VOICES OF THE AMAZON

Environmental-Communicational Diagnosis of the Ecuadorian, Brazilian and Colombian Amazon

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CORAPE
Coordinadora de Medios Comunitarios Populares y Educativos del Ecuador

Rede de Notícias da Amazônia

Grupo ComunicArte
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PWRDF

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Images taken by research teams during the assessment process and from ALER's photographic archives.

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May • 15 • 2024

CONTENT

Communication and information issues are major barriers to participation, as many communities are unaware of new policies and lack platforms to make their voices heard. We have also heard that many policy makers, despite being interested in greater community participation, have difficulty communicating with local communities due to the influence of local elites interested in shaping policy discussions for their own benefit, as well as due to fragmented and broken communication channels between communities and policy makers.

Introduction

Both ancient wisdom and modern science tell us that we live interconnected lives. Land, water, forests, plants and food systems are in constant dialog with each other and need each other to exist and thrive. Humans, in all our diversity, are part of these systems.

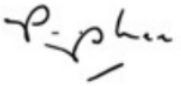
Few ecosystems on Earth embody these interdependent relationships as clearly as the Amazon. The Amazon rainforest, a huge region spanning nine countries and home to an astonishing diversity of flora and fauna, provides clean water and air to millions of people and animals, plays a pivotal role in regulating weather patterns around the world, and is essential in the fight against climate change because of the carbon it stores.

Tragically, this region is under threat. Deforestation, mining, petroleum extraction, large-scale agriculture and cattle ranching are putting the region, its inhabitants and their cultures at risk.

From WACC's perspective, this situation cannot be addressed unless the people of the entire Amazon, especially those who have been historically marginalized and are most affected by the effects of climate change, are able to voice their concerns, solutions and visions for a sustainable Amazon. Failure to listen to local voices, those of the people who know their territories best and who are often at the forefront of defending vital natural resources, will result in policies that reproduce patterns of oppression and colonialism and ultimately miss an opportunity to positively transform the region in the long term.

For these reasons, WACC is proud to partner with ALER, CORAPE, Grupo COMUNICARTE and RNA in the publication of this document and in the implementation of the Voices of the Amazon project. The document highlights the role of local community radio stations in creating spaces for dialog and debate in relation to climate and environmental policies.

This initiative aligns with our position that communicating the complexity of the climate emergency requires a people-centered approach to sustainability, resilience and preparedness. Enabling communities to share information and knowledge allows them to begin the long process of adaptation and recovery. As such, we hope this document will help guide the work of environmental and communication rights activists throughout the Amazon region in their fight for climate justice. There is no climate justice without communication justice!



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Philip Lee
General Secretary, WACC

The Voices of the Amazon Project

The Voices of the Amazon project (2023-2025) seeks to strengthen local communication and advocacy capacities among grassroots communities in the Amazon regions of Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, with the long-term goal of establishing a network of local communicators capable of using community radio and digital platforms to support local organizing and amplify local voices, even in policy-making processes.

These objectives are intended to be achieved by involving multiple local actors. The overall coordination of the initiative is led by WACC, an international organization whose purpose is to promote the right to communicate, and the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación y Comunicación Popular* (Latin American Association for Popular Education and Communication) (ALER), a regional organization that for 50 years has been at the forefront of the community radio movement throughout Latin America and has been producing content on the Amazon for years. In Ecuador, WACC and ALER would work with the *Coordinadora de Medios Comunitarios Populares y Educativos del Ecuador* (Coordinating Body of Popular and Educational Community Media of Ecuador) (CORAPE), and its network of six (6) radio stations in the Amazon region. In Brazil, WACC and ALER would work with the *Rede de Notícias da Amazônia* (Amazon News Network) (RNA), a network of 20 Catholic radio stations broadcasting in seven states (Pará, Amazonas, Roraima, Acre, Rondônia, Amapá and Maranhão). In Colombia, WACC and ALER will collaborate with Grupo COMUNICARTE, a civil society organization with decades of experience in community radio broadcasting throughout the country, including the Amazon. The project is financially supported by WACC and PWRDF-Canada.

> The project seeks to establish a nucleus of 36 local environmental communicators (50% women). people (50% women). Twelve of them will come from Brazil, 12 from Colombia and 12 from Ecuador. In each country, WACC and ALER will work with six (6) community radio partners in each of the three countries, with two (2) local environmental communicators. (6) partner community radio stations in each of the three countries, with two (2) local environmental communicators from each partner community radio station.

In Brazil, the six community radio stations participating in this initiative are 1. *Rádio Monte Roraima* of Boa Vista (Rorarima), *Rádio Riomar* of Manaus (Amazonas), *Rádio Educadora* of Parintins (Amazonas), *Rádio educadora* of Tefé (Amazonas), *Rádio Educadora* of Coari (Amazonas) and

Rádio comunitária of Borba (Amazonas). Together, the stations have an estimated audience of 800,000 people.

In Ecuador, the six radio stations will be: *Stereo Ideal* (Napo), *Puyo Radio* (Pastaza), *Diario Digital Eco Amazónico* (Pastaza), *Sucumbios 105.3* (Sucumbios), *Emisora La Voz del Upano* (Morona Santiago), *Radio Integración* (Zamora Chinchipe). Together, they have an estimated audience of 380,000 people.

Finally, in Colombia, the radio stations will be: *Radio Custodia Stereo* (Guainía), *Juventud Estéreo* (Guaviare), *Dignidad Estereo* (Guaviare), *Camaxagua Stereo* (Meta) and *Radio Yurupari* (Vaupés). Together, these stations have an audience of 40,000 people.

In addition, content is broadcast through allied stations in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, which together have an estimated audience of some 5,000,000 people. This proposed initiative reflects the commitment of all partner organizations to localizing climate-related policies and to a locally driven approach to development, based on the conviction that grassroots communities must be at the center of social change. This approach is in line with the Istanbul Principles on Civil Society Organizations Development Effectiveness, which emphasize that civil society plays a key role in development processes. In particular, it seeks to support grassroots communities in their struggle for *Buen Vivir* (Good Living), a lifestyle that protects ecosystems, generates viable livelihoods and promotes a dignified life for all.

Low-income communities in the Global South, including indigenous peoples, family farmers, the urban poor, and vulnerable and rural women, are being much more affected by climate change than people living at higher latitudes and in more industrialized countries.

Taken from the assessment text

General Context of the Assessment

The 2021 report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) unequivocally links climate change to human activity and predicts more frequent and severe natural catastrophes in the coming years (IPCC 2021). Given the current trajectory of emissions and the lack of meaningful climate action, we are on track for 4 °C warming by 2100. As a result, entire regions of Africa, Australia, the United States, South America, and Asia would become "uninhabitable from direct heat, desertification, and flooding" (Wallace-Wells 2020).[1]

> Low-income communities in the Global South, including indigenous peoples, family farmers, the urban poor, and vulnerable and rural women, are being much more affected by climate change than people living at higher latitudes and in more industrialized countries. Changes in agricultural areas, unpredictable precipitation patterns and pressure on inadequate urban infrastructure, among other factors, will also be more pronounced in the countries of the Global South. Thus, climate change "will make those who are already most vulnerable even more so, creating new and unique patterns of vulnerability and disadvantage" (Schlosberg 2012).2

As climate change intensifies many communities will experience "loss and damage" as some climate impacts will be too severe for communities to adapt to (Christian Aid 2022). Many will be forced to move as they are exposed to the effects of climate change, sea level rise, extreme droughts or even heavy rains, all of which are expected to become the norm. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to climate-induced displacement and are on the front line of climate change impacts.

However, many of the communities most affected by the effects of climate change are also key drivers of environmental and climate justice movements (Meynen 2020). Indeed, local struggles to stop new extractive projects may represent our best hope for reducing emissions, given the inability of governments to do so.

[1] Wallace-Wells, David. La Tierra inhabitable: La vida después del calentamiento. Reimpresión, Tim Duggan Books, 2020

[2] Schlosberg, David. Justicia climática y capacidades: Un marco para la política de adaptación. Ethics & International Affairs, vol. 26, no. 4, 2012, pp. 445-61.

All this is taking place in a context where countries around the world are struggling to translate the climate policies they have submitted on international stages into viable, culturally sensitive and effective local environmental policies. The presence of indigenous peoples at international events has already gained a voice and a vote in the agreements in which they are involved.

At the last Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2021, an agreement was approved calling for the protection of 80% of the Amazon rainforest by 2025, a proposal that emerged from grassroots activists of the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA, by its Spanish acronym). And at COP26 in Glasgow, one of the most important commitments made, and endorsed by 141 countries, was to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030. To achieve this goal, about US$18 billion has been allocated, including US$1.7 billion to support indigenous peoples' stewardship of forests.

Moreover, since at least 2007, the international community has recognized the critical role of traditional and indigenous ecological knowledge (TEK) in helping local communities adapt to the effects of climate change (IPCC 2007). There is an almost universal consensus in climate circles: “in the midst of rapid globalization, indigenous communities have demonstrated their persistent capacity to conserve ecosystem services and co-evolve with the natural world” (Hosen et al. 2020), due to the detailed knowledge of the local environment possessed by many grassroots and indigenous peoples.

This knowledge and the observation of changes at the local level allow adaptation in terms of land and resource management. In turn, social practices and community relations enable such adaptation. Traditional beliefs and cultural and spiritual systems underpin these practices (Hosen et al. 2020). Traditional knowledge has been shown to play an important role in protecting natural resources, promoting community resilience, improving the effectiveness and local legitimacy of climate policies, and strengthening local governance (Lee and Vargas 2022). However, there is still a long way to go before traditional knowledge is fully integrated into climate policy, mainly due to the difficulty of creating a viable dialog between different knowledge systems.

In this context, community media can play an important support role in bringing climate policy to the local level and amplifying the voices of traditional knowledge holders. For example, they can play a key role in informing communities in their own languages, providing platforms for dialog with policy makers and other actors, helping to create a common understanding around TEK and contributing to the resolution of environmental conflicts.

However, grassroots communities in the Amazon have little access to information on environmental policies due to the scarcity of local media, limited access to electricity, language barriers, digital illiteracy, poor training of communicators in the region, and limited media coverage of environmental issues, partly due to the deadly risks involved in reporting.

These problems are symptomatic of the numerous economic, institutional and political barriers that prevent members of indigenous, rural and urban marginalized communities, including vulnerable women and girls, from fully exercising their rights. In this context, the promotion of communication rights is essential to address climate justice. Such rights essentially aim to call for the democratization of media, communication and information systems worldwide.

In response, many grassroots groups have “taken media into their own hands [to] develop their own narratives” through community media and have employed social media for political organizing and information dissemination (Roosvall and Tegelberg 2018). Many of these efforts have proven fruitful.

One instance, is the pivotal role that community radio has played in enabling communities in the Choapa Valley in northern Chile to counter dominant narratives about the impact of mining on their communities, as well as enabling them to organize for change (Palma and Alcaíno 2020).

In the United States and Canada, indigenous activists in the Idle no More, Unist'ot'en Camp, and Standing Rock movements successfully employed digital and analog media to organize and assemble a narrative that went beyond saying “no” to extractivism and actually proposed alternative development paradigms based on long-standing indigenous knowledge, protocols, and practices (Kidd 2020).

In Argentina and Ecuador, media activists working to protect indigenous lands have played a critical role in filling local information gaps, promoting community participation and cohesion; as well as improving alternatives to extractivist development and even working as a form of protection for activists facing police repression (Segall 2021; Serafini, 2019; Coryat, 2017).

> The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) is a powerful tool to ensure the full and effective implementation in the region of the rights of access to environmental information and public participation in environmental decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP30, which will take place in 2025 in the Amazonian city of Belém, Brazil, offers an opportunity for both indigenous peoples and local communicators to join efforts to guarantee access to information and the right to communication for Amazonian communities.

A multilingual and multimodal communication ecosystem is needed to strengthen the right to communication and to accurate and timely information on local and regional environmental issues. Initiatives in this regard are already emerging. One of them is "*Voces Climáticas,*" a Spotify channel with podcasts that "seeks scientific dissemination to achieve changes and solutions in the framework of climate action in Latin America, as well as to give a voice to those who have made a change in their lives and communities."[3] With audiovisual language, Latinclima - *Red de Comunicación en Cambio Climático* (Climate Change Communication Network), offers a Youtube channel[4] with didactic videos, as well as informative ones.

In the textual-graphic format, Infoamazonia [5], whose website reveals geolocated reports based on research and database cross-checking, and the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*, whose "*Amazonas*" section carries out in-depth investigative reports [6], stand out. In addition, in the territories, community radio stations broadcast from populated centers in the Amazon despite the enormous challenges, risks and limitations, as will be detailed in this assessment.

[3] https://open.spotify.com/show/3u874rP6rrO4Igs5AWrD6z
[4] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgx-qf1SorhyEAuQJEhzM4Q
[5] https://infoamazonia.org/es/
[6] https://www.elespectador.com/ambiente/amazonas/

UNESCO has joined in this effort by dedicating World Press Freedom Day 2024 to the importance of journalism in the context of the global environmental crisis.

In this context, the partners of this project believe that adopting a rights-based approach to the communication of ancestral environmental knowledge is essential to help improve adaptation to the climate crisis. We believe that unless the people leading the fight against the climate crisis on the ground, such as indigenous peoples and other vulnerable communities, can have their stories heard and their knowledge incorporated into public policy, and unless they have the communication tools and skills to amplify their voices, it will be very difficult to generate the political will at the national and international level that will translate into effective action to address this crisis.

For this reason, the partners of this project are pleased to submit this assessment, carried out in Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador, which hopes to highlight the importance of understanding the right to communication as a pillar of climate justice. In particular, the assessment, which was funded by PWRDF-Canada, seeks to shed light on the factors that contribute to the degradation of the Amazon and how these factors relate to the communication and information ecosystem at the local level in some Amazonian communities.

The partners in this project, ALER, CORAPE, grupo COMUNICARTE, RNA and WACC, believe that there is a strong link between communication and environmental issues, including climate change. Our collective response as a human family to the many threats posed by the climate crisis depends, partly, on the extent to which climate-related issues receive public attention, particularly in terms of media content, which can have a knock-on effect in terms of public mobilization and policy change. Furthermore, given that the effects of climate change have a disproportionate impact on people and communities in vulnerable situations, WACC believes it is critical to enable these communities to tell their stories, organize to address climate change and promote their own solutions to the climate crisis.

ECUADOR

"Free, prior and informed consultation should be considered as a mechanism for intercultural dialog, a means by which the collective rights of peoples and nationalities are guaranteed, where agreements and consensus can be reached that allow a project to be carried out..."

(WWF, 2024, p. 18)

Environmental Regulatory Framework and Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities

With 48% of its territory located in the Amazon, Ecuador's Constitution enshrines the right of every person to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment (Art. 14), and the power of the State to apply precautionary measures and restrictions on activities that could lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems or the permanent alteration of natural cycles (Art. 73). The defense of nature is a function of the Ecuadorian State both to prevent negative environmental impacts (Art. 396) and to act alternatively to guarantee the health and restoration of ecosystems in the event of damage to the environment (Art. 397).

Medium and high impact projects, such as extractive activities, must have an environmental license issued by the Ministry of Environment and Water. When such activities are intended to be developed in territories with aboriginal population, the Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources must carry out a process of “prior, free and informed consultation” with such indigenous peoples and nationalities prior to the initiation of plans and programs for prospecting, exploitation and commercialization of non-renewable resources.

Consultation prior to the adoption of laws that could affect the environment or culture of indigenous peoples is also established (Art. 57, paragraph 17). In addition, Ecuador is part of international instruments such as Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The first explorations for petroleum extraction in the Ecuadorian Amazon date back to the 1960s. Today, the extensive deposits of black gold found in 2007 make oil the main non-renewable product of the Amazon. However, the processes of “free, prior and informed consultation” have not been as successful as the explorations, according to international organizations.

Amnesty International in its report “Amazon at risk”[7] states that, “Even though the right to free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples is recognized in article 57 of Ecuador’s Constitution, and international instruments ratified by it, there is no adequate legislation to guarantee it in line with international standards.”

The “Analysis of Environmental Impact Studies, Citizen Participation and Prior Consultation in Ecuador” by the World Wildlife Fund, WWF, agrees with Amnesty International. “There are no secondary regulations that regulate free, prior and informed consultation, which is why this right is violated, and indigenous peoples and nationalities can file legal actions to guarantee and protect their collective rights, such as protection actions.”[8]

The Amnesty International report recalls that, “In 2018, the A'i Cofán people of Sinangoe took legal action against the Ecuadorian State for having granted 20 mining concessions and processed 32 others, thus violating their rights to free, prior and informed consent to a healthy environment and to water, among other things. The first instance judgment, issued in August 2018, recognized “that there was contamination in the water of the rivers that are part of the territory of the Sinangoe community.”

In addition, the second instance judgment, in November of the same year, ordered that the concessions granted be rendered legally ineffective and that those pending be definitively suspended. In 2019, the Constitutional Court decided to analyze the case in order to establish case law on the matter. On January 27, 2022, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling confirming the violation of the “rights to prior consultation, to nature, to water, to a healthy environment, to culture and to territory” of the A'i Cofán of Sinangoe community, and also ordered comprehensive reparation measures.”[9]

The WWF study stresses that prior consultation should take into account the cultural identity of indigenous peoples, and cites the case in which the Provincial Court of Justice of Pastaza recognized that a consultation process was carried out, but that it did not take into account fundamental aspects of the rights of indigenous peoples and nationalities.

[7] Amnesty International: Submission to the 41st session of the UPR Working Group, November 2022. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr28/5384/2022/en/

[8] WWF. (April 3, 2024). *Análisis de Estudios de Impacto Ambiental, Participación Ciudadana y Consulta Previa en Ecuador*. P. 16. Retrieved from https://www.wwf.org.ec/?uNewsID=382310

[9] Amnesty International: Submission to the 41st session of the UPR Working Group, November 2022. Retrieved from https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr28/5384/2022/en/. Paragraphs 31, 32 and 33

> “Free, prior and informed consultation should be considered as a mechanism for intercultural dialog, a means by which the collective rights of peoples and nationalities are guaranteed, where agreements and consensus can be reached that allow a project to be carried out; this implies a permanent dialog and negotiation between the parties that allow indigenous peoples and nationalities to influence decision-making and give way to the formulation of public policies, legislation and generate changes in regulations” (WWF, 2024, p.18).

The study concludes that as with prior consultation, the process of environmental regularization of infrastructure and extractive industry projects lacks specific regulations that address issues related to indigenous peoples and nationalities in a particular way, as not all regulations can be applied in a general manner.

Socio-environmental Past and Present of Ecuadorian Amazon

The Ecuadorian Amazon region is divided into six provinces (Napo, Sucumbíos, Orellana, Pastaza, Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe), with connections to the Ecuadorian Andean territories and close to central political and administrative nodes at the national and regional levels.

Historically, the boom-and-bust cycles of the extractivist economy have determined the struggles for land in Ecuador's Amazon region. Erazo explains that the demand for products such as gold and rubber conditioned the central government's interest in land management in the region until the early 20th century. “During these periods of prosperity, the interest of the political center to control the region skyrocketed. In between, the region returned to marginality, and indigenous residents enjoyed a relatively high level of autonomy” (Taylor 1994 in Erazo 2011, p. 423). Catholic missionaries played a pivotal role in the period by attempting to regulate agricultural land use and promote permanent settlement. However, most “natives never accepted the domination of civil authorities and Jesuit missionaries. Rather, most interacted with them intermittently to facilitate access to goods such as matches, salt and cloth. Until the mid-twentieth century most of the region's native population alternated between at least two residences: one located relatively close to the mission center and a second located in the forest, where hunting was better.” (Erazo 2011, p. 423).

Such dynamics began to change when the central government sought to settle and assert its sovereignty over the Amazon region in the 1960s. This took place after the collapse of the world rubber trade and the emergence of cattle ranching as an economic alternative, and in the context of the U.S. Alliance for Progress initiative, which sought to discourage communist organization. The government encouraged peasants from the Andean region to move to the Amazon and created incentives for indigenous people to establish indigenous associations to obtain land titles in the form of collective or communal lands. This led to the creation of the first modern indigenous organizations in the country and to a culture of collective organization among the indigenous people, which sought to prevent an excessive share of the land from being occupied by Andean peasants.

> One of the consequences of this evolution was that many indigenous organizations began to assume responsibilities similar to those of the State, such as planning and building roads, creating new labor regulation mechanisms and playing the "role of land planners." State and international development agencies were also key actors as financiers and supervisors of infrastructure and agricultural extension projects. Among other things, this evolution "allowed for the emergence of a new type of leader, who was not respected for his or her shamanic powers, but for his or her abilities to communicate with state officials and understand bureaucratic processes" (Erazo 2011, pp. 424-426).

These new arrangements represented a "dramatic shift from previous residence and work habits based on the patrilineal household" (Erazo 2011, p. 429). Which gave rise to many tensions within indigenous organizations over the exercise of political power, access to land, internal expectations of reciprocity in terms of labor, and relations with external agents. "Members resisted these attempts at standardization and the growing presence of state agents, who oversaw members' activities and managed the expenditure of state dollars on infrastructure and agricultural extension projects." (Erazo 2011, p. 431).

Even so, the new model of organizing indigenous people into formal land tenure entities proved to be transformative. "Despite this resistance, no one could deny the tangible benefits that had come from the formation of the cooperative. The resources provided by the state and various international development organizations were important in boosting the legitimacy of the collectivist project and the leaders who championed it" (Erazo 2011, p. 431).

In the 1980s and 1990s, when the debt crisis gave way to neoliberal austerity and structural adjustment, the spirit of collective organization that emerged from indigenous organizations remained strong, even as indigenous landowner organizations themselves weakened. For example, although collective cattle ranching and agricultural production became unprofitable and many indigenous people began cash cropping and living under the regulations of private property, indigenous people continued to play an important role in land management, and also managed to maintain substantial amounts of land in indigenous hands. (Erazo 2011, p. 437).

In recent years, "the Ecuadorian government has allocated millions of hectares to indigenous organizations without requiring adherence to the cooperative model, collective participation in market-oriented activities more generally, or specific agricultural activities" (Erazo 2011, p. 438). This development, which builds on decades of organizing around collective land ownership in the Amazon, "contradicts any simplistic dichotomy between states and indigenous peoples" by demonstrating the viability of indigenous-led land governance models, thus "challenging theories that place the state as the main arbiter of human-environmental relations" (Erazo 2011, p. 438).

Currently, Ecuador's land tenure system comprises indigenous territories, communal lands, private lands, and public lands (Eloiza et al. 2017, p. 22). However, communities seeking to claim land titles and use the land for their purposes face conflicts among themselves and private interests.

The recognition of nature as a subject of rights in the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution generated conflicts over land tenure and tensions between peasants and state authorities, who seek to protect environmentally sensitive ecosystems (Eloiza et al. 2017, p. 21).

> "In Ecuador, the production of palm oil, coffee, cocoa, sugarcane and dairy products are the main threats to the forest.... From 2001 to 2018, 4,290 square kilometers of the Amazon were deforested in this country, with a peak in 2017 when the devastated area exceeded 630 km^2. Community leaders in the region have denounced that "there are no incentives to conserve the forest and that, faced with necessity, dozens of farmers have opted to sell their land to palm oil producers[10]." (DWA, p. 30).

[10] Akademie - Amazonia – El desafío de comunicar la diversidad. 2020 https://www.dw.com/es/amazonia-el-desaf%C3%ADo-de-comunicar-la-diversidad-los-casos-de-colombia-ecuador-y-per%C3%BA/a-54899438

Among the programs to reduce deforestation promoted by the government of Ecuador, the project Integrated Management of Multiple Use Landscapes and High Value Conservation Forests (2016), promoted by the Ministry of Environment and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), stands out. The initiative seeks to link national efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with productive sector policies (DWA, p. 36).

The development model based on petroleum extraction promoted by the Ecuadorian state for decades has led to the (often irreversible) contamination of water sources and the destruction of flora and fauna, with consequential effects on the health and livelihoods of the population. “Several epidemiological studies have suggested an association between chemical contaminants with levels above admissible levels in water for human consumption and the increased likelihood of developing some type of cancer” (Oller-Arlandis and Sanz-Valero 2012). In 2016, cancer was the leading cause of death in minors and adults, affecting 32% of the population (INREDH, 2016).

Between 2001 and 2020, in the Amazon basin, which also encompasses part of the Andean region, constituting more than half of continental Ecuador, 623,509 hectares have been deforested according to data from MapBiomas. And from 2012 to 2022 there were 1584 spills, mainly due to lack of pipeline maintenance, according to the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (MAATE, by its Spanish acronym). This is equivalent to 12.6 spills per month.

Despite these impacts, government policy continues to promote extractivist processes, including large-scale mining, under the argument of “economic development” and as a post-pandemic economic reactivation strategy.

Communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon have reacted to these challenges by creating and strengthening networks to promote different social and environmental justice initiatives. One of them is the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE, by its Spanish acronym), which stands out for its capacity for social mobilization and for generating political proposals and actions such as the 268 amnesties for indigenous people and activists involved in social protests and in the defense of the rights of nature, which were accepted by the National Assembly of Ecuador in March 2022. This, in the context of continued threats to environmental activists and assassinations of leaders in the Amazon and the rest of the country (Mongabay, 2022).

Also noteworthy is the court ruling that ordered the state oil company, Petroecuador, to extinguish 112 gas flares that were located near populated centers in the provinces of Orellana and Sucumbíos. The lawsuit, brought by the daughters of the families affected with catastrophic illnesses, opened a public debate on the responsibility of oil companies and the guarantees that the Ecuadorian state grants to people affected by socio-environmental impacts.

According to the Communication-Environmental Assessment of the Ecuadorian Amazon, carried out by CORAPE, the provincial delegate of the Napo Ombudsman's Office, Andrés Rojas, considers that despite the established public policies, authorizations and permits are granted for legal mining activities applying previous regulations and reforms, and which do not specify the regulation of this type of activity. In addition, he assures that existing environmental public policies are not being applied or are not being duly monitored for compliance.

However, for some officials and politicians interviewed by CORAPE, the community is not timely and sufficiently informed to guarantee their participation in environmental policies in the Amazon. Sandra Rueda, elected Assemblywoman for the Napo province, states that the community does not know when and where participation assemblies are held for the public policy making; and María Godoy, Director of Environmental Management of the Municipal Decentralized Autonomous Government of Zamora, assures that the community should be updated and work together with the community to recognize their needs and proposals, because they are only working on the already proposed Development and Land Use Plan (PDOT, by its Spanish acronym).

According to the report of *Alianza por los Derechos Humanos*, the impact is felt most acutely by “vulnerable populations” that have been historically discriminated against, such as indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and nationalities. They, says the report, “receive attacks to dissuade them from their role of defending and protecting their territories, autonomy and identity” (Alianza DDHH, 2021).

In this scenario, the government of Ecuador is implementing the Escazú Agreement, which it ratified in 2021, through the *Ecuador Sincero* program, with the support and participation of civil society, academia and the German agency GIZ. Journalists and communicators have, in this regional treaty, an instrument to demand and guarantee the right to information, citizen participation and access to justice in environmental matters.

Communication Ecosystem in the Ecuadorian Amazon

The voice of local communities affected by pollution resulting from extractive activities is gaining prominence in Ecuador's alternative and community media. “Radio Sucumbíos, one of the community radio stations in the region, regularly reports on the conflicts with the oil companies” (DWA, p. 32). “For community activists, Radio Sucumbíos is a very important medium because every time there are meetings with the oil companies, they invite the radio station to record what happens. When the oil companies do not comply with the agreements, the complaints are made public through Radio Sucumbíos” (DWA, p. 44).

Electricity supply in the Ecuadorian Amazon is basically limited to the population centers, so the cell phone and Internet signal is limited to those centers. Consequently, radio is the most widespread means of communication. As a result, there is an important radio development at the ethnic level, which is represented in the Amazon Intercultural Radio Network (RIAR, by its Spanish acronym), composed of five Amazonian radio stations (*Radio Sucumbíos*, *Radio Voz de Zamora*, *Radio Voz del Upano*, *Radio Stereo Ideal* and *Radio Interoceánica*). Through networking, RIAR seeks to strengthen indigenous communities, their culture and perspective, so that they can participate in local and regional development processes. This network performs a task that is highly valued by the indigenous communities as it allows them to access information in their native languages and content that reflects the context of their towns.

RIAR works in collaboration with CORAPE, which brings together 35 community radio stations throughout Ecuador. These radio stations flourished under the protection of the Organic Law on Media enacted in the government of Rafael Correa (2007-2017) and amended by the next president. “During Correa's term, fourteen indigenous communities, ten of them in the Amazon, received broadcasting licenses, as well as technical equipment including antennas and transmitters. The measure was part of a government campaign to strengthen the constitutional right of indigenous people to free and intercultural communication. In the long term, however, the lack of training programs for those in charge of these new media hindered their sustainability. At the time of this research (2020), only five of the new indigenous radio stations in the Amazon were still in operation. Most of the other local media in the region belong to Neo-Pentecostal churches. In 2020, the government has initiated a bidding process for frequencies for community broadcasters. However, the high cost of maintenance and lack of funding mean that most community radio stations can only operate very precariously” (DWA, pp. 44 and 45).

According to the DW-Akademie report, there are technological communication initiatives in the Ecuadorian Amazon based on drones, GPS and camera traps to collect environmental information and then disseminate it through social media. Through this strategy, they have pressured the State to take actions to protect their territory. Another initiative is that developed by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, (CONFENIAE, by its Spanish acronym), which provides Amazonian nationalities with information related to the activities of the indigenous movement based on its network of community reporters, which it disseminates through social media and its online radio station.

CORAPE conducted research on the challenges of communication on environmental issues in the six provinces of the Ecuadorian Amazon through 58 surveys applied to representatives of different social organizations, indigenous peoples and nationalities, and the media; as well as individual interviews with eight representatives of state institutions involved in the implementation of environmental policies in the Ecuadorian Amazon territory.

To gather information, the research team visited the provincial capitals of the Amazon, as detailed in the following table:

PROVINCE	PROVINCIAL CAPITAL
Morona Santiago	Macas
Napo	Tena
Orellana	Francisco de Orellana
Pastaza	Puyo
Sucumbíos	Lago Agrío
Zamora Chinchipe	Zamora

The main causes of environmental problems identified by respondents in each province of the Ecuadorian Amazon were: in the provinces of Sucumbíos and Francisco de Orellana, oil exploitation. In the central Amazon, in the province of Napo, the main problems mentioned were mining, oil exploitation, deforestation and pollution. Meanwhile, in the province of Pastaza, the responses point to deforestation, oil exploitation and pollution. In the province of Morona Santiago, the main problems referenced were mining, construction of public works, such as hydroelectric power plants, livestock expansion and deforestation. Finally, in Zamora Chinchipe, mining and livestock expansion were identified as the main causes of environmental damage.

The survey had questions about the type of impacts and consequences of environmental problems. The responses were: environmental contamination (32.76%), conflict between communities (10.34%), and change in customs and loss of ancestry (10.34%). Other no less important consequences mentioned were: gender-based violence (6.90%); persecution and threats to leaders (6.90%); alcoholism and drug addiction (6.90%); and health effects on the impacted population (6.90%).

The people interviewed in the study considered it important to train the population on environmental issues and the spaces for participation to demand compliance with regulations and respect for the rights of nature. They also emphasized the use of the media as a tool for socialization and awareness-raising on the environmental issues that affect them.

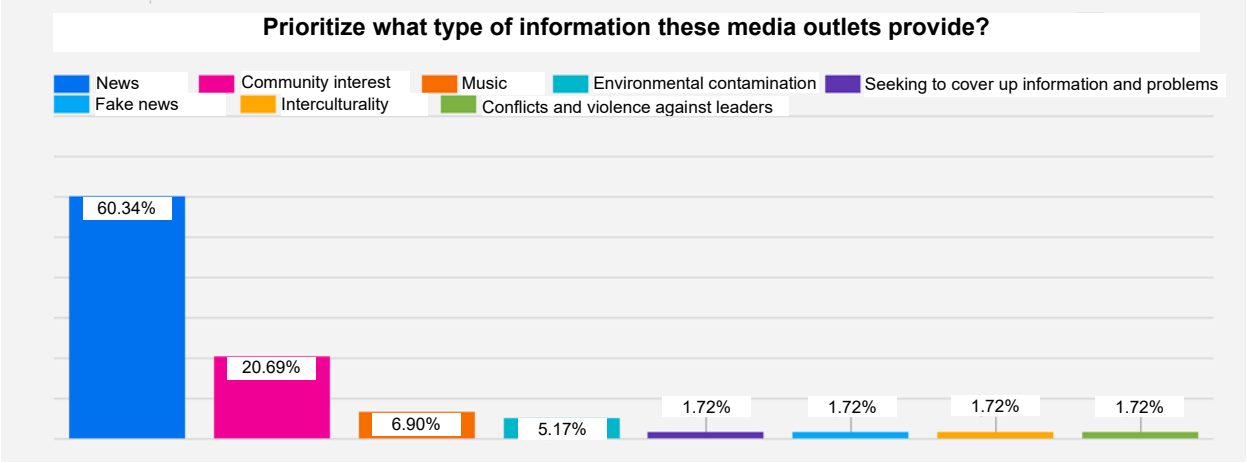
Based on the information gathered, CORAPE states that it is evident that both urban and rural young people are promoting cleanup and awareness campaigns on deforestation, mining and river contamination. These campaigns are accompanied by some media outlets. *Radio Puyo* has a program on land, water, and seeds to address environmental issues. It also has a legal department that provides advice to the territories and communities facing these processes against mining.

> In the Amazonian territories, community and private radio stations are the predominant means of access to information, which is why the strengthening of this media is fundamental for community participation in the construction of the environmental agenda. The CORAPE survey found that, in the radio spectrum, private media are the most listened to (43.10%), followed closely by community media (41.38%), and far behind by public media (15.52%). Other media used in the Amazon for access to information are television (17.24%), digital media (13.79%), instant messaging (WhatsApp, Telegram, Messenger) with 8.62%; and press with only 3.45%. The survey also identified a relationship between the most listened to media by type of audience. Adults prefer to listen to the radio, while young people prefer to use social media to access and share information.

Regarding the languages in which information is disseminated, the following results were obtained: Spanish (69.14%) plays a leading role in the content broadcast by these media. Other languages used by the Amazonian media are: Amazonian Kichwa (18.52%); Shuar Chicham (8.64%); Awap'it (1.23%); and Achuar Chicham (2.47%). In other words, the languages of indigenous peoples and nationalities have almost no presence in the media present in the Amazon.

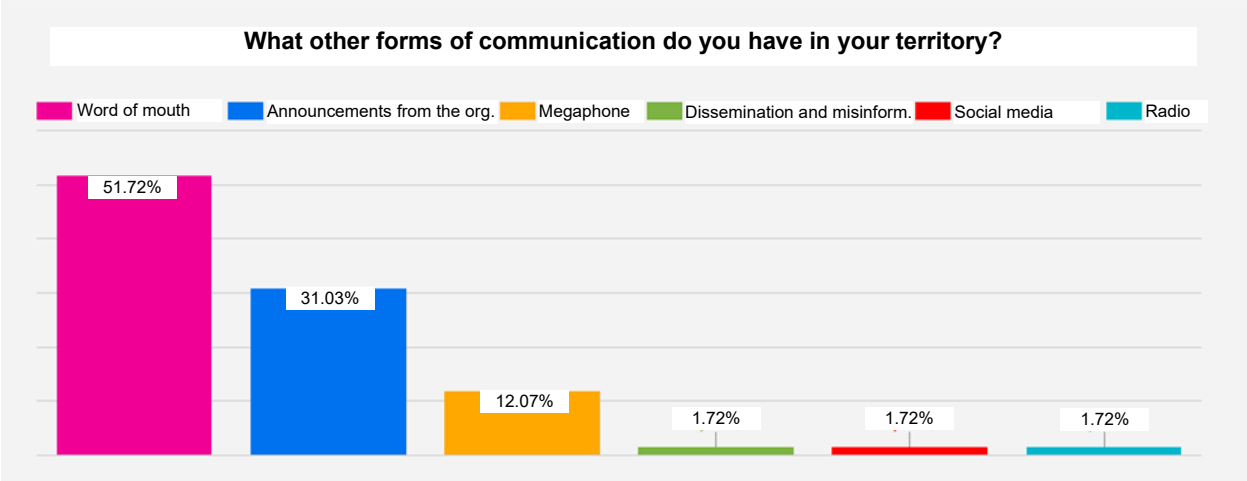
Below is a graph on the type of content broadcast by the media in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

ANALYTICS



Source: CORAPE Communication Survey, 2023.

In addition to the mass media, it was possible to identify that the Amazonian population has other ways of communicating, which according to the surveys are the following.



Source: CORAPE Communication Survey, 2023.

Challenges of Community Radio in the Ecuadorian Amazon

With the participation of representatives of different social organizations, indigenous peoples and nationalities and the media, CORAPE carried out a focus group exercise, which allowed the following challenges to be identified.

Broadcasting in native languages. One of the main obstacles to the democratization of communication and information in the Amazon is the scarce use and discrimination of native languages. CORAPE considers that there is interest among the social organizations and indigenous peoples and nationalities consulted in the media to produce and disseminate content in native languages such as: Amazonian Kichwa, Shuar, Cofán and Waorani. This would contribute to preserve and promote ancestral languages and to maintain the world vision of each culture, since language is a manifestation of this vision. It would also increase the media's audience among the Amazonian population.

> Currently, some media outlets broadcast programs in native languages in the morning. However, for CORAPE “there are still sectors that are not aware of the right of the populations to receive information and interact in the mass media using their own languages. This is evidence of a discriminatory attitude, since one language is given more importance than others.”

Political and economic interests. Some of the private media, which are the most listened to in the Amazon (43.10%), have economic and political interests that do not contribute to the defense of human rights and nature, as highlighted by the people consulted by CORAPE, who stated that the owners of these media are businessmen or receive financing from mining and hydroelectric companies, or have been politicians who through their influence managed to get radio stations. According to CORAPE, “due to these interests, these media outlets choose to advertise in favor of mining, delegitimize the struggle in defense of the environment and the communities, or simply ignore their denunciations and actions related to the issue”.

Nevertheless, there are some private media outlets that are sympathetic to the defense of the rights of nature. For example, Radio Ideal Tena (Napo province), which disseminates information from community organizations and campaigns by environmental groups.

CORAPE states that there is a climate of fear to report on extractive activities or to denounce their negative impact due to the risk of being attacked or killed. People consulted by CORAPE stated that in Pastaza province information should be disseminated with caution, as they fear reprisals.

Sustainability of community media. Ownership of community radio stations in the Amazon is shared between the Church and indigenous organizations, as follows: *Radio Sucumbíos*, *Radio la Voz de Zamora*, *Radio Puyo* and *Radio La Voz del Upano* belong to Vicariatos. *Radio La Voz de la CONFENIAE*, *Radio Tuna*, *Radio Jatari* and *La Voz de las Cascadas* belong to indigenous peoples and nationalities. They are media that have legal frequencies to operate and among their main sources of financing is advertising, as well as self-management of resources. Other media are sustained through agreements with NGOs; and there are those that receive money for renting their infrastructure.

For example, in Pastaza, where 7 of the 14 Amazonian indigenous nationalities live, the indigenous people received the radio frequency along with equipment and payment to personnel from previous governments. For the people consulted by CORAPE, today it is necessary to generate training and resource management processes in order to give sustainability to community radio stations.

New information technologies. According to CORAPE's survey, community media need to be trained in the use of digital communication tools that allow them to reach other audience niches, better manage social media and generate content in new formats. Training is also needed in investigative journalism and news coverage of environmental and human rights issues.

Women's participation. According to the people consulted by CORAPE, the women's participation in the production of community radio content is still a minority. Although there are some women journalists, most of them perform secretarial, accounting and cleaning activities. This perception coincides with the gender gap in the editorial months that also exists in traditional media (WACC-GMPP 2020).

BRAZIL

Colonization began in the 17th century, when settlers, called bandeirantes, moved into the area to extract gold and raise cattle, as well as to enslave indigenous people to sell.

Taken from the research text

The Difficult Equation: Agrarian Policies and Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian Governance

The Amazon is known internationally for its superlative natural resources and for the environmental services it provides to Brazil and the rest of the planet. This wealth has been used predatorily, through deforestation for agriculture, cattle ranching, timber extraction and mining, among other activities. At the same time, serious social problems persist in the region and there is a lack of opportunities for social progress for the vast majority of the population.

The Amazon is one of the main victims of Brazilian mismanagement in recent decades. On March 14, 2024, the Brazilian Supreme Federal Court ruled that the government of Jair Bolsonaro actively promoted the massive violation of socio-environmental rights in the Amazon, with the consequent impact on the climate, health and survival of Amazonian ethnic groups, their culture and wisdom.

Deforestation of the rainforest has had consequences in terms of economics and social inequality, as well as territorial/environmental destruction. Arvor et al. provide a useful summary of the factors that have historically influenced agrarian policies in the Brazilian Amazon. They argue that, in the background, land management policies have reflected a constant concern on the part of Brazilian institutions to foster socioeconomic development in the region and, at the same time, control the movement of the border to protect natural resources.

Colonization began in the 17th century, when settlers, called *bandeirantes*, moved into the area to extract gold and raise cattle, as well as to enslave indigenous people to sell. This process was regulated in the 1930s when the modern Brazilian state began to encourage colonization and settlement in the Amazon as part of its March to the West policy, with the aim of asserting sovereignty in remote regions of the country and expanding rubber production.

> In 1953, these efforts became even more organized, as the Brazilian state defined what constituted “legal Amazon” in geographical terms, and continued to promote development in the region, especially to give access to land to Brazil's millions of landless peasants. This process included the construction of roads, cities, and even a new national capital, Brasilia (Arvor et al. 2018, p. 5). The underlying assumption in Brazilian land policies is that Amazonian lands were empty and available for distribution to those who needed them, and that these lands were mostly unproductive.

Unfortunately, many of these efforts did not have the desired effect and contributed to environmental degradation. A good example is the story of border development in the state of Mato Grosso in the southern Brazilian Amazon. Although the federal government made many efforts to encourage agricultural development in Mato Grosso that would put small farmers at the center of this process, it eventually decided to allow more private investment and large-scale agriculture because small-scale agriculture did not meet the intended production targets.

This resulted in the concentration of land in the hands of a few companies and an extractivist model that emphasized cattle ranching, mining and industrial agriculture. At that pace, soybean became an essential part of the Brazilian economy in the second decade of the 21st century, although corn, cotton and sugar were also grown (Arvor et al. 2018, p. 6). Unfortunately, the expansion of large-scale industrial agriculture led to significant deforestation throughout Mato Grosso.

Thanks in part to international and local pressure from environmentalists, the government began to take deforestation more seriously. The pioneering environmentalist was Francisco Alves Mendes, who in the 1970s became a leader of the peaceful struggle against timber extraction and grassland expansion in the Brazilian Amazon. Chico Mendes, as he is known, achieved something that no one else had before: uniting such different sectors as peasants, workers, politicians and environmentalists for the sole purpose of protecting the Amazon and the communities that inhabit it. Chico Mendes received the UN Global 500 Award in 1987 and the Better World Society's Environmental Medal. However, his actions did not please the landowners, extractivists and other agents of deforestation. He was assassinated in 1988.

In order to protect some regions of the Amazon for both environmental and social reasons (indigenous lands, Afro-Brazilian *quilombolas*), the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC, by its Portuguese acronym) was created in 2000. In 2010, about 28.7% of Mato Grosso's lands were protected under this system (Arvor et al. 2018, pp. 8-9) and deforestation had decreased by 90% (Arvor et al. 2018, p. 2) compared to 2004. From an environmental point of view, the SNUC system has been relatively successful. In particular, it has encouraged Afro-Brazilian and indigenous land management practices, which have succeeded in reducing deforestation and promoting biodiversity. Alves-Pinto et al. state that 94% less native vegetation was lost on indigenous-managed lands than in areas without environmental protection, meaning that indigenous practices were 17 times more effective. The figure is 82% in the case of Afro-Brazilian *quilombolas*. (Alves-Pinto et al. 2022, p. 4).

This shows that indigenous and Afro-Brazilian communities have much to contribute to the protection of the Amazon and that “more enforceable actions of this type are possible if there is political will.” (Alves-Pinto et al. 2022, p. 5). They also note that “regardless of their contribution to conservation, it is necessary to ensure full respect for the international and national rights of local communities and indigenous lands” (Smith et al., 2016; Jonas et al., 2017), and to ensure the full and effective participation of local communities in decision-making processes (Magnusson et al., 2018) (Alves-Pinto et al. 2022, p. 5).

More recently, the “Forest Code” that regulates development in the Amazon has been revised to allow agricultural development on land that has already been cleared, while protecting land that has not yet been touched. The revised Forest Code aims to achieve this by improving law enforcement, employing satellites to monitor deforestation in real time, and creating a range of punitive measures. (Arvor et al. 2018, p. 13).

Attempts have also been made to reduce the environmental impact of large-scale agriculture by implementing practices such as “no-till,” integrating crop and livestock farming, paying the farmer for reforestation, processing agricultural raw materials locally, and imposing moratoriums on soybean and beef production in some regions. (Arvor et al. 2018, pp. 15-17). For Arvor et al., these policies demonstrate that, to some extent, Brazil was able to incorporate agricultural development policies that “decoupled agricultural expansion from deforestation” (Arvor et al. 2018, p. 2). However, although some agricultural policies have succeeded in protecting nature and enabling indigenous and Afro-Brazilian forest governance at the macro level, many problems still exist. For example, policy implementation and control of deforestation remain a challenge. Climate change and the pressures it will exert on these ecosystems are not yet fully understood. And access to land and lack of support for small-scale agriculture continue to await resolution. (Arvor et al. 2018, pp. 17-18).

A useful example that summarizes some of these issues is the application of REDD+ programs in an effort to reduce deforestation. In essence, REDD+ initiatives (REDD+ stands for “reducing emissions from forest degradation and deforestation”) seek to promote carbon sequestration in forests by monetizing it and offering a payment in exchange for forest conservation. While generally effective in reducing deforestation, in some cases, these programs have exacerbated inequality, particularly over land ownership. As Greenleaf explains, “in forest carbon project sites, land ownership is often unclear, contested, and/or socially complex... For this reason, REDD+ programs often emphasize ‘clarifying’ land tenure in an effort not to exclude those without formal land rights”

(Greenleaf 2020, pp. 290-291).

The key assumption of these approaches “is the perceived role of land tenure insecurity in forest resource depletion. Public and private ownership of land is proposed as a solution to this 'tragedy of the commons'” (Hardin 1968)... Land must be formally owned, according to this logic, to avoid the rapid squandering of resources (see Araujo et al. 2009) (Greenleaf 2020, p. 291). For other researchers, green bonds (REDD+) have become a mechanism that incentivizes the financial aspect more than the conservationist spirit that inspired them.

Another example that illustrates the complexity of designing and implementing transformative agricultural policies is the assessment of the impact of multilevel governance on land-use management. Pikkety et al. note that over the past 20 years a number of efforts have been undertaken to “localize” and empower local actors, especially municipalities, and to clarify the role of state and federal authorities. These initiatives “are characterized as multiple forms of governance operating simultaneously, often involving close collaboration between state and non-state actors,” and “often aim to counteract the fragmentation of sectoral decision-making and involve a wider range of actors affected by environmental problems to address the different scales of a given problem” (Pikkety et al. 1518).

However, while these efforts appear to have had a positive impact on deforestation rates, they “have not yet succeeded in triggering large-scale land-use intensification, reforestation, and restoration of degraded lands.” Nor have they “succeeded in containing deforestation on small farms.” This is mainly due to the enormous complexity of designing policies that provide the right negative and positive incentives for multiple actors, from local governments to indigenous communities to small and large farmers, to work together. It is also influenced by the sheer amount of territory that requires monitoring (Pikkety et al. 1531).

> Innovative approaches have been implemented in this regard. For example, in the state of Acre, where government authorities sought to circumvent land ownership issues by creating a system in which the state would sell carbon credits internationally and distribute them to landless communities in exchange for “green work,” such as fish farming and forest conservation (Greenleaf 2020, pp. 296-299).

Environmental Issues and Socio-Environmental Tensions

In 2014 and 2015, São Paulo experienced an unprecedented drought due to deforestation in the Amazon. How can this be if they are separated by about 3,000 kms? The answer is “flying rivers.” Trees expel enormous amounts of water vapor, which rises to form “rivers” that move by the action of the winds; the vapor then condenses and falls as rain. Brazil's two main cities, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, depend on the Amazon trees for rainfall. This event set off alarm bells in urban Brazil about the deforestation suffered by the communities of nine Brazilian Amazon states, where more than 24 million people live, including Afro-descendants, *mestizos* and, mostly, indigenous people. The state of Amazonas alone is home to 29% of Brazil's native population (2022 census).

Unfortunately, in the Brazilian Amazon, fire is consuming the forests. More than 100,000 fires per year have been registered by the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research (INPE, by its Portuguese acronym), which are caused by people living near the river or roads, who burn the trees to replace forests with pastures. The “flying rivers” feed the flow of rivers in the most productive area of Brazil. Nowhere is the consequence of Amazon deforestation more evident than at the Iguazu Falls, as demonstrated by Antonio Nobre, senior researcher at INPE and author of the report “*El Futuro Climático de la Amazonía*” (The Climate Future of the Amazon) [11] This prodigy of nature is drying up due to the decrease in the flow of the rivers that feed them. It is precisely in the third most deforested Amazonian state, Pará, that the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP30, will take place in November 2025.

> Today, the Amazonian economy is based primarily on agribusiness for the international market. Most of Brazil's 20 million head of cattle and a large part of the soybean crops are concentrated in the Amazon, both of which have a proven negative impact on the environment. As for mining, iron, manganese, bauxite, cassiterite and gold are extracted from the “lungs of the planet”, as well as timber for export.

The territory of the Yanomami people has been the target of illegal mining for decades, but the invasion of their lands for extractive purposes has intensified in recent years. In 2022 alone, devastation in the territory reached 54%. Mining activity has a direct impact on the way of live of

[11] DW-Documentary “Ríos Voladores, las aguas de la Amazonia”. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8q3O3eHD_c&t=1s

indigenous peoples, as the invasion destroys the environment, provokes violence, armed conflicts and contamination of rivers through the use of mercury. The study “Impact of mercury in protected areas,” carried out by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation and the Socio-environmental Institute in 2023, revealed that in nine Yanomami communities, 94% of the indigenous people have a high level of mercury contamination. Out of the 287 hair samples examined, 84% recorded mercury contamination levels above 2.0 µg/g (microgram per gram); and another 10.8% were above 6.0 µg/g. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mercury levels in hair should not exceed 1 (one) microgram per gram. The research found that indigenous people with higher mercury levels more often had cognitive impairment and limb nerve damage.

Malnutrition in the indigenous communities reached such high levels that in January 2023 the federal government declared the Yanomami territory in a state of public health emergency. This is not an isolated case. The social reality of 772 municipalities and the nine states that make up the Brazilian Amazon is dramatic. Almost 98.5% of Amazonian municipalities have a score in the Social Progress Index below the national average. The report “Social Progress Index in the Brazilian Amazon - IPS Amazonia (2014)” shows that the common citizen of this region faces enormous deficiencies in virtually all components of social progress: there are enormous difficulties in access to clean water and basic sanitation, problems in the quality of basic education, lack of information and poor means of communication, and very few opportunities to reach higher education. In addition, it points out that the Amazonian citizens face considerable restrictions in terms of individual rights and freedom of choice, mainly due to mobility difficulties in the cities, early pregnancies during childhood and adolescence, and widespread violence, especially affecting young people.

Additionally, catastrophic fires occurred in 2020, especially in the Pantanal region, and 2021 was affected by devastating floods. These phenomena disproportionately affect groups that already suffer structural discrimination (Amnesty International, 2022).

However, what is not invested in social development is invested in infrastructure works, some of which generate serious impacts on the ecosystem and, consequently, on the communities living there. In São Luís, capital of the state of Maranhão, the Chinese company “China Communications Construction Company” and “WPR - São Luís Gestão de Portos e Terminais” are building a port in one of the most coveted regions on the planet. The cargo shipped there will reach the Asian country faster and at lower cost, crossing the Panama Canal. In the midst of these powerful companies, the community of Cajueiro struggles to maintain their way of life and their land. The inhabitants denounced that since 2014 they have been the target of attacks, such as the destruction of houses

and crops, and several leaders have received death threats. Questioned by Tierra de Resistentes' report [12], the Maranhão government admitted that it is licensing the port without a legal decision about the ownership of the land.

> In this scenario, one piece of good news stands out: Brazil recorded a 36% drop in deforestation in 2023 compared to 2022, according to Global Forest Watch's 2023 report. And the rate is even more encouraging in the territories of native communities. Deforestation in indigenous lands in the Amazon experienced a 42% reduction in forest clearance between August 2023 and March 2024, the lowest since 2018. For this downward trend to continue and for these peoples to remain protected, "it is necessary for the government to move forward with the demarcation processes of invaded indigenous lands. This should be a priority, since these territories are shields against the advance of the destruction of the biome," claims Larissa Amorim, researcher at the Brazilian research institute IMAZON [13].

The appropriation of indigenous lands uses violence and false documents (known in Brazil as *grilagem*). The Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau indigenous people in the state of Rondônia are literally surrounded by extractivists who have cut down everything around them and who have no scruples about falsifying documents in order to take land from the native communities [14].

Media in the Brazilian Amazon

The 2014 Global Social Progress Index (SPI) [15] report for the Amazon found that access to information and communication in the region is 10 times lower than Brazil's average (53.36 and 63.44 respectively).

Due to the conditions of the nature and size of the Brazilian Amazon, a large part of its rural area is devoid of media, including cell phones. In order to provide a communication solution, the community radio network was created, which, unlike a network of community radio stations, involves people

[12] https://tierraderesistentes.com/es/2019/04/23/sitiados-por-el-progreso/
[13] https://imazon.org.br/imprensa/desmatamento-em-terras-indigenas-da-amazonia-e-o-menor-em-seis-anos/
[14] El cercado indígena. https://tierraderesistentes.com/es/2019/04/23/el-cercado-indigena/
[15] The Social Progress Index measures, in a holistic and robust way, the social and environmental performance of nations and territories, regardless of their economic development (SPI, 2014).

connected through a two-way radio system (based on high frequency transceivers). This system currently operates in the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve (state of Acre) and in the Terra do Meio region (state of Pará). The former has a network of seven radio stations within the reserve and a main distribution station in the city of Marechal Thaumaturgo. This network is the result of a long-term partnership, which began in 2013 between the traditional and indigenous communities of Acre and professors from the universities of Brasilia, state of São Paulo and Campinas.

Meanwhile, Acre's community high frequency radio network consists of eight two-way communication radios, i.e., a point-to-multipoint transmission system, which allows each station in the network to receive the transmission and communicate with each other. This system is self-contained, requires minimal maintenance and is easy to use by any member of the community after basic training. As there is no power or infrastructure for electricity supply, each radio station is powered by solar panels and batteries. In 2016, successful tests were conducted to send text files and images through this type of radio to locations that were 100 km away.

Considering the media ecosystem, traditional radio has the largest coverage in the Brazilian Amazon territory. According to data from the Brazilian Ministry of Communications (2015), the number of community radio stations represented just over 75% of the total number of radio stations in the region. “If we take into account that more than half of these licensed community radio stations, that is, 265 of them, do not compete for audience with commercial radio stations, since they are, according to data from Anatel (2015), the only radio station or the only mass media in their municipalities capable of producing information about the local reality in the most popular medium that exists to date, we have a strategic potential of community radio broadcasting” (Steinbrenner 2017, p. 85). [16] Although, the figures date from almost a decade ago, the growing trend of licensing allows inferring that the scenario and analysis remains in force.

However, some community radio stations are distorted, becoming “pseudo-communitarian.” [17] Steinbrenner explains that “the limited financial management model, which only allows ‘cultural support’ restricted to local supporters, added to the extreme bureaucracy of the legalization process of community radio stations and the lack of public policies, end up benefiting stations ‘sponsored’ by churches or politicians, or even those that simply reproduce commercial models. This creates a wave of 'pseudo-community' stations, which are inspired by private interests, reproduce commercial

[16] Steinbrenner, R.A. (2017). Mapeamento de Rádios Comunitárias na Amazônia como ferramenta ao desenvolvimento sustentável. Logos, 24(1).
[17] Steinbrenner, R.A. Idem

formats or are not open to community participation" (Steinbrenner, 2017, p. 86).

RNA conducted a survey on the communicational-environmental situation in four Amazonian states through the radio stations: *Rádio Rural Educadora de Tefé* (Amazonas), *Rádio FM Monte Roraira* (Roraima), *Rádio Educadora do Maranhão* (Marañao) and *Rádio Rosário FM* (Pará). Two hundred surveys were randomly applied to women, men, indigenous people, *quilombolas* (Afro-descendants), riverside dweller, extractivists and urban dwellers.

The survey showed that where there is no electricity, radio has become the only media. Through it, inhabitants access information that is then communicated by word of mouth to the rest of the community. In areas with access to Internet and electricity, television, radio and social media have the largest audience. Most of the radio stations found in these four Amazonian states are private, linked to politicians or belong to church groups.

Radio Nacional da Amazônia, which belongs to Brazil's public broadcasting system, is also received. Respondents from the four states stated that most of the media are influenced by politicians. As for community radio stations, few were mentioned, or respondents said that they were unaware of them. This turns out to be a paradox, since, on the one hand, they are numerous and relevant to the communications ecosystem, but at the same time, they are invisible beyond their town.

Ninety percent of the people surveyed indicated that environmental news and information on climate change is rarely produced in these media. Meanwhile, they mentioned the RNA newspaper and the *Ampliando Vozes* program, broadcast by *Radio Rural Educadora de Tefé*, as media where they do find environmental information.

In the Amazonian state of Roraima, the survey pointed to mining as the major source of contamination and health problems due to mercury. As for the media, 70% of respondents answered that they get information through social media, then radio and finally television.

In the state of Maranhão, the extraction of sand, minerals, deforestation, land conflicts and threats were the main problems highlighted in the surveys. Indigenous and *quilombola* (Afro-descendant) territories are the most affected. Recent high temperatures were also mentioned and attributed to deforestation and climate change. In terms of communication, most have access to television, radio and Internet, but they reiterate that there is little dissemination of environmental information through these media.

In the state of Pará, the problems most cited by respondents were deforestation, mining (legal and illegal) and overfishing. Another worrying factor in the region is the strong presence of agribusiness. As a result, the surveys indicate, many families are losing their land or are being evicted to make room for agribusiness, in addition to suffering health problems due to the extensive use of pesticides. In analyzing the questionnaires, RNA found that 85% of the respondents omitted the names of the companies entering the territory.

This reflects the fear of reprisals and threats as a consequence of complaints related to extractivist actors. Likewise, the interviewees highlighted the ineffectiveness of governments to solve problems and to support social movements and NGOs in the struggle for the defense of territories. Turning the media into allies in this struggle is another challenge in the Amazon region, according to RNA.

According to RNA, which owns 20 radio stations (out of which only one is a community radio station) located in seven Brazilian states, some radio stations report on the processes of “prior, free and informed consultation” that are developed within the framework of the regulations on projects in the Amazon region. However, for RNA, more training is needed for journalists to cover such sensitive topics and to do so safely, as it can cost them their lives, as happened to British journalist Dom Phillips and indigenist Bruno Pereira in 2022. In this regard, RNA has joined the National Network for the Protection of Journalists and Communicators in order to reinforce support and legal advice in the event of a situation that puts the safety of reporters at risk.

At the same time, RNA considers that it is necessary to raise the critical awareness of the inhabitants of the Amazon so that they can participate in a better way in the debates and processes related to their territories. For this reason, it states that the strengthening of Amazonian radio stations is fundamental, as they play an important role in this awareness-raising process.

COLOMBIA

"Conflicts associated with land and natural resources are not only numerous and frequent, they are also often protracted and twice as likely to recur in the first five years as other types of conflict. Moreover, they are fueled by crises, such as climate change, democratic crisis and mass migration, which are hotbeds of political, economic, social and environmental instability." [18]

18 Global Witness. Una década de Resistencia. (2022) https://www.globalwitness.org/es/decade-defiance-es/#accounting-over-half-2021-attacks-mexico-colombia-and-brazil-es

Efforts and Risks of Conserving Biodiversity

In 2023, Colombia was the country that achieved the greatest reduction in deforestation of tropical rainforests in the world, according to data from Global Forest Watch. The decrease was 48% compared to 2022 [18]. However, Colombia's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development warned that in 2024 there is an upward trend in deforestation due to “significant coercion by armed groups in the area” and El Niño weather phenomenon. [19]

The decrease in deforestation in Colombia in 2023 is attributed to several government policies and strategies, such as the expansion of the National System of Protected Areas and the strengthening of the Comprehensive Strategy for Deforestation Control and Forest Management (EICD, by its Spanish acronym). Furthermore, the achievements of the National Program of Payments for Environmental Services, which seeks to promote conservation through economic incentives by means of agreements with communities in the territories, have been added to this. In the Amazonian department of Vaupés, where most progress has been made thanks to the agreements signed, the indigenous communities are guaranteeing the protection of at least 3,992 hectares. [20]

Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world; the first in bird and orchid species; and the second with the most plants, amphibians, butterflies and freshwater fish. It also holds the third position in number of species of palms and reptiles, and fourth place in mammals.

Because of the importance for the world of conserving this wealth, Colombia was chosen to host the Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP16), to be held in October 2024 under the theme “Peace with Nature.” With this theme, the Colombian government intends to “call for reflection to improve the relationship we have with the environment and to think of an economic model that does not prioritize extraction, overexploitation or pollution of nature.” [21]

[18] https://www.regnskog.no/en/news/increased-global-deforestation-despite-decline-in-tropical-primary-forest-loss
[19] La deforestación baja en 2023 y en 2024 enfrenta amenazas - Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (minambiente.gov.co)
[20] El Espectador (published on April 7, 2024). https://www.elespectador.com/colombia/mas-regiones/amazonas-guainia-y-vaupes-invierten-presupuesto-en-pagos-por-servicios-ambientales-noticias-hoy/
[21] Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia https://www.minambiente.gov.co/colombia-presenta-al-mundo-la-imagen-de-la-cop16-paz-con-la-naturaleza/#:~:text=Bajo%20el%20tema%20de%20Paz,Convenci%C3%B3n%20sobre%20la%20Diversidad%20Biol%

It is hoped that COP16 will succeed in persuading the international financial system to support the protection of the Amazon, both to contain deforestation and to improve restoration processes and develop more scientific research aimed at its conservation.

In order to comply with the commitments of the Biodiversity Conference of the Parties, Colombia has a National System of Protected Areas (SINAP, by its Spanish acronym), made up of 1,116 protected areas covering more than -31 million hectares, equivalent to 15% of the national territory. Unfortunately, threats to SINAP officials and deforestation in protected areas continue to be the order of the day. [22]

Defending nature and land is highly risky in Colombia due to the economic interests behind extractivism, armed groups and organized crime. Attacks and killings of environmental defenders have been on the rise in recent decades. At least 60 of them were killed in 2022, according to the latest count by Global Witness. [23]

One of the most suitable legal instruments to address this situation is the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, (Escazú Agreement), as it includes specific clauses related to environmental and land defenders. The Colombian Congress ratified the Agreement in 2022; however, at the time of this assessment, the Constitutional Court had not yet made a decision on the review of its constitutionality, which is indispensable for its implementation.

“Conflicts associated with land and natural resources are not only numerous and frequent, they are also often protracted and twice as likely to recur in the first five years as other types of conflict. Moreover, they are fueled by crises, such as climate change, democratic crisis and mass migration, which are hotbeds of political, economic, social and environmental instability.” [24]

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[22] Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia. La deforestación baja en 2023 y en 2024 enfrenta amenazas - Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (minambiente.gov.co)

[23] El País (Spain), September 2023. https://elpais.com/america-futura/2023-09-12/colombia-es-el-mayor-cementerio-mundial-de-defensores-de-la-tierra.html

[24] Global Witness. Una década de Resistencia. (2022) https://www.globalwitness.org/es/decade-defiance-es/#accounting-over-half-2021-attacks-mexico-colombia-and-brazil-es

In addition, there are internal displacements due to environmental factors, including those generated by disasters, the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation. Hence, in April 2024, the Colombian Constitutional Court issued a ruling recognizing the displacement of people for reasons associated with climate change and natural disasters, ordering the State to ensure that they have the means to restore all their rights, and ordering Congress to legislate to address forced internal displacement for environmental reasons.

The High Court emphasized that climate change, deforestation and other environmental deterioration often develop progressively, even imperceptibly at times, but still end up generating devastating consequences for people, especially for the most vulnerable.

Socio-Environmental Issues

According to the Territorial Environmental Information System of the Colombian Amazon, the Amazon biome covers 23.3% of the total national territory (including the marine area) and represents 42.3% of the continental part. Regionally, its area corresponds to 6.8% of the Amazon. The Amazon region covers the southern part of the department of Vichada; the southeastern part of Meta; the entire territory of the departments of Guainía, Guaviare, Vaupés, Amazonas, Putumayo and Caquetá; the *Bota Caucana* in the department of Cauca and the Amazonian slopes of Nariño (the upper part of the Guamuéz, Sucio, San Miguel and Aguarico rivers). In total, there are 79 territorial entities, divided as follows: 61 municipalities and 18 non-municipalized areas.

The Colombian Amazon suffered an alteration with the advent of colonization generated by the "bonanzas," first of quinine, then of rubber and later of furs. After these periods ended, colonization continued as a result of the bipartisan violence and later, government policies that encouraged the colonization of border areas. Today, the region is populated by indigenous communities (56 indigenous peoples [25]), *mestizos* and Afro-descendants who are mainly engaged in agriculture,

[25] DWA El desafío de comunicar la diversidad, p. 16

cattle ranching, ecotourism services and commercial ventures.

> To these waves of colonization, which were the origin of deforestation, a new cycle of colonization was added in the 1970s with the emergence of illicit crops (*Observatorio Amazonia*). To eradicate them, glyphosate spraying was used, an herbicide with different chemical components harmful to the environment, such as potassium, isopropylamine salt of N-phosphonomethylglycine, ammonium and other inorganic agents. Among the effects on the land, ecosystems and communities are several types of cancer and a decrease in soil productivity. According to UN data, in 2021, around 204,000 hectares of coca were cultivated in Colombia, of which approximately 70% is concentrated in the Colombian Amazon, especially the departments of Putumayo and Caquetá.

"In the Colombian case, the phenomenon of deforestation is very complex, given that it is the result of illegal processes, including drug trafficking, arms trafficking and the presence of illegal groups, intermingled with a scenario of land grabbing and expansion of the agricultural frontier (cattle ranching and agribusiness), without it being possible to have information on all the situations present in the region." [26]

Until 2016, the former FARC guerrillas controlled the exploitation of the jungle in the department of Guaviare. Anyone who wanted to fell trees had to ask their permission and usually the only logging allowed was of small tracts of land that peasant families dedicated to growing crops for their consumption. If these rules were broken, the guerrillas imposed fines on violators.

Several researchers point out that, during the years following the Peace Accords between the Colombian State and the FARC guerrilla, the Andean and Amazon region lost more native forest than during 24 years of conflict with that guerrilla. (Murillo Sandoval et al. 2021, p. 6). This is because "fearful of the new restrictive land policies [expected to be implemented after the Peace Accord], local ranchers and outside investors aggressively pursued large-scale land grabbing... Large landowners and outside investors, no longer deterred by the FARC's restrictive land use regulation during the conflict," precipitated deforestation (Murillo-Sandoval et al., 2020 in Murillo-Sandoval et al., 2021, p. 8). However, it should be mentioned that although during the hegemony of the extinct FARC, the guerrilla stopped deforestation for commercial uses, on the other hand, they cut down important amounts of forest for the construction of roads in the Amazon region (Sinchi Institute 27).

[26] Observatorio Amazonia Sobre nosotros (fcds.org.co)
[27] https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a68b4e579dfa467592f81d14d9b3d849

The Orinoquía region has four million hectares of cattle-raising land, according to the Agustin Codazzi Geographic Institute. The Amazon region has zero. And although the department of Guaviare belongs to the latter region, the 2008 livestock census of the Colombian Agricultural Institute counted 169,000 head of cattle, and the 2019 census counted 443,633 animals. In other words, in 11 years, the number of cows nearly tripled in this Amazonian department. This implied a vast process of deforestation and replacement of forests with pastures.

A 2010 report by the Amazonian Institute of Scientific Research (Sinchi, by its Spanish acronym) explains it as follows: “The indigenous population has subsistence systems that do not require major interventions on the environment to meet their needs and requirements. But, on the other hand, the *mestizo* population that has arrived in the region comes from the Eastern Llanos and the departments of Huila and Tolima, with a strong cattle-raising tradition, which has led them to replicate these models.”

In response to deforestation, the Colombian government has also implemented REDD+ carbon credit initiatives. These initiatives, grouped under a national program named *Visión Amazonia*, have sought to strengthen local and indigenous forest governance, improve institutional coordination, promote sustainable livelihoods through agricultural production, and create an enabling political governance environment (Rodriguez de Franciso et al. 2021, p. 4). However, academics and researchers observe that these credits have been distorted, resulting in what is known as “green washing” or a method to whitewash the image of companies that harm nature.

Mineral extraction is another cause of socio-environmental conflicts in several areas of Colombia. Illegal mining of coltan, gold and construction materials (sand - gravel) is also carried out in the Amazonian departments of Guainía, Amazonas and Vaupés (DWA, 2020). It has been demonstrated that the mercury used in gold mining ends up contaminating rivers, fish and, therefore, riverside populations.

Gold mining is devastating Colombia's “protected areas,” particularly in the Amazonian department of Guainía. Overflights conducted between 2022 and 2023 by National Natural Parks of Colombia

identified 10 illegal mining sites within the protected area, resulting in 72.2 hectares deforested. [28]

Informal and illegal mining in Colombia have implications ranging from evading control systems over natural resources, evading tax burdens, causing irreversible damage to protected ecosystems, failing to comply with the minimum requirements of workers' rights, and even becoming a source of fundraising without state control used to finance illegal activities (Sandoval, Marín and Almanza 2017 p. 2).

Meanwhile, legal mining generates different types of socio-environmental pressures that may result in internal tensions in the communities, ranging from transformation of productive indigenous systems and impacts on fauna, flora and water resources to scenarios of risk to human health, therefore, being potential triggers of socio-environmental conflicts. (Sinchi, 2022)

As in other countries that share the Amazon, the oil wells have replaced the millenary trees. More than 90% of the oil exploration or production projects are located in the Amazonian departments of Caquetá and Putumayo. Oil exploration-production in the Colombian Amazon dates back to the 1960s. Since then, 738 oil wells have been drilled in 31 Amazonian municipalities. In Colombia, oil exploitation has caused serious damage to water sources, illnesses in the communities and the murder of those who denounce these events. An example of this is the contamination of rivers that provided water to the communities of Puerto Vega-Teteyé, in the Amazonian department of Putumayo, by oil spills from the exploitation of Consorcio Energy (today the Canadian Gran Tierra Energy). Since 2002, the community has been defending the water with strikes, legal processes and with their own lives.

> In several international and national scenarios, the current president of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, has stated that during his government he will not sign new oil, coal and gas exploration contracts, as a measure to curb the climate crisis and that, instead, he is progressing in the energy transition. Likewise, he opposes the fracking method in oil and gas exploration, as it pollutes the environment and affects the health of communities.

In addition to drug trafficking and the presence of dissident armed groups of the FARC (which departed from the Peace Accords), a major factor undermining effective environmental governance

[28] https://www.elespectador.com/investigacion/las-rutas-del-oro-sucio-asi-avanza-la-mineria-ilegal-de-oro-en-la-amazonia-oro-colombiano/

in the Colombian Amazon is related to the inability of state policies to effectively integrate indigenous paradigms. Torres and Verschoor stated that state policies have a colonial perspective towards the Amazon region, that is, one that understood the area as an empty land and one that needed to be governed in order for the state to claim sovereignty (Torres and Verschoor 2020, p. 127).

In contrast, indigenous perspectives understand the land as something closer to a living body or entity from which all life emanates and which needs to be protected and healed rather than governed. For Torres and Verschoor, the result of the dispute between these competing visions is that none of them is able to become dominant and, therefore, none manages to effectively protect the territory and the people who inhabit it. In this context, a third paradigm ends up becoming dominant, one rooted in illegal and environmentally destructive activities, such as drug trafficking and mining, which provide easy money and corrode the social fabric of communities, and which is nurtured by bad governance (Torres and Verschoor 2020, p. 130). Torres and Verschoor echo the position of Rodriguez de Franciso et al. in arguing that the only way out of this crossroads is to begin to "take seriously indigenous ways of relating to the environment in the framing of environmental problems and solutions." (Torres and Verschoor 2020, p. 131).

Community and State Radio Stations in the Colombian Amazon

Communication in the Amazon is limited due to the enormous extension of the territory, the few communication routes between rural and urban areas, and the climatic conditions marked by periods of intense rains, high temperatures and humidity. This prevents good connectivity. Internet speed is slower than in the rest of the country, despite the fact that telecommunications companies such as Claro (the main telecommunications company in Colombia) has announced the installation of 4G in several areas. In this country, Internet access is below 47.7% among the Amazonian population, which in reality can mean any number below that figure. In general, people complain about the lack of connectivity that prevents them from making progress in communication initiatives. For example, young people in the department of Amazonas cannot attend classes online because the Internet speed is not sufficient. (DW-A, p. 23)

Nevertheless, DW Akademie study found that by 2020, there were 18 news websites operating from the six Amazonian departments; eleven newspapers with a limited, mainly urban reach; and 26 TV channels were tuned in (DW-A, p. 26).

However, the Amazon also poses a communication challenge due to the multiplicity of ethnic groups and heterogeneous cultures, such as indigenous peoples, *mestizos* and Afro-descendants. Thus, radio continues to be a medium that, due to its technological characteristics, is more accessible to the inhabitants of the region.

Due to the internal armed conflict scenarios, the Colombian Army implemented a network of radio stations, "*Colombia Estéreo*," which has coverage throughout the country. Given its institutional character, its programming aims to promote its campaigns, in addition to broadcasting news and music. However, communities avoid it, especially in areas where the Army fights guerrilla and organized crime organizations, to avoid being seen as allies of the Army and thus becoming targets of illegal armed groups.

According to the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP, by its Spanish acronym), six out of seven departments in the Amazon region were classified as "silent" according to *Cartografías de la Información* (Information Cartographies), i.e., areas where there are no media outlets producing local news. For this reason, community communicators have taken on the responsibility of narrating their territory and set up the *Red Amazónica de Periodismo Comunitario* (Amazonian Community Journalism Network). Among the people who are part of this initiative are leaders of peasant organizations and productive associations.

Community radio has a long history in Colombia characterized by the disappearance of many radio stations while licenses continue to be issued for new ones. Over time, several radio networks have been formed, which today are grouped in the Federation of Community Media of Colombia (Fedemedios, by its Spanish acronym), which represents 350 radio stations. Among its achievements are agreements with *Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia* (National Open and Distance University) to reduce tuition fees for members of the affiliated radio stations; agreements with the associations that represent the rights of authors and composers in Colombia, which means significant savings for the radio stations in terms of royalties. In addition to managing discounts for the use of the electromagnetic spectrum and legal steps to be included in public policies.

Leaders of social organizations and non-profit foundations are trained in communication skills through Fedemedios' School of Community Communication. The training has been carried out throughout Colombia, including Amazonian departments.

Likewise, in compliance with the Peace Accords signed between the Colombian State and the FARC guerrilla (2016), the state-owned *Radio Nacional* has trained members of organizations of victims of the internal armed conflict and members of *Ecomún*, the cooperative of demobilized FARC members, in radio production and techniques to operate the radios that have been licensed and equipped for them. To date, the commitment to create 20 community radio stations, named *Emisoras de Paz*, in municipalities and territories historically affected by the armed conflict has been fulfilled, in order to give a voice to the communities so that they can tell their stories, needs and socio-environmental situation. Some of them are located in Colombia's Amazonian departments, where members of ethnic groups and social organizations participate. In order for these radio stations to contribute to peacebuilding in a sustained manner, the Colombian government must allocate economic, technical and operational resources.

In order to obtain a direct opinion on the coverage of environmental issues by radio stations in the Colombian Amazon, the Colombian organization "*Grupo Comunicarte*" consulted representatives of the radio stations *Juventud Estéreo* (Guaviare), *Dignidad Estéreo 89.7fm* (Guaviare), *Camaxagua Estéreo* (Meta) and *CDH La Colmena* (Putumayo).

> The media people consulted state that the communities are aware of the environmental damage caused in their territories. However, they point out that environmental regulations are not understood by the communities and, therefore, it is important that the local and community media carry out their outreach work available to all and promote the use of native languages.

Aware of this situation, the organization *Foro Nacional Ambiental* (National Environmental Forum) will hold 16 educational forums on biodiversity throughout Colombia in preparation for COP16. Likewise, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development will hold workshops on COP16 in 20 Colombian cities, including three in the Amazon.

CONCLUSIONS

The surveys conducted in Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil show that radio is the main medium in the rural areas of the Amazon region, and that it transmits little timely and reliable information on local and regional environmental issues because its programming is influenced by the political and economic interests of its owners or financial backers. Thus, community radio is called upon to convey local environmental information and give a voice to the actors in situ.

Taken from the text of the assessment conclusions

Conclusions

According to the atlas “Amazonia Under Pressure,” published by the Amazon Network of Georeferenced Socio-Environmental Information, 66% of the Amazon is subject to some type of pressure that generates deforestation or degradation, which favors climate change in two ways. When forests are lost, the trees that capture greenhouse gases are lost, and when they are cut down, they release the carbon dioxide they have captured. In total, deforestation alone causes about 10% of global emissions.

Environmental degradation in the Ecuadorian Amazon is mainly due to mining, oil exploitation, agricultural activity and the construction of public works, such as hydroelectric dams. These activities have generated deforestation and socio-environmental tensions due to the impact on the health of the communities, loss of their customs, and contamination of water, soil, and fauna. This impact is exacerbated in the most vulnerable populations (indigenous people and Afro-descendants), who stand out for the defense of their territories and culture, despite the threats and attacks that this struggle brings against them.

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has some origins that coincide with Ecuador's, and others that are more unique. Among the main ones are the fires caused by human beings with the aim of pruning the forest for agricultural and livestock production. The production of soybeans and cattle, Brazil's main export products, is located mainly in the Amazon. In addition, there is the extraction of minerals and Amazonian timber, as well as the construction of infrastructure such as ports, roads and hydroelectric plants. These activities have a direct impact on the way of life of the native peoples because they destroy indigenous lands, provoke violence, conflicts and river contamination. The State implements several measures to contain deforestation and the invasion of indigenous lands, while indigenous peoples continue to struggle to protect their territories even at the cost of their lives.

In Colombia, the causes of deforestation in the Amazon have been multiplying. Coca production and processing have been added to livestock activities, mainly by settlers from other regions of Colombia. With the dismantling of the FARC guerrilla, which acted as an environmental authority, legal and illegal mining has increased, and with it deforestation. In addition, oil exploitation and exploration in the jungle, and the subsequent opening of roads, has increased. All these activities generate different types of socio-environmental pressures that result in internal community tensions, transformation of indigenous productive systems, impacts on fauna-flora and water resources, and risk scenarios for human and ecosystem health. In a scenario with the presence of armed groups, drug trafficking and

extractive companies, the protection of Amazonian ecosystems and indigenous territories puts both communities and state officials at risk. Figures show that Colombia is one of the countries in the world where it is most dangerous to defend the environment and the land.

Although, as recorded by international monitoring organizations, there has been progress in reducing deforestation in the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon as a result of public environmental policies, the rate of logging is still high and there are serious shortcomings in the application of such policies at the local level in the three countries, particularly with regard to the implementation of “free, prior and informed consultation” with the communities involved in any project to be carried out in the Amazon.

These improvements are also the result of agreements to exchange financial incentives for environmental services promoted by the communities and administered locally. Although their coverage is still limited considering the size of the Amazon, they do represent a step forward in the recognition that agricultural practices and land use by traditional and indigenous peoples favor the conservation and natural restoration of Amazonian ecosystems.

However, access to information and the right to communication are extremely limited for the communities living in the Brazilian, Colombian and Ecuadorian Amazon. The lack of electricity and Internet connectivity in non-urban areas of the region has made radio the medium with the greatest coverage in the Amazon in the three countries. However, the ownership of these stations varies from country to country.

According to a survey conducted by RNA on the environmental communication situation in four Amazonian states (Amazonas, Roraima, Marañao, Pará), most of the radio stations broadcasting in these territories are private, linked to politicians or churches. Based on the answers given by nearly 200 people surveyed, it is evident that there is a perception that politicians influence the radio stations, that the programming gives very little space to local environmental issues, and that community radio stations are practically unknown.

In Colombia, the radio stations present in the Amazon region are part of either private radio networks, the State's public radio broadcasting system, or the National Army's network of radio stations, and a few are community radio stations. The National Army radio station is part of an informative strategy implemented throughout the country, particularly in areas where guerrilla groups or drug traffickers are present, as is the case in the Amazon region.

In Ecuador, community radio has had an important development partly due to the boost given by the government during the second decade of this century, and partly due to the effort dedicated to it by the indigenous peoples and nationalities. Its audience is on a par with that of private radio stations in the provincial capitals of the Ecuadorian Amazon, according to a study carried out by the Coordinating Body of Popular and Educational Community Media of Ecuador (CORAPE, by its Spanish acronym). In fact, the ethnic radio stations, which are members of the Amazon Intercultural Radio Network (RIAR, by its Spanish acronym), carry out collaborative work aimed at strengthening indigenous communities, their culture and perspective, so that they can participate in local and regional development processes. This network's work is highly valued by the indigenous communities, who prefer to access information through community media that use native languages and produce content that reflects the context of their towns. However, considering the region's radio spectrum, Spanish is the predominant language of the media in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

CORAPE conducted a focus group exercise, which allowed us to determine the five main challenges to the right to communication and access to information in the Amazon, which are also common to Colombia and Brazil: Broadcasting in native languages, use of new communication technologies, threats from political and economic interest groups, women's participation, and financial sustainability.

The surveys conducted in Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil show that radio is the main medium in the rural areas of the Amazon region, and that it transmits little timely and reliable information on local and regional environmental issues because its programming is influenced by the political and economic interests of its owners or financial backers. Thus, community radio is called upon to convey local environmental information and give a voice to the actors in situ.

Considering the enormous and valuable wisdom held by the different Amazonian ethnic groups on environmental care and sustainable production, issues that are very little disseminated in the media, putting these issues on the media agenda would be the greatest contribution of community radio stations to the adaptation to the climate crisis.

Likewise, the advent of the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP30, in Belém, is an opportunity for community radio stations to amplify the proposals of the different traditional, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities on the issues to be discussed at COP30. To this end, existing radio stations need to be strengthened both in their capacity to develop environmental

journalism and to manage resources that will allow them to carry out their journalistic work in a professional manner. In this way, it is hoped that communities will be able to participate more actively in environmental policy and, in particular, influence the proposals that their governments will take to international meetings, such as COP30 and COP16.

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The voices, knowledge and ideas of the people most affected by the effects of climate change, such as the urban poor, family farmers, indigenous communities and vulnerable women in the Global South, are rarely heard in the media