



**THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INEQUALITY: YOUTH, PEACE
AND SECURITY IN THE AMERICAS
MAPP/OAS**

TRAINING SCHOOL OF EMPIRICAL ARTS – RESOLVE TO BUILD PEACE

***RURAL SETTLEMENT AREA OF ASPASICA, MUNICIPALITY OF LA PLAYA DE BELÉN
CATATUMBO REGION - COLOMBIA***

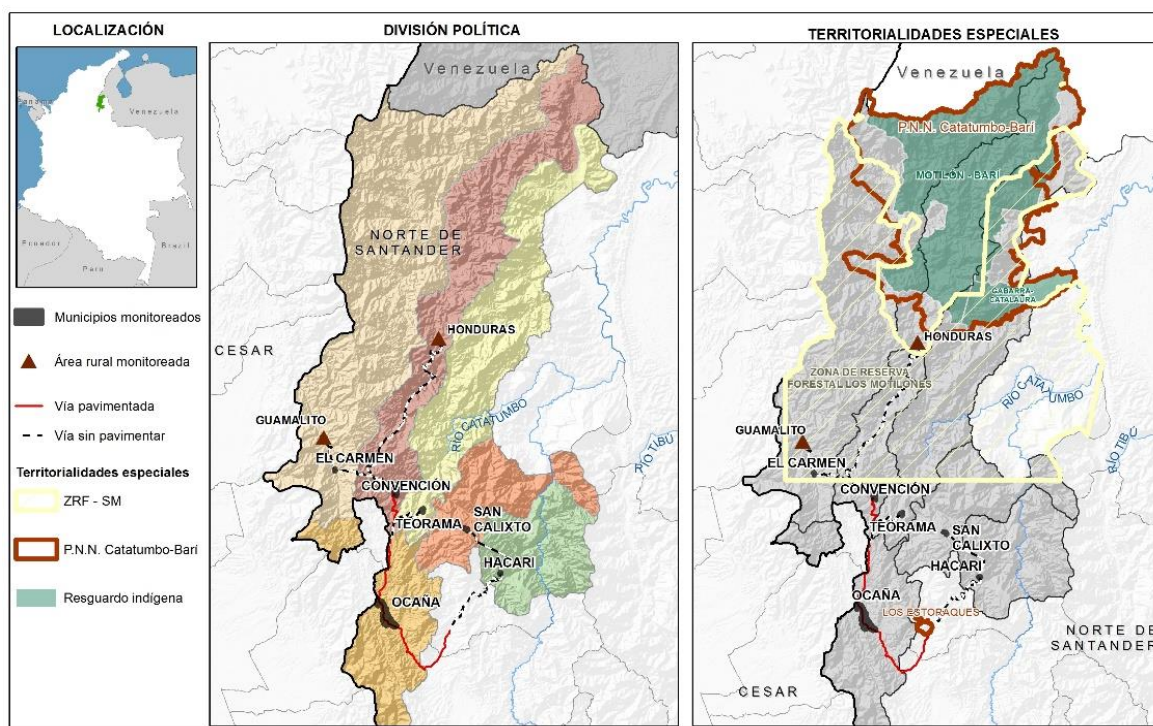
***A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRESS STUDY ON YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY MANDATED BY SECURITY
COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2250 (2015)***

2016

INTRODUCTION – AN OVERVIEW OF THE CATATUMBO REGION

1. GENERAL CONTEXT

MAP 1. CATATUMBO REGION - COLOMBIA



Organización de los Estados Americanos **Mapp-OEA**
Misión de Apoyo al Proceso de Paz Colombia

SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE MAPP/OAS

The Catatumbo Region is located in the Department of Norte de Santander in the northeastern part of Colombia; it borders Venezuela to the east and north, and the Colombian Department of Cesar to the west. It is one of the Colombian regions that, apart from having a strategic location by its immediate proximity to an international border, are interconnected to the northern and central parts of the country. The Catatumbo Region constitutes approximately 50% of the Department's entire territory, and is made up by 11 municipalities¹ with similar social, economic, geographic and cultural characteristics. Additionally, the region possesses invaluable natural resources and extremely rich in biodiversity. In this region, the Unique Nature Area of Los Estoraques is located in the municipality of La Playa de Belén – the urban center of this locality is considered national heritage. Additionally, in this region, the Forest Reserve Zone Los Motilones is located, as well as the indigenous reservations² of the Barí Catalaura and Motilón Barí, and also the National Park

¹ The 11 municipalities are: Ábrego, Convención, El Carmen, El Tarra, Hacaré, La Playa, Ocaña, San Calixto, Sardinata, Teorama and Tibú.

² The indigenous reservations (*Spanish: resguardos indígenas*) are special legal and sociopolitical entities formed by an indigenous community or a fraction of an indigenous community, which has a communal property title, possesses its own territory and manages both the territory and the community, organized on the basis of the indigenous jurisdiction and/or its cultural guidelines and traditions (Sentence C-921/07. Constitutional Court of Colombia)

Catatumbo-Barí, which continues towards the north and the Venezuelan National Park Serranía del Perijá. Similarly, the region has invaluable oil and coal resources which have been used in order to implement an economic development model based on energy and mining³. Despite of its strategic position with an international border and the great potential for commercial exchange and interconnectivity with the northern and central parts of Colombia, the region has remained marginalized and isolated from the developments in the political, economic and administrative center of the country. This has resulted in scarce state presence, in terms of government institutions as well as sufficient and satisfactory provision of goods and basic services for the population.

The Catatumbo Region has approximately 282.132 inhabitants and the population is divided by age group as shown in Figure 1. On average, the young people aged 20-29 represent 14-15% of the population in each municipality and 15.77% of the total population in the region. Men are a majority in this age group, making up 8.2% of the total population, while the women make up 7.4%.

FIGURE 1. POPULATION DATA BY AGE AND GENDER – CATATUMBO REGION

Municipality	Age (Years)								
	0-19		20-29		30-69		>70		Total
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Ábrego	7.969	7.847	2.872	2.771	7.268	7.176	972	1.122	37.997
Convención	2.780	2.616	1.160	1.002	2.793	2.472	390	356	13.569
El Carmen	3.140	2.945	1.172	990	2.643	2.365	400	350	14.005
El Tarra	2.783	2.600	1.025	915	1.828	1.495	160	151	10.957
Hacarí	2.589	2.534	1.082	855	1.824	1.466	146	161	10.657
La Playa	1.580	1.564	639	599	1.848	1.663	314	339	8.546
Ocaña	18.461	17.512	7.372	7.025	20.524	22.305	2.029	3.001	98.229
San Calixto	3.392	3.188	1.401	1.050	2.207	1.844	207	225	13.514
Sardinata	5.425	4.817	2.056	1.708	4.213	3.542	462	409	22.632
Teorama	5.393	5.128	1.907	1.735	3.630	3.072	356	303	21.524
Tibú	9.040	8.282	3.223	2.905	6.234	5.642	680	496	36.502
Total	62.552	59.033	23.909	21.555	55.012	53.042	6.116	6.913	288.132

SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE MAPP/OAS BASED ON DATA RETRIEVED FROM DANE, POPULATION PREDICTION OF 2015.

More than half of the 288.132 inhabitants live in rural areas (48%)⁴, where the majority of the population is considered to have the most Unsatisfied Basic Needs (*Spanish*: NBI)⁵. For instance, in rural communities belonging to municipalities such as Hararí, El Tarra and San Calixto, people live in precarious conditions where the deficit of basic needs is over 80% (see Figure 2). In this sense, 79 out of each 100 citizens in the municipality of Hararí are considered poor; while in the municipalities of El Tarra and San Calixto 73 out of each 100 citizens live in poverty.

FIGURE 2. UNSATISFIED BASIC NEEDS IN THE CATATUMBO REGION

³ In the Catatumbo Region, the Colombian Petroleum Company (ECOPETROL) has operations through the Caño Limón-Coveñas oil pipeline system, the most representative of the area and one of the most important ones in the country, since it stretches from the Eastern regions to the West.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Unsatisfied Basic Needs (*Spanish*: NBI). This is a measurement used by the Colombian government that seeks to determine if the basic needs of the population are covered. Groups that do not reach a set minimum threshold are classified as poor. The simple indicators selected are: Inadequate housing, Homes with critical overcrowding, Dwellings with inadequate services, Homes with high economic dependence, Homes with children of school age who do not attend school. (Source: www.dane.gov.co)

General Context			
Population	15.164	SISBEN Population ⁶ (2004)	6.183
Men	7.430	Economically active population	8.685
Women	7.696	Seeded agricultural hectares (2008)	5.267
Social Context			
Unsatisfied basic needs (2012)	68,67%	Multidimensional Poverty Index	96,2
Education coverage (2014)	15,3%	Illiteracy rate > 15 (2005)	16,9%
Kiosco Vive Digital ⁷	8	Aqueduct coverage (2005)	34,13%
Quantitative housing deficit (2005)	5,7%	Qualitative housing deficit (2005)	73,3%
Child mortality (2011)	27,6%	DTP Vaccination	100%
Municipality	Municipal center	Rural area	Total
Ábrego	36,19%	58,74%	48,44%
Convención	21,81%	62,40%	45,10%
El Carmen	31,06%	74,70%	66,53%
El Tarra	50,32%	87,10%	73,11%
Hacarí	37,73%	85%	79,18%
La Playa	13,89%	55,56%	50,83%
Ocaña	21,59%	57,54%	26,16%
San Calixto	44,55%	80,28%	73,89%
Sardinata	28,97%	70,67%	53,30%
Teorama	34,74%	60,10%	56,53%
Tibú	40,31%	67,22%	56,76%

SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE MAPP/OAS BASED ON DATA RETRIEVED FROM DANE: "COLOMBIA. UNSATISFIED BASIC NEEDS BY TOTAL, MUNICIPAL CENTER AND SURROUNDINGS, ACCORDING TO MUNICIPALITY AND NATIONAL, RESULTS FROM THE 2005 GENERAL CENSUS".

In relation to access to education, only 2.7% of the inhabitants of the 11 municipalities have some sort of higher education, this is contrasted by the national average of 11.9%. The illiteracy rate among people over the age of 15-years is 30% - almost 21.6 percentage points above the national average, which is 8.4%.⁸ "In municipalities such as Hacarí, San Calixto, and Teorama, young people don't finish secondary school (...) mainly because the rural schools only have curricula and teachers up until the fifth and ninth grades"⁹. In addition to this, the MAPP/OAS may conclude that education opportunities are precarious in various parts of the region, with education facilities made out of wooden boards and without legal right to the land it's built on, oftentimes without safe drinking water or electricity, and only one teacher per village with children from both elementary and secondary school in the same classes.

In addition to this, as is shown in Figure 3, the gross coverage rate for secondary school in 6 out of the 11 municipalities in Catatumbo is below 50%. "The fact that children don't remain in the education system is [oftentimes] related to things such as forced recruitment of children by non-

⁶ SISBEN is short for the Beneficiary Identification System for social security used in Colombia.

⁷ Kiosco Vive Digital is a governmental service that provides rural areas with internet access centers and free computer training.

⁸ Results General Census 2005 and the estimation for 2011.

⁹ Local Coordination Team. Department of Norte de Santander. Regional Briefing. July 2016.

https://umaic.org/briefings/Norte_de_Santander.pdf Retrieved on January 17, 2017.

state armed groups (...) early entrance into the labor market and adolescent pregnancy, among other factors that result in high levels of children dropping out of school”¹⁰.

FIGURE 3. GROSS COVERAGE RATE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL AND ILLITERACY RATE IN THE CATATUMBO REGION

Municipality	Gross coverage rate for secondary school (2015)	Illiteracy rate among people over the age of 15 (2005)
Ábrego	41,1%	27,2%
Convención	56,2%	29%
El Carmen	59,7%	36,4%
El Tarra	39,0%	36,5%
Hacarí	14,8%	36,9%
La Playa	53,7%	35,1%
Ocaña	86,6%	15,7%
San Calixto	13,1%	33,7%
Sardinata	47,2%	20,7%
Teorama	25,4%	34,9%
Tibú	55,9%	24,4%

SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE MAPP/OAS BASED ON DATA RETRIEVED FROM THE NATIONAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT (DNP). “RECORDS ON TERRITORIAL CHARACTERISTICS”.

With regards to the above mentioned issues and with the aim to support young people who live in poverty and conditions of vulnerability that put their continued upper secondary, vocational or university studies at risk, the Colombian government has a program called “Youth in Action” carried out by the Administrative Department for Social Prosperity (DPS). Through this program, the government provides conditioned monetary transfers, called TMC¹¹, in order to support young people in conditions of vulnerability access higher education. Nevertheless, despite the particular conditions of vulnerability in the Catatumbo Region, this program has only been implemented in 1 out of the region’s 11 municipalities - in the municipality of Ocaña the program has reached a total of 2.037 adolescents, which corresponds to 14.14% of the total amount of adolescents in the municipality, according to official numbers from 2015.

FIGURE 4. BENEFICIARIES OF THE YOUTH IN ACTION PROGRAM IN THE CATATUMBO REGION 2015

Municipality	Beneficiaries of the Youth In Action program (adolescents with monetary incentives in 2015)
Ábrego	0
Convención	0
El Carmen	0
El Tarra	0
Hacarí	0
La Playa	0
Ocaña	2.037
San Calixto	0
Sardinata	0
Teorama	0

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ TMC is the amount of money that the participant of the Youth in Action Program receives once it has fulfilled the commitments that condition the delivery of the same. Synonym of incentive or monetary stimulus. Taken from: Operational Manual Young people in action. June 2016.

Tibú	0
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SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE MAPP/OAS BASED ON DATA RETRIEVED FROM THE NATIONAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT (DNP). "RECORDS ON TERRITORIAL CHARACTERISTICS".

Overall, the Catatumbo Region presents high poverty levels, high unemployment rates¹², a large percentage of students who drop out of school, poor health services, low education coverage, poor road infrastructure, especially poor rural road-building, as well as scarce access to communications and the internet¹³, among others. These factors have resulted in particular conditions of vulnerability for the region's inhabitants, along with a background of historic conflicts that are directly related with the agriculture sector, land ownership, illicit crops - more specifically the coca cultivation, which currently is an important income source for many of the inhabitants in the rural areas of the department.

According to the latest report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime¹⁴, "In Catatumbo there were less than 500 hectares of coca in 2006; in 2010, it was reported that there were close to 1.900 hectares; since that year, the growth rate has increased and in 2015 some 11.527 hectares were reported", this means that the region is now the second region after Tumaco, located in the Department of Nariño, with the highest rate of coca cultivation hectares in Colombia.

In addition to this, the agricultural projects are generally not sustainable and therefore, they don't constitute a constant source of income for the rural population. Some of these issues lie in production and trade problems, commercial intermediaries, low purchase prices on agricultural products, the poor road infrastructure and the peasants' limited access to financial resources.

2. THE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE CATATUMBO REGION

The Catatumbo Region is considered an area of geostrategic interest for the different illegal armed actors, who have taken advantage of the weak state presence and the advantages provided by its proximity to the international border in order to consolidate dynamics based on illicit economies. This region is considered an enclave and part of the corridor of illicit crop trafficking, contraband, hydrocarbon theft and as a connection to the Venezuelan border with regions such as the south of the Department of Cesar and the south of the Department of Bolivar - and from there with other regions of Colombia.

Since the late 1970s to the early 1980s guerrilla groups have consolidated a significant and permanent presence in the region. Initially, the National Liberation Army (ELN), entered the Catatumbo Region seeking to control the oil economy of the Caño-limón-Coveñas pipeline through attacks against the oil infrastructure, something which has caused serious damage to the environment as crude oil leaked into the rivers and streams from which the communities retrieve their water supplies.¹⁵

¹² The unemployment rate in the last two years has remained above 12% in the department of Norte de Santander. By 2015, according to DANE, the department's unemployment rate was 12.5%.

¹³ According to data from the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications of Colombia (2015), the average internet coverage in the municipalities of Catatumbo ranges from 1% to 2%.

¹⁴ July 2016. "Colombia: Monitoring of territories affected by illicit crops 2015".

¹⁵ In addition to the attacks on the oil infrastructure, this guerrilla group carries out practices such as extortion and kidnapping, which have been the basis for its financing.

Moreover, the People's Liberation Army (EPL), entered the region in the early years of the 1980s, and although the Colombian Government carried out a process of negotiation with the guerrilla that resulted in its demobilization in 1991, the Catatumbo Libardo Mora Toro Front of the EPL declared itself dissident and did not take part in the process, evidencing its presence in the region, mainly in the municipalities of Hacarí, San Calixto and El Tarra.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP), established itself in the region in the mid-1980s, with the Front 33 "Mariscal Antonio José de Sucre", the Columns Móbiles Antonia Santos and Ruiz Barí, and the Companies May 29, Iván Ríos and Catatumbo Resistencia. The guerrilla's entrance in the Catatumbo Region occurred as part of the politico-military strategy for expansion and consolidation of this armed group throughout the national territory¹⁶.

With regards to this, the Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Colombian Vice President's Office has confirmed on various occasions in several reports that:

"(...) Since the beginning of the 1980s, the Department of Norte de Santander has seen a very active guerrilla presence, which has sought to benefit from the strategic advantages granted by its location on the border with Venezuela, its oil potential, coca production and the corridors that interconnect the east with the north of the country. Likewise, the guerrilla's advancements in the department are closely linked to the fact that most of the territory is mountainous¹⁷".

The paramilitaries entered the region in the 1990's and consolidated their presence in the end of the same decade through the Catatumbo Block of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC in Spanish) orders to: "confront, combat and counteract militarily the armed and unarmed guerrillas, as well as those guerrillas uniformed and dressed as civilians. (...) The entrance of the paramilitaries was a deliberate and quick invasion that took down civilians in its path as it spread terror"¹⁸ among the civilian population. In between the years of 1997 and 2004 began the great exodus of massacres in the area, along with massive displacements, and the upsurge of war in the region, in which the civil population was the most affected¹⁹.

In the year 2005, the demobilization of the AUC took place, and with it the demobilization of the Catatumbo Block that was present in the area. However, soon after this process new armed groups and organized criminal groups (GAO/GDO is the term used by the Colombian government), which still have a presence in different parts of the national territory and specifically in the Catatumbo Region.

Thus, this constant presence of non-state armed groups has caused and continues to cause serious harm to the civilian population, among others: selective killings, kidnappings, forced recruitment of children and adolescents, extortion, threats, forced displacement, disappearances, presence of anti-personnel mines, restrictions on mobility²⁰, Antipersonnel Mines (MAP), other explosive devices like unexploded ordnance (MUSE) and improvised explosive devices (AEI), mainly

¹⁶ Since 2012, this guerrilla group is in the process of negotiating with the national government. During the year 2015, they decreed a unilateral ceasefire, which continues to date, and which has allowed a decrease in the damages caused by this guerrilla group to the civilian population.

¹⁷ Observatory of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. "Current Overview of Norte de Santander". Bogota Colombia. May 2002.

¹⁸ National Center for Historical Memory. Licensed to move. Massacres and territorial reconfiguration in Tibú, Catatumbo, Bogotá, CNMH, 2015.

¹⁹ According to the Single Victims Registry, between 1997 and 2004, a total of 128,256 victims were presented, this means more than 50% of the total number of victims registered for the region (214,008).

²⁰ In some municipalities in the region illegal armed groups impose restrictions on mobility from 9 at night to 5 in the morning.

in rural areas; also the population is stigmatized²¹ by all armed groups are present in the territory, among others²².

According to the Single Victims Registry²³, 214,008 of the 8,022,919 registered victims of the armed conflict – recognized by the Colombian State in court on December 1, 2016 – are from the Catatumbo Region. Out of these, some 107,704 are men; 104,596 are women; 33 people with diverse sexual orientation, identity and gender expression; and 1,675 did not report their gender (see Table No. 5). Furthermore, 46,552 victims were between 18 and 28 years old at the time of being victimized – which represents 21.75% of the total number of victims in the region.

**FIGURE 5. VICTIMS OF THE ARMED CONFLICT
CATATUMBO REGION**

Municipality	Men	Women	LGBTI	Don't report gender or sex	Total number of victims of the armed conflict
Ábrego	4.644	4.503	1	51	9.199
Convención	10.409	10.008	1	157	20.575
El Carmen	5.303	5.023	4	85	10.411
El Tarra	10.979	10.476	3	209	21.668
Hacarí	5.344	5.502	1	88	10.937
La Playa	3.333	3.196	1	45	6.575
Ocaña	7.980	7.978	5	128	16.091
San Calixto	7.153	6.775	1	312	14.241
Sardinata	8.025	7.803	1	98	15.927
Teorama	9.308	9.406	6	154	18.874
Tibú	35.226	33.926	9	348	69.510
Total	107.704	104.596	33	1.675	214.008

SOURCE: SINGLE VICTIMS REGISTRY (REGISTRO ÚNICO DE VÍCTIMAS – RUV). SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT FOR VICTIM SUPPORT AND REPARATIONS (UARIV), COURT DECEMBER 1, 2016.

During the two last years, 2015 and 2016, young people between the ages of 18 and 28 have represented 20.16% and 22.28% of the total population affected by the violence in the region. According to the Single Victims Registry, in 2015 there were a total of 11,680 people in the Catatumbo Region who suffered some kind victimizing act during that year, out of which 2,355 were young people between the ages of 18 and 28. During the year of 2016, a total of 2,216 victims were registered out of whom 583 were young people between 18 and 28 years old. The most frequent forms of victimization were related to threats and forced displacement.

However, through the monitoring efforts of the MAPP/OAS, the Mission may conclude that one of the most worrying effects on young people in the region is the persistent risk of recruitment by illegal armed groups present in the territory. In many cases, the lack of opportunities to continue higher education, the difficulties in accessing formal employment and the destruction of their

²¹ With regard to the stigmatization of communities, they recognize that they have been constantly victimized in two ways, given that when there is a presence of the Public Force in the territories; guerrillas point to the population as collaborators of the military and/or the police, in some cases the civilians are forced to move or live under threats. On the other hand, some leaders have been singled out by local and national institutions for having an ideological and political affinity with the guerrilla groups, thus hindering their participation in some political and/or social fora.

²² During 2016, the MAPP/OAS has been able to conclude that both the ELN and the EPL have reinforced the control mechanisms they exercise over the civilian population in order to avoid infiltration, punish those considered as alleged collaborators of the Public Force and impose sanctions against people who contravene the regulations imposed in order to state an example, as well as to punish those who are supposedly guilty for crimes such as theft or drug abuse.

²³ <http://cifras.unidadvictimas.gov.co/Home/Dinamico> (Accessed: January 20, 2017)

expectations on life due to the armed conflict are factors that have led them to become part of these groups. In addition, the lack of spaces and opportunities for recreation, training in the arts and sports among others, exacerbates their vulnerability, exposing them to the risk of becoming part of the illegal economy linked to illicit crops, or to links with illegal armed groups.

In addition, several of the young people in the region suffer serious psychosocial effects as a result of the armed conflict, and many of them have been exposed to traumatic events, which result in behavioral problems and has limited their psychological and emotional development, which in turn limits them in the construction of their life project. According to a 2015 report on these issues in Catatumbo, prepared by the National Centre for Historical Memory: "The psychological and emotional effects in children and young people produced by the violence (...) are reflected in aggressive attitudes and school abandonment".²⁴ Similarly, it has been found that suffering traumatic events such as forced displacement leads to "breakage of their social networks and relations, both the immediate and secondary ones, something which [has led to] a lack of support in their physical, emotional, moral and cognitive development"²⁵, as well as a lack of spaces for participation and training.

Given that the Catatumbo is one of the regions that historically have suffered the most and continues to suffer from the current conflict in Colombia, and in virtue of the Mission's current mandate, the MAPP/OAS has continuously supported the peacebuilding efforts in the region. Taking into account the special conditions of vulnerability of young people and the importance of strengthening their capacities, potential and independence; support them in restoring their social fabrics and their life projects; as well as overcome feelings of mourning, fears, hatred, guilt, as essential elements for peacebuilding and strengthening of democracy in Colombia – the Mission supports and accompanies the initiative "*Training School of Empirical Arts. Resolve to Build Peace – Catatumbo Region*". The aim of the training school is to help increase the resilience²⁶ of the rural young population facing threats and the constant risk of recruitment by illegal armed groups present in the territory. In addition to this, the school seeks to open spaces for reflection, mourning and participation for young people in an independent community space that allows for dealing with peacebuilding issues. In this sense, secure spaces for dialogue and emotional liberation are created, which in turn allow the participants to strengthen their leadership skills in issues related to peacebuilding and a culture of peace.

THE ROLE OF THE INITIATIVE SUPPORTED BY MAPP/OAS

WHAT IS THE INITIATIVE ABOUT?

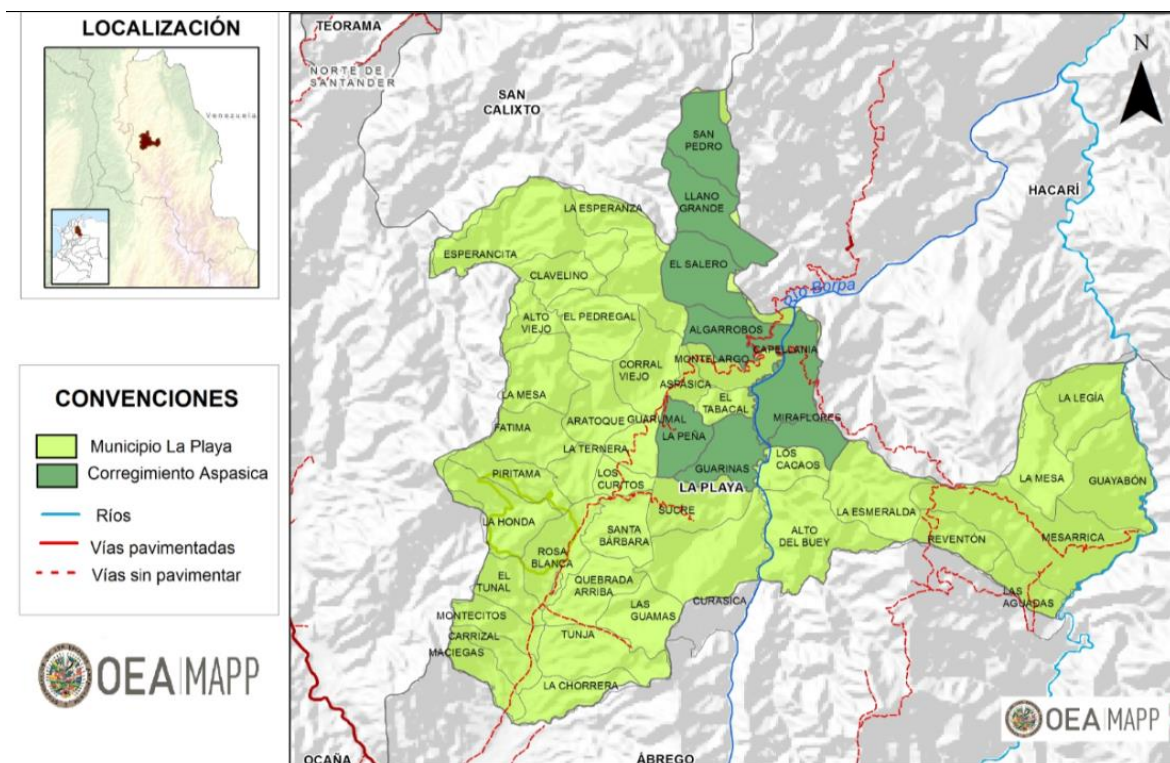
The *Training School of Empirical Arts* is a project that moves throughout the Catatumbo Region and aims to sow a seed of love for art in the young people of the region, teaching them another option for life, through the implementation of a methodology called Resolve to Build Peace, which consists in guiding people, and especially those who have been victims of the internal armed conflict, to explore their abilities, regain faith, self-confidence and invites them to discover their fears and explore their strengths through art (poetry, storytelling, dance, performing arts, acting, painting, among others).

²⁴ National Center for Historical Memory. Licensed to move. Massacres and territorial reconfiguration in Tibú, Catatumbo, Bogotá, CNMH, 2015. p. 134.

²⁵ Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparation to the Victims. Subdivision of Participation. Differential approach for young victims.

²⁶ This means a combination of factors that allow a human being, to face and overcome the problems and adversities of life, and build upon them.

**MAP NO. 2. MUNICIPALITY OF LA PALAYA DE BELÉN, RURAL SETTLEMENT AREA OF ASPASICA
CATATUMBO REGION – COLOMBIA**



SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE MAPP/OAS

The project is led by a woman who is a victim of the armed conflict and who found the methodology to be good way for supporting the emotional recovery, confidence and self-esteem of young people in the region. In 2011, the project was in its initial phase and the methodology was being applied in some communities in the city of Cúcuta, capital of the Department of Norte de Santander. In 2016, the project reached Aspasica (see map No. 2), more specifically to the *Rural Youth Home*²⁷, it arrived in the Municipality of La Playa de Belén as an itinerant pilot project in the Catatumbo Region.

The initiative includes guided artistic works, as well as training workshops in poetry, dance, visual arts and performing arts for six months, often weekly. By the end of the workshops and art sessions, the idea is to have a presentation or performance of the work. Through this work, spaces of exchange between these young people and other students of the region are created that allow for deconstruction of the different stigmas that fall on them as a result of the internal armed conflict. This exchange takes place through the preparation of works of art or workshops of

²⁷ The "Rural Youth Home" is composed of 38 children and adolescents, of which 28 are girls and 10 are boys. This center functions as a shelter for children, adolescents and young people coming from the rural area of the municipality of La Playa and Hacarí. The home makes it possible for the children and adolescents to stay in school, without this shelter they would have to quit school by the end of their primary education. In addition, the home offers opportunities for vocational training through agricultural production projects, in information technology and human rights, among others.

reading and poetry, as well as through horizontal exchanges of training – peer-to-peer – on new artistic techniques learned as a part of the initiative.

PHOTOS FROM WORKSHOPS

POETRY WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



SCENIC ARTS WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



PAINTING WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



PAINTING WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



DRAWING WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



DANCE WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



DRAMA WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



DRAMA WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA



VISUAL ARTS WORKSHOP. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016



The theme of the works and workshops are carefully selected by the tutors and aim particularly to engage the participants in issues related to human rights, coexistence, democracy and dealing with gender-based violence – all of these are key elements for peacebuilding in the region.

The tutors in charge are teachers with professional training in different fields such as children's pedagogy, dance and theater. The team also has a professional singer with experience working with vulnerable children and young people with issues related to drug abuse; as well as a professional in the peacebuilding field who is specialized in working with young people and peace, as well as an audio visual technician trained in social communication. All tutors are young people around the age of 20-26.

The general strategies used are:

Reading aloud: This is a practice that encourages reading while promoting values such as peaceful coexistence. It is also an action that precedes the artistic creation, allows for the creation of works and for the recreation of past experiences.

Public speaking, narration and dramatization: oral narration, reciting poems and portraying texts through body language. This activity allows the participants to express feelings and thoughts – a pure manifestation of being. However, the underlying idea is that being is not something individual, we are not isolated entities, but rather seen as something we build together with others, in the sense that we are the result of interaction with other human beings, and that the expression of that social construction is understood as art.

Development of the oriented imagination: imagination is a human characteristic, the work group's task is to empower it, it's not about teaching how to imagine or to teach to create, that fire already exists, it requires a spark that ignites it, and in this way the autonomy of the artist in the creation and development of their works is not affected.

Spontaneous creation based on personal awareness: This creative process is not linear, it is recurrent and does not have a specific order, it's based on the intuitive, and therefore it's spontaneous. A spontaneity that comes from one's own awareness, art is a response to the awareness of one's own emotions, in an environment that constantly is overflowing of the being.

Sensory stimulation for emotional relaxation: listening to soft music in silence and stillness, evoking sounds of tranquility and peace becomes a mechanism to achieve emotional stability and to continue enhancing creativity. The idea is to contribute to reducing aggressiveness and to promote peaceful existence.

The concept of empirical art²⁸, understood as the different forms of expression that don't derive from traditional processes of learning but *from the essence of each human being and our creative nature*, runs transversally through the different activities. While it is true that the techniques will allow for a more elaborate aesthetic result, the background and the life of the artistic work is the product of the participants' encounter with themselves and with the universe; this kind of artistic expression is life itself, born out of experience, interaction with others, human relationships, suffering, love, etc.

Thus, art is considered a vital expression and as a means to recover, accept, rebuild and liberate oneself – affection²⁹ and the development of autonomy are its basic principles.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

²⁸ This concept was constructed by the members of the project, therefore, this is also how it's understood by them.

²⁹ Interaction with the communities is mediated by the recognition of the other, by respect, by face-to-face communication and above all by affection. Likewise, conflict resolution is based on dialogue and words.

The specific objectives within the framework of the project are:

- To motivate young people through art, so that, from their capacities, potential and autonomy, they restore their social fabrics, overcome their processes of mourning, fears, hatred, feelings of guilt and build their life projects;
- Develop and enhance creativity with artistic expressions as a means to make the most out of their leisure time, strengthen family networks, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence;
- Promote the transformation of the violent and aggressive way of conceiving the world how to relate to and communicate with others in the communities. Seeking to reduce expressions of violence and aggressive behavior, thus contributing to the creation of a culture of peace.

ACTIVITIES

The project activities are divided into four phases, with one week per phase. The first one is a cultural presentation, the second and third ones are the poetry, storytelling, mime and painting workshops, the last one is the presentation of the works.

Phase one				
Activity	Description/process	Aim	Place	Date/duration/frequency
Cultural space: "paz-ala bien"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interaction, approach to the public with mimes and storyteller (icebreaker). -Presentation of the Training School of Empirical Arts, "<i>marta mora</i>": Background, what it is, what it aims to achieve, how it is done. - Storytelling presentation - Poetry presentation -Exhibition of paintings: School of Empirical Arts. - Drama presentation - Conversation with the community: evaluation, suggestions, invitation, next activity 	Create links, trust between the community and the work group.	Central square	First Friday of the month: 4pm to 10pm.
Phase two				
"Paz-ala bien". Initial creative workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation - Relaxation -Theoretical work -Application of strategies (practical work), according to each dimension: poetry, storytelling, painting and mime workshop. - Completion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial introduction to art. -Exploration of awareness. -First artistic creations -Knowledge of basic techniques 	Common room, school, etc.	1 Saturday from 9am to 12 pm. 45 minutes in 4 workshops carried out simultaneously and consecutively.
Phase three				
"Paz-ala bien". Creative workshop or follow-up and strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation - Relaxation -Theoretical work -Application of strategies (practical work), according to each dimension: poetry, storytelling, painting and mime workshop. - Completion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the process of artistic creation. Follow-up the on group's progress 	Common room, school, etc.	2 Saturdays from 2pm to 8pm. 45 minutes in 4 workshops carried out simultaneously and consecutively.
Phase four				

Cultural fair: “paz-ala bien”.	Presentation of poems, mime works, paintings and stories in a single cultural space for interaction with the whole community. Project product. Includes audio-visual works.	Present the art works to the community	Central square	3 Saturdays from 4pm to 8 pm
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THE VALUE OF THIS EXPERIENCE AND THE RESULTS AND IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

The internal armed conflict generates psychological, family, social and economic consequences such as feelings of fear, helplessness, pain and mistrust, family breakdown, the breakdown of the social fabric and the loss of cultural heritage accumulated throughout life, among others.

Therefore, to promote artistic talents and to train in arts is an alternative that, in addition to countering problems such as drug addiction, alcoholism, crime, facilitates the transmission and exteriorizing of mourning and release of pain.

In the work of mourning, art is a mechanism for externalizing emotions, sensations, cognitions and affections that the loss or damage leaves behind; it is a mechanism for redirection, catharsis and liberating emotional loads, through the relation between cognitive and emotion. Art is an important and valuable vehicle in mourning processes, and a majority of people

Art is an important and valuable tool in grieving processes. Many individuals respond well to art as a therapeutic method, considering that many people find it difficult to express their feelings openly. The art becomes a possibility of expressing their suffering, their sadness, and fears; thus reducing their level of tension and avoiding future negative repercussions.

Beyond the mourning process, the work with the children and adolescents focuses specifically on opening the possibility of building a life away from illicit activities. The elements that make the proposal effective and successful are adequate language, experimental methodology (empirical art); and tangible results (artistic exhibition, a mural or a play).

In addition to this, tackling vital issues such as setting future life goals, rejecting violence and promoting human rights through the arts has been the only way to dialogue and work on these issues in an environment that is vastly affected by the social control exercised by illegal armed groups in a hostile environment like the Catatumbo Region.

PHOTOS OF WORKS CREATED BY THE YOUNG PARTICIPANTS. RURAL SETTLEMENT AREA OF ASPASICA. 2016.









PRESENTATION IN THE CENTRAL SQUARE. NOVEMBER 2016.

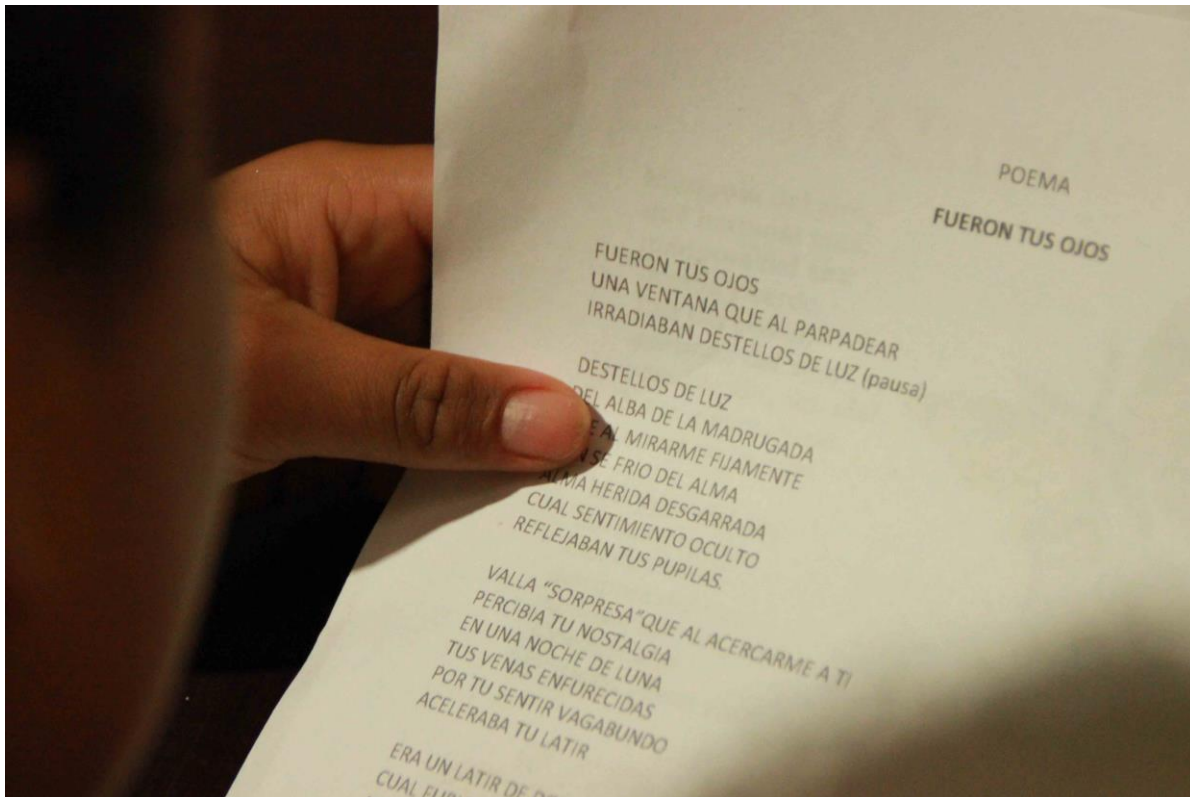








POETRY. RURAL YOUTH HOME, RURAL SETTLEMENT OF ASPASICA. 2016.



IMPACT ON THE YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

With regards to the quantitative impact, the Director of the Foundation states that she has trained and accompanied – for a minimum period of 6 months – more than 138 young people in the 6 years of the project's existence. In Norte de Santander she has worked in 4 municipalities: Tibú, La Playa de Belén, Cúcuta and Villa del Rosario. According to the follow-up work done by the Foundation, 90% of the young participants have been able to stay away from illicit activities. Additionally, 42 of the young people have continued with art (rap, dance, and painting) as a life option and some of them are earning income with their art.

In the case of the rural settlement of Aspasica, empowering the children and adolescents has led them to believe in the possibility of making living through other activities than those related to coca production, and has led them to start creating new life projects. This is the case of one young woman who began to invest the money she earned by scraping coca to buy wool and knit backpacks to sell them. According to her testimony, the Foundation's project gave meaning to this activity, which until recently she had simply had as a hobby. With the support of the project, she began speaking openly about the possibility of starting a smaller enterprise weaving traditional backpacks and not working in the coca production; and through the Project she seeks to link it to other microenterprise initiatives for women in the region.

Among the testimonies attached, there is one case of a young woman in the tenth grade who have tried to commit suicide on several occasions because of her experiences in the midst of armed conflict and the difficulty of finding a safe place and people she could trust. In her testimony, it

becomes evident that her life quality has improved; along with her emotional stability and also that she has gained hopes for a better future (see attachment).

C. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MAPP/OAS IN SUPPORTING THE INITIATIVE? WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT TO THE MISSION?

For the past 12 years, the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia has monitored and accompanied the peacebuilding efforts in the territories most affected by the internal armed conflict in Colombia, interacting with all of the actors involved in this process. The mission has fifteen (15) regional offices throughout the country, through which it carries its permanent and sustained accompaniment works for both the communities and the governmental institutions.

Within the framework of the monitoring activities carried out by the Mission's Regional Office in Cúcuta, the Foundation of Empirical Arts and the heads of the Foundation for Rural Youth Homes expressed their concern regarding the lack of training opportunities, as well as safe and recreational spaces for the young people in the rural settlement area of Aspasica, which is located in the Municipality of La Playa de Belén.

The Foundations requested that the MAPP/OAS provide support, and subsequently, the Mission arranged for and accompanied the staff of the Foundation of Empirical Arts as to prepare a proposal and achieve their financing through USAID "fast response" funds. The aim of these funds is to build trust between the Government and the communities directly affected by the armed conflict in order to ensure the participation and smooth transition from conflict to post-conflict.

As mentioned above, the Mission has accompanied the formulation of the proposal, the need assessment of the Rural Youth Home, and the capacity assessment of the Training School of Empirical Arts since the very beginning of the initiative.

The Mission's accompaniment efforts have supported and facilitated trust-building among the different actors involved in implementing the initiative. In particular, the Mission's presence makes mitigates risks – both for the operator and the young people involved in the project – by deterring violent acts perpetrated by the illegal armed actors in the area. On the other hand, the MAPP/OAS accompaniment encourages the civilian population to trust the local institutions and the Rural Youth Home, as to promote the project's sustainability.

PROPOSAL FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE BY REDUCING RISK AND ENHANCING YOUTH RESILIENCE (RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES DERIVED FROM THE YOUTH CATATUMBO PROJECT)

A. Encourage the training of young people in social and civic participation, promoting capacities for debate, dissent and the formulation of proposals that allow them, from the recognition of their own needs, to become central players in shaping a lasting peace.

B. Carry out processes that allow young victims of the armed conflict in Colombia to restore their social fabric, strengthen their capacities and autonomy, and overcome grieving processes caused by events in the context of the internal armed conflict, in order to rebuild and create their life projects.

C. Guarantee access and continuity for young people in the education system, as a central element for the prevention of recruitment by illegal armed groups.

D. To develop and promote creativity in young people through the use of different artistic tools that allow them to make the most out of their free time, the strengthening of family networks, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.