastronomy, which generates a sort of "virtuous circle" between production, food preparation and the enjoyment of its consumption. Needless to say, this activity generates economic and health benefits by reducing family expenses and promoting the consumption of better-quality food.

The main challenge related to production for self-consumption is to ensure that the interest and commitment to diverse and quality food production is maintained beyond crisis contexts and becomes a permanent resilience strategy. An important part of this challenge is for communities to recognize



**The pandemic served as a catalyst for renewed interest in production for self-consumption and in learning new techniques to improve it.**  
The main challenge is to ensure that it is sustained beyond crisis contexts and becomes a permanent resilience strategy.





the relevance - and also to adopt - the concept of resilience. It also involves the promotion of a diet based on local consumption, as well as the involvement of youth in this type of projects.

**Productive activities for income generation**

Given the lack of employment in the region (let alone well-paid employment), the production of various crops for commercialization is an economic alternative for many families; however, poor production, processing and marketing conditions prevent them from increasing their profits from these activities, which continue to be relatively marginal. Historically, this type of small-scale, non-value-added production is purchased

by intermediaries, who buy the products at a low price and then sell them at a higher price, keeping a significant part of the profit.

Strengthening productive activities creates a window of opportunity for income diversification, which reduces dependence on a single source of income and, with it, the risk of falling into poverty. For example, the pandemic crisis affected the income of urban migrants, who often constitute the most important source of family income. By having coffee, pepper or other crops, families have a modest but guaranteed resource. Income diversification is an economic resilience strategy, which can be defined as practices that reduce the economic vulnerability of individuals and families and, in particular, help them cope with shocks with economic impacts.

Although the barriers to improving production are important, they can be overcome to a large extent through technical assistance. As far as price is concerned, the only way to improve production is to transform or seek new marketing channels. Avoiding sales to intermediaries can only be achieved by grouping producers together to generate significant volumes of merchandise and negotiate directly with the companies at a better price. This process involves years of training, legal and administrative procedures, access to non-repayable financing, negotiations and positioning of the organization.

The community projects in Mexico and Colombia clearly demonstrate that indigenous communities are either already positioned in value chains (international in the case of Mexico) or have the resources and capacity to integrate into regional value chains (as in the case of egg production in Guaviare). This contradicts the traditional view of governments, which tend to consider indigenous communities as non-productive agents, excluded from the national economies and therefore subject to assistance programs rather than productive development.

### **Financial education and community savings**

Crisis situations commonly cause simultaneous impoverishment and extraordinary expenses. This generates severe stress in the family

economy, with the danger of the household falling into poverty or extreme poverty. In this context, the development of community savings funds, accompanied by financial education processes, is an interesting mechanism to reduce this type of negative effects.

Financial education strengthens family financial management skills and the processes of income planning, spending, saving and investment of resources. Likewise, the savings funds created in the communities of the Sierra Norte de Puebla can be seen as an investment. In effect, the capital saved is lent among the people of the community at a lower interest rate than that of the moneylenders, banks and stores; the profits created with this interest are re-distributed among the savers, becoming an extra income.

It should be noted that the creation of these funds has also had an impact on social cohesion. By grouping people together to form their funds (also called “cajas”), they develop trust and a sense of solidarity. It also encourages individual and community planning for the development of projects that can be financed in the medium and long term with the resources generated by these funds.

In many cases, the savings banks are made up of women; thus, they become safe spaces for sisterhood, organization, recreation and even commercial exchange. Due to the traditional dynamics of these communities, the formation of

SOCIOS	PARTICIPACION EN EL FONDO	INTERESES POR SOCIO
CARDIANAZ	4.59%	563.73
FELISA	2.45%	300.66
ALMA LITICA	2.48%	304.37
BARTOLA	21.22%	2602.90
SUSANA	0.84%	102.54
EMMA	1.94%	237.56
LUCIA	4.24%	581.36
LEONARDA	2.66%	326.64
CESILIA	4.32%	529.88
LILIANA	13.77%	1688.87
ALVARA	5.28%	648.87
ESPERANZA	5.28%	648.87
CUNETA	5.28%	648.87

SOCIOS	PARTICIPACION EN EL FONDO	INTERESES POR SOCIO
IRENE	8.20%	40,24.27
TERESA	15.35%	7,533.51
GUADALUPE	13.89%	6,819.26
VICTORIA	3.77%	1,849.80
VACILIZA	0.78%	374.46
MA. ANTONIA	12.92%	6,339.66
MA. DE JESUS	8.56%	4,100.00
MA. FRANCISCO	2.01%	
AMAPALD		

9079.00

this type of space, outside of a functional context such as the savings bank, can be complicated and even frowned upon by men. Likewise, the perception of earnings on savings clearly empowers women, which helps their recognition as participants in decision-making within the household.

There are several challenges associated with setting up such funds. A large part of the success of these funds lies in the trust among their participants; the breakdown of this



**Financial education strengthens family financial management skills** and the processes of planning income, spending, saving and investment of resources.

trust could generate a major blow to the social fabric and a bad track record that could block new attempts in the future; therefore, it is important to establish clear and transparent rules and control mechanisms, as well as to build capacities for conflict mediation. Another relevant challenge is to achieve independent management of the funds by the communities,

since in some cases, people do not know how to read, write or do calculations and depend on third parties for their efficient administration.

Finally, the physical management of resources can represent an important area of risk, since significant amounts of cash can be handled; their transfer to a bank branch in contexts of insecurity due to organized crime is compromised.

### **Recovery of traditions and ancestral knowledge**

In the *Resguardo* El Refugio (Colombia), the leaders and elders of the indigenous communities are the most concerned about the process of recovering ancestral knowledge. In fact, the

transmission of this knowledge to the new generations depends on it and, consequently, the survival of their cultural identity.

The recovery of knowledge in these indigenous communities ranges from re-teaching their language to teaching the name of plants and fruits essential for the survival of the communities, in which the relationship with nature is fundamental. However, the proximity of indigenous territories to urban centers, and the consequent integration of indigenous peoples into the dynamics of the cities, constitute a constant threat to the transmission and recovery of knowledge.



In this sense, within the framework of the project implemented, priority has been given to traditions that are in line with the lived needs of the younger generations, such as the recovery of the indigenous *chagras*; the knowledge of the *piamasá*<sup>13</sup>-*blancos* has also been incorporated, as is the case of training in marketing channels, so that the products of the *chagras* can be used both for self-consumption and for trade.

The inhabitants of indigenous territories are victims of discriminatory discourse about their economic activities. Indeed, it is common to hear that their practices are not marketable or that their activities are not classified as productive in an economic context based on the Western model. However, communities such as El

Refugio are aware of the capacity of their land to produce non-timber fruits that are sought after by the national and international market. They also have the knowledge to transform these fruits and other natural products into dishes that are becoming increasingly important for tourism and into handicrafts that are cultural symbols of the country.

Supporting knowledge recovery processes helps both to strengthen the social fabric within the communities, but also as a strategy to strengthen alliances between the communities themselves and with external communities, including economic organizations whose interest is focused on acquiring what the Amazon can sustainably offer. These types of initiatives and ventures can be managed by young people and have an impact on the generation of community and economic resilience in the face of future crises.

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13 In Syrian language, Eastern Tucano people.

# 06

## Recommendations



- 1. Resilience: a development agenda.** The building of community resilience requires the promotion and implementation of formative and participatory processes in the communities, which will allow the development of strategies and relevant resources to respond to crisis situations. Community project agents should play the leading role, given the challenges and capacities of their agency. In other words, a community resilience policy should be inserted into a community development policy, taking ingredients and instruments from the development world and proposing its own methodologies.
- 2. Designing public policies with cultural relevance and an intersectional approach.** For resilience policies to be useful and sustainable, they must be formulated by the communities. The design and implementation should be actively led by people from the communities, as part of their local development plans or similar processes. In addition, the intersectional dimension of the problems should always be considered, in order to identify and prioritize the most vulnerable groups.



**In some communities, political and social dynamics** still limit women's involvement in different aspects of community life. Women's involvement in different aspects of community life. It is not possible to conceive real resilience strategies that do not take into account their vision and specific needs.



- 3. Recognize the need for flexible policies with a medium and long-term vision.** The diversity of territories and challenges posed by future crises generates a high degree of uncertainty about their magnitude, intensity and temporality. For this reason, policies related to resilience must be flexible and “failure-tolerant”. Likewise, it must be clear that building resilience is not a short-term process or one that is in line with the administrative timeframe of governments. Therefore, a medium and long-term vision is required that positions this need as part of its permanent agenda and translates into a constant investment in the territories.
- 4. Promote coordination between the different levels of government.** Initiatives of this nature should be promoted with a local focus, but due to their complexity and the large amount of resources they require, coordination and support from other levels of government is key to their success. Also, at times there may be overlapping programs or initiatives that conflict in some way and end up diminishing their impact. The articulation of the isolated or fragmented efforts of the different agencies, and even collaboration with other actors such as civil society organizations or academia, can generate important benefits for the collaborative improvement of initiatives and the strategic use of resources.

**5. Promote youth leadership to promote sustainability and innovation in resilience initiatives.** Several of the challenges identified for the generation of resilience are associated with the difficulty of ensuring that projects are maintained beyond the specific interventions of governments or other organizations, as well as the need to incorporate new capacities from the projects and renew some of their approaches, since, in terms of resilience in the face of the crises of this century, practically everything has yet to be invented. In some regions, youth participation in these initiatives is low, largely because they are not considered in decision-making due to their age. This further reduces their interest

and jeopardizes the continuity of the projects in the medium and long term. Therefore, it is essential to develop strategies that promote the incorporation of this population group.

**6. Promote the participation of women in decision-making to ensure an inclusive resilience strategy.** In some communities, political and social dynamics still limit women's involvement in different aspects of community life. It is not possible to conceive real resilience strategies that do not consider their vision and specific needs. For this reason, their active and free participation in the construction of this type of projects must be guaranteed, without exposing them to reprisals from men.



### **About this document:**

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