

WOMEN FEED THE WORLD

LAND FOR THE WOMEN WHO WORK IT

 WE
EFFECT **LATFEM**



Photo: Marcus Lundstedt

Research Coordinators: Mariana Paterlini (Institutional Coordinator at LatFem) and Damaris Ruiz (Program Director Latin America for We Effect).

Authors: Azul Cordo, María Paz Tibiletti and Damaris Ruiz.

Methodology and Data Analysis: Mariana Paterlini.

Research Adviser: Ricardo Quirós.

Editor: María Florencia Alcaraz.

Work Team and Data Gathering: Mireya Cavieles, Yeraldin Camelo, Milagro Escobar, Carlos Tzul, Glays Xol, Byron Caal, German Coy, Mariano Moo, Elva Tzoc, Fredy Misti, Iram Sales, Hermelinda Pérez, Aurora Bol, Fernanda Alvarado, Yoselyn Ordoñez, Manuel Escobar, Mónica Hernández, Verónica Maquin, Carolina Reyes, Elva María Tzoc Che y Sara Avilez Tomé, Márilyn Carlosama Sandoval, Kelly Johana Quitian Sosa, Danixa Muñoz, Juliana Jimenez, Yúnior Oyuela Núñez, Gilson Castillo Romero, Lizmy Banegas, Lincu Díaz, Analítika, S.A. (El Salvador), Institute for Rural Development in South America (IPDRS - Bolivia).

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Fight hunger with gender justice

"Do not go out, stay at home and work there," the authorities instructed. What if you are unable to work from home? What if your work is not on the computer, and cannot be done online?

The COVID-19 pandemic turned the whole world upside down. Everyone was affected, one way or another. However, the pandemic and the crisis it unleashed had the direst effect on those who were already living in conditions of poverty.

The pandemic-induced crisis has primarily affected people of limited means who are unable to work from home, people who work in the fields with a machete and a hoe. The protagonists of this report; rural women, women peasants, indigenous and Afro-descendant women, for instance. Restrictions and lockdown cost them their income, which had already been in short supply. When the pandemic shuttered the majority of local markets, these small-scale peasants who used to trek into the marketplaces to sell the fruits of their labor, were bereft of this income that was so valuable to their families.

Closed markets and lost income also made finding food harder. According to United Nations estimates, between 720 and 811 million people in the world went hungry in 2020. This is 161 million more than the previous year. This report shows that almost 60% of respondents faced difficulties accessing food as a result of the pandemic.

Six years ago, the international community rallied under the blue flag of the United Nations to eliminate hunger by 2030. It is easy to understand why, when there two billion people worldwide with no secure access to the food they need today. However, the problem is not decreasing - it is increasing.

Eliminating hunger requires work on the causes - not merely the symptoms. One of the fundamental causes is the injustice experienced by rural women in Latin America and throughout the world. Most farm workers in the world are women, and they are responsible for half of food production worldwide. Women feed the world, but they endure hunger the most, and have the least access to farmland. Women work the land, but others own it.

In Latin America, this is a serious problem. This study shows that, although 70% of rural women have access to land to grow food, only 30% of them have land in their own name. Instead of owning the land they work on, it is often borrowed, leased or in the name of the husband who sets aside a small plot for the woman to experiment.

However, ensuring that rural women - especially peasant-, indigenous- and Afro-descendant women, who are among the most marginalized - have access to and control over land is a fundamental condition for sustainable rural development. On the one hand, it is fundamental for their economic empowerment and self-reliance, and on the other, it is fundamental for their right to food justice and the struggle against hunger.

These are some of the reasons we have prepared this report. We wanted to gain in-depth insight into the realities experienced by rural women in Latin America. We wanted to take in the dimensions of the issues they face when they lack access to land and food justice. What kinds of violence do they experience, and how has the pandemic crisis affected them?

These questions are raised because We Effect wants to fight the causes of major problems in the world, not just treat the symptoms. Fighting the causes ensures the community has food today, tomorrow and thereafter. This report shows that the role rural women play in achieving this is extremely important.

Anna Tibblin
Secretary General
We Effect



Photo: Philip Krook

FEMINIST NARRATIVES FOR BUILDING A MORE JUST WORLD

Feminist struggles are generally presented in the traditional mass media in the sizzling images of the excesses caused by large mass demonstrations in the streets. Nonetheless, there are other, less effervescent images, that emanate ancestral power, and it is necessary - urgent, even - to shed light on them, in order to learn the stories they contain: The daily subterfuge and silent resistance that are built in the territories outside urban spaces. The images are not new, but are at the margins of hegemonic narratives. In these times, when health, economic, environmental, caregiving - and a long etcetera - crisis proliferate incessantly, it is necessary to approach, get to know and talk about those people who put life at the center.

Everyday and every moment, rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women of Latin American and the Caribbean are carrying forward actions that put life at the center, and developing strategies to defend the body-territory. Everyday and every moment, *women feed the world*, and in so doing, they are involved in survival at the most elemental level, facing forms of oppression that the patriarchy deploys against them: They only get to own the lands they work if their partner or male relatives die; they cultivate small plots that they improve with agroecological techniques, without chemicals, but others benefit from these improvements. As women, partners, wives, daughters and sisters, they are not exempt from interpersonal macho violence. As activists, they face the deadly risks violence perpetrated by the state and by extractive projects overrunning the region, casting them out of their lands, and even taking their lives.

Their daily labor and chores, a replica of what goes on in the caregiving systems, has been historically rendered invisible or neutralized as part of what ought to be. In the domestic spaces out in the jungles, the forests, the fields, the extensive and diverse territories they inhabit, they have no walls as homes do in urban spaces, but they still reproduce cultural imaginaries that underestimate them or even ignore them, and wind up casting them out of public policy designs that could strengthen their potential, lift the overbearing burden of labor or basically might protect them from threats and persecution.

Unfortunately, these rural women, peasant women, Afro-descendant women, indigenous and native women, appear in the mass media once the news is tragedy: Disappearance, murder, a land seizure that ended in violence. This is how the world learned of Berta Caceres and her struggle in Honduras. Her political femicide in 2016 was a call to feminist journalists to push for justice to fence impunity in, but also a reflection about what was going on with those who are on the first line of defense of the land and territory, but whose stories were not being narrated.

Prior to this study, LatFem was certain that *women feed the world*, but we knew little about their life journeys, and their communities, how they farmed, how they accessed the land, how they organized in the face of patriarchal, racist and capitalist violence on a daily basis. We wanted to hear their voices, and shorten the distances that the pandemic had widened.

As activists and journalists, we believe feminist narratives are transformative. Our conviction stems from having been protagonists and witnesses to these changes: From the cry for Not One Less that shot across the region, to the green tide in favor of the right to decide about our own bodies. And in this context, guided by this conviction, we created LatFem in 2017. It is about denouncing everything that jeopardizes the lives of girls, adolescents, women, lesbians, transvestites and trans-persons in Latin American and the Caribbean, but also refers to everything they do to be alive in a dignified way. It is about creating messages and discourse beyond progressive spheres, and to speak to those who have not yet been summoned to these struggles for feminism, the environment and social justice.

As an organization, we believe in the power of partnerships, coordination and creating complicity, and we therefore join We Effect in searching for the data that had not yet found its way into our journalist work. The report bellow is the result of collective and interdisciplinary efforts. And it is a tool to tell life stories and contribute data, two fundamental elements for quality journalism that disputes the installed meanings.

In a world at the brink of extinction, we know that without gender justice, there can be no social or environmental justice. That is why, we consider that contributing to sharing the stories of rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women, for a more just world for them, and everyone, is now an ethical and political imperative as feminists.

María Florencia Alcaraz
Co-directora de LatFem



Photo: Philip Krook

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The regional and worldwide peasant movement has shed light on the importance and leading role of farmer and rural women in sustainability of life. Data provided by the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the Organization of American States (OAS), rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women defenders of the earth and territories, represent 50% of the formal food production force in the world. They are the majority in small-scale food production, but on a daily basis experience the paradox of feeding the world without having tenure over the land they cultivate.

In addition, people and communities have a role as keepers of native and local seeds, together with ongoing technical and scientific training and upgrading with the "farmer to farmer" methodology, which involves transmitting ancestral knowledge to the new generations. These practices have not only ensured subsistence for peasant women and their families historically, they also drove agroecological development to produce healthy and safe food, and the creation of food sovereignty (La Via Campesina, 2021)

Indigenous and native communities of Latin America and the Caribbean protect 80% of the biological wealth of the continent (United Nations Environment Program, UNEP, 2021), and manage 3,000 territories and conservation areas, known as "territories of life," under governance and conservation models that are recognized by the United Nations, and women tend to lead these processes in their territories.

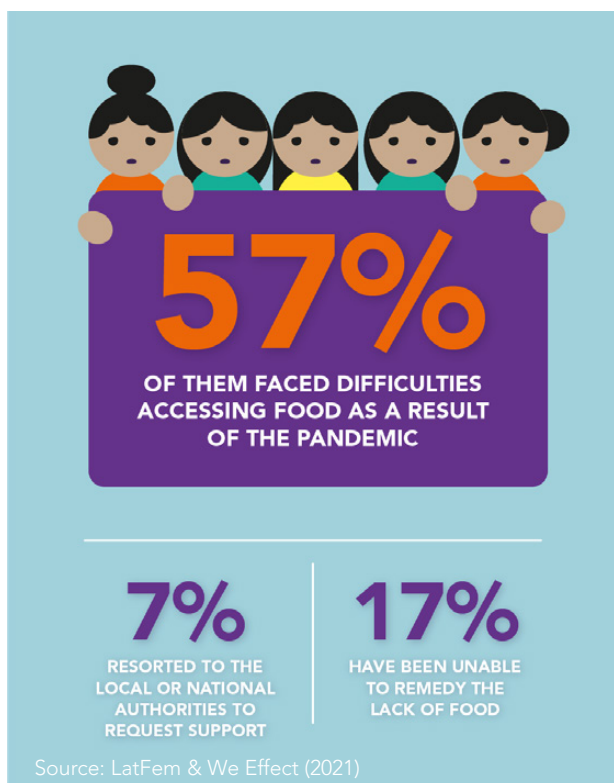
Nevertheless, rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women are still unable to access land rights and control. This lack of ownership also affects their ability to access loans and financial services, as they have no collateral, and face limitations in

accessing "the public resources to support local peasants and the national and international markets for their produce," as noted by the CIM/OAS (2021) in its paper on "Rural women, agriculture and sustainable development the Americas in times of COVID-19." Throughout the years, financial institutions have used land as collateral for loans, a handicap for the vast majority of peasant women who do not own land, and live in poverty.

Given the concentration of this common asset in hands of large companies, and the entrenchment of extractive processes in the region, we deem it necessary to have evidence about the conditions of access and use of land for rural women, not only in terms of property or ownership, but also in size, amount and quality of the lands they actually have access to, these plots where they grow food and ensure the right to food for themselves, their families and communities.

Although enough food is produced for the worldwide population, in 2020, almost 811 million people in the world went hungry, 161 more than in 2019, according to *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2021). COVID-19 created a crisis that uncovered the way the food system under multinational corporate control fails to ensure food security for all people, affecting women and girls disproportionately during the pandemic.

In this study, 57% of rural women surveyed faced difficulties accessing food due to the health crisis, and they worked this out on their own or with their community. Only in 7% of the cases did they resort to the local or national authorities to request support, and 17% have yet to remedy the lack of food.



WOMEN WORK THE LAND, BUT OTHERS OWN IT

This study shows that, in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, **7 in 10** rural women have access to land to grow food, but the land is in their name in only **3 in 10** cases.

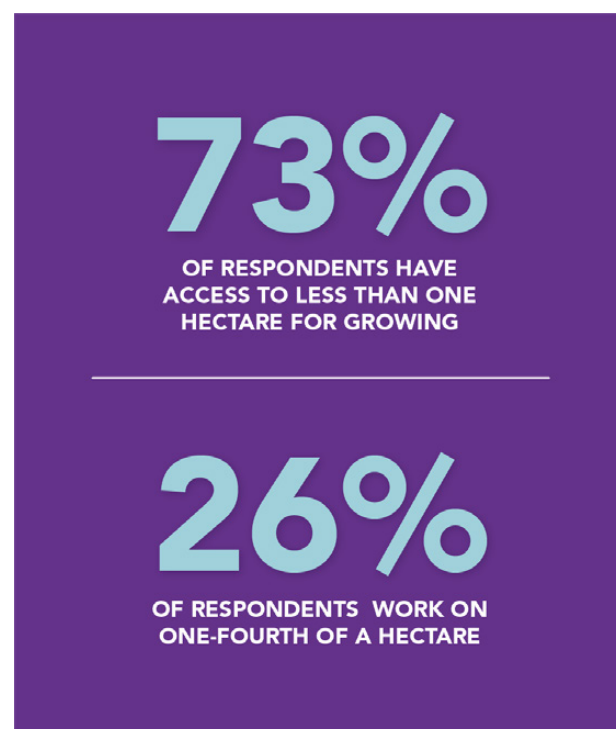
In the five countries in the study, the majority of women access farmland by inheritance (23%), except for Honduras, where access is mostly through ancestral and/or community held land.

El Salvador (93%), Bolivia (78%) and Honduras (77%) account for the highest percentages of women who responded that they had access to land to grow food, but when asked about ownership, figures plummeted to 20%, 33% and 16% respectively. Actually, 27% of women surveyed stated that the lack of access to land, inputs and technical assistance are the cause for the main land and food related conflicts in their countries.

HOW, WHERE AND FOR WHOM DO WOMEN PRODUCE?

The study notes that **57%** of rural women surveyed grow food for their families, while **36%** of them also produce for sale.

Although they guarantee food, particularly for their families and communities, most women work small plots that tend to have poor-quality soil, that needs preparation to make it productive. They "figure it out every day," as one of the respondents said, "to ensure that we at least get the crop of corn we are going to eat with the children."



This means they are not even able to get what can be considered a small food-producing farm (2 hectares according to World Bank estimates). In addition, 20% have 1 to 5 hectares, and only 2% have access to more than 20 hectares.

Given this scenario, where land ownership is fundamental to ensure food production is adequate, ecologically and economically sustainable over time,

68% of women surveyed consider that they are not taken into account as recipients of public policies for access to food or access to land. This situation clearly shows that it is important for governments to promote food sovereignty, and that they respond to proposals by peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant organizations in the region.

HIGH-RISK STRUGGLES

The process of land concentration in Latin American and the Caribbean has become more entrenched since the mid-90s, and it intensified during the 2008 world economic crisis, and the international rise in agricultural prices that accompanied the growth of the *commodities* market (Borras, 2013).

The intensity grew with the accelerated expansion of the agroindustrial boundary that put more and more lands in the hands of large agrobusinesses and installed extractive projects with the complicity of different governments throughout the region. These businesses have actually been identified in the latest Global Witness report (2021) as "responsible for climate change and attacks against defenders." During 2020, this organization recorded 227 lethal attacks around the world, an average of more than four people

murdered per week, mostly in the global south. This is the highest figure on record since the registry began in 2012, and more than one-third of these fatal attacks were against indigenous people. The report states that 9 in 10 fatalities were men; however, women defenders of land and territories face specific forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Global Witness notes the Latin American region is the most dangerous for women defenders of land, territories and common goods. During 2020, two countries account for most murder fatalities: Colombia with 65 murders, and Mexico with 30. The seriousness of these acts is compounded by the way these crimes tend to go unpunished with impunity, particularly with regard to intellectual responsibility, consequently deterring and silencing the population facing the violence.

According to surveys for this study in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, 58% of respondents who indicated they had experienced harassment and threats had not reported it, and 83% of those who reported it felt that this had not been taken into account in their country. Some 30% stated they experienced violence or threats for their role in the community. Among those who experienced acts of violence or threats, 50% perceived "differences" in the type of violence "because they were women."

EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE FOR BEING LAND DEFENDERS AND REPORTING IT

Country	Experienced violence or threats for their role in the community	Reported the violent incident	Felt the reported violence was not taken into account in their country
Bolivia	26%	43%	86%
Colombia	60%	53%	79%
El Salvador	8%	16%	90%
Guatemala	29%	19%	90%
Honduras	27%	51%	76%
Total	30%	42%	83%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

This study shows that land access and control is one of the central problems that women face, and they perceive that solving it is not a priority for Latin American States. Nonetheless, reliable information is urgent and indispensable to shore up advocacy to influence the design of laws and public policies promoting fair and equal access to land.

Access to land for peasant-, rural-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women is a fundamental prerequisite for their economic empowerment, self-reliance and right to food, and it contributes to reducing gaps between women and men. This is also key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

(United Nations, 2015) adopted by the 193 member states of the United Nations in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We are certain that the information resulting from this investigation is a fundamental tool to drive forward this debate on the public agenda, providing decisionmakers with evidence, contributing to public policy discussions in the countries analyzed, and throughout the region, in the context of decisions made for post-pandemic recovery. Since women feed the world, it is only fair for those who work the land to have access to- and ownership of this common good, and their right to food be guaranteed.



INTRODUCTION



Access to land is a historical struggle in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is one of the primary socioenvironmental, economic and political conflicts being waged in the region, which is one of the least fair in land distribution, and in so many other dimensions, as well.

Over half of productive land in the region is dedicated to 1% of large-scale exploitation, according to OXFAM

data (2016). This means that 1% of large-scale producers use more land than the remaining 99% do. The most extreme case is Colombia, where 0.4% of large farms account for over 67% of the farmland.

Despite outsized amount of farmland concentrated in very few hands, 90% of the world's farmers are native people, indigenous people and peasants, and they grow food with less than one-fourth of the farmland,

according to the 2014 Grain report. It also notes that, in Latin America, **small farmers own only 17% of the land, but contribute 50% of the total agricultural production.**

This inequality in land distribution has a greater impact on rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women in the region, who are usually left out of processes of land access and ownership, and public policies, loan programs and the legal discussions that promote them. A UN Women report in 2018 revealed that **only 13% of farmland owners worldwide are women.** In Latin America, this figure climbs to 18%, according to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Lack of access to- and/or control of land also affects economic self-reliance and other economic and social rights of rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women, whose work growing food tends to be disregarded and thrown in as part of unpaid care and reproductive work. In addition to their role in domestic and rural work, women are usually at the forefront of defending territories and the environment, responding collectively to the appropriation, concentration and foreign ownership of land in the region.

Against this backdrop, we ask, how do they farm, and who are these women who feed the world. How do they access the land they work? What type of access do they have? What kind of farming do they do? Where, how and for whom do they grow food? How do they organize to guarantee the right to land and food for themselves and their own communities? We also want to figure out the way

they live and face threats, harassment, and other forms of violence experienced by defenders of land and territories in the region.

That is why, We Effect, the largest development aid organization in the world working to provide support and capacity-building to people involved in small-scale farming in the peasant-, indigenous sphere; and LatFem -digital native media based in Argentina that practices journalism from a feminist and inter-sectional lens- have undertaken this investigation, in order to take an in-depth look at the reality of the state of small rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant farmers in five countries throughout the region: Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

This study digs deeper and wider on the scope of the report on *High-Risk Struggles: women on the front lines defending land and territories* We Effect published in 2020, whose focus of study concentrated on Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras, and documented the ways peasant-, indigenous- and women's organizations work in rural development in those countries, experienced the risks their work and land-, territory- and human-rights activism.

The following report comprises five chapters with the details of the results of each of the pillars covered: Access to land, right to food, violence and impact due to COVID-19 pandemic, and finally, the conclusions and recommendations to address these issues in feminist terms. There is also a glossary of certain fundamental concepts, a section on investigation methodology, and a technical file for each country where the investigation took place.

INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology we used in order to understand and provide evidence of the way land access and control is linked with the right to food in feminist terms, combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. Between June and October 2021, we implemented a series of information gathering instruments.

A multiple-choice, closed-answer survey was administered to 1994 women respondents (394 in Bolivia, 447 in Colombia, 407 in El Salvador, 397 in Guatemala and 349 in Honduras) 18 years or older, whose primary activity related to land use in food production, and/or defense of the right to land and food. This sample was defined in terms of the total estimated population to ensure a 95% confidence interval. In addition, to avoid bias, it was determined randomly.

In order to delve into the study's central dimensions, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with rural women, environmental and territory defenders, women in academia, and We Effect specialists and technicians accompanying territorial processes throughout the region. Along these lines, four focus groups were held, one per country, in: Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. It was not possible to hold a focus group in Bolivia because of the health crisis.

Additionally, secondary sources were reviewed and analyzed, including very important references to the women and land reports that were carried out in each country with the support of We Effect and led by partner organizations from late 2018 through 2020.

Most of the women surveyed were between the ages of 26 and 60, with similar numbers in the 26 to 40 (36% - 43%) and the 41 to 60 (36% - 40%) age groups.

Although only a small percentage of respondents in Bolivia, Colombia, El Salvador and Honduras identified as lesbians, non-binary and/or trans, we consider that acknowledging these identities studies about peasants in a scenario where LGBTQI+ visibility in rural areas is gaining traction in the Latin American and Caribbean peasant movement, as demonstrated in the experience of the Landless LBGT Collective, within the Landless Rural Worker Movement in Brazil, and more recently the Via Campesina LGBTI Collective.

Some 86% of women surveyed in the five countries have sons and daughters under their care, and 35% of them are married, while 28% are single. In addition, the majority identify Spanish as their native language, 20% stated they did not know how to read or write, and 18% said they had never had access to formal education. 35% identify as rural women, 34% as peasant women, 20% as native peasant, 8% as native indigenous and 3% as Afro-descendant peasant.

Interviews with different peasant women and land defenders provided first hand accounts of the ways they live, work, organize and what their demands are. This involved conversations with Yasmin Lopez, National Coordinator of the Council for Integral Development of the Peasant Woman (CODMICA) in Honduras, Ana Rosalia Tiul of the Committee for Peasant Unity and Maria Rosario Barrera of the National Coordinator of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA), Wilma Mendoza president of the National Confederation of Indigenous Women of Bolivia (CNAMIB), Ligia Granda, legal representative of the Raices Corporation of Colombia.

We also interviewed a variety of technicians and specialists, like Flor Edilma Osorio Perez, a researcher at the Javeriana University of Bogota's Environmental

and Rural Studies Department, Bertha Zapeta Say, We Effect representative in Guatemala, Alina Menjivar of the Feminist Collective for Local Development in El Salvador, Sara Avilez Tome, We Effect programs and gender officer in Honduras, and Alberto Lizarraga, economist and member of "Ciudadania" (Community

for Social Studies and Public Action) in Bolivia. Exchanges with specialists enabled us to grasp the different dimensions that the lack of land ownership has on access to land for peasant-, indigenous-, native-, Afro-descendant- and rural women in the region, from food rights to prevention of macho violence.



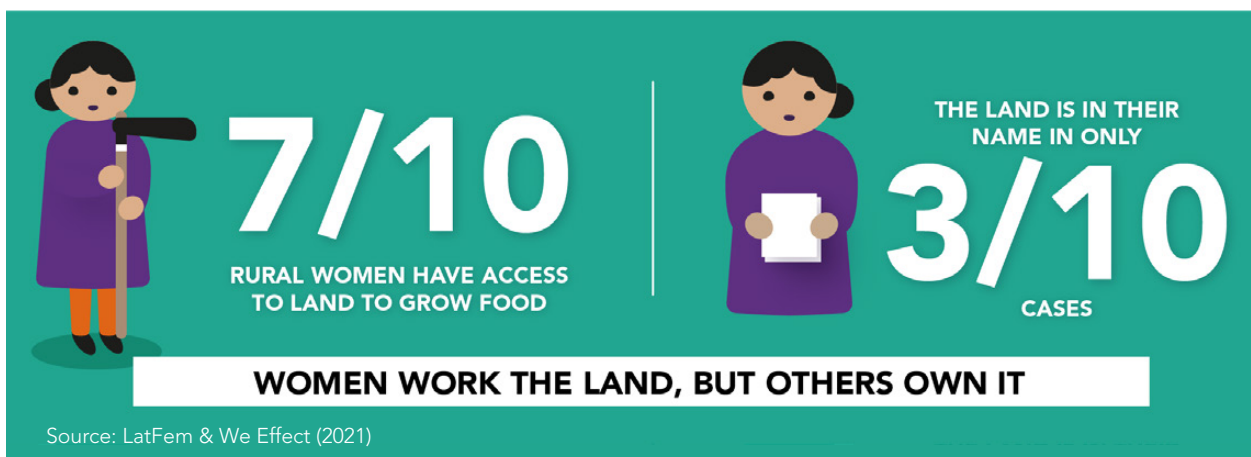
ACCESS TO LAND

In Latin American and the Caribbean, land distribution is the most inequitable worldwide, with half of the farmland accounting for 1% of the productive units in the region (OXFAM, 2016). This land distribution and concentration has given rise to a series of disputes in the region, including armed conflicts in Colombia, military takeovers in Honduras in 2009 and in Paraguay in 2012 (Borras, 2013; Dominguez, Sabatino, 2008; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2011). It has also led to the eviction of different peasant and indigenous communities from their territories, forced displacement, human rights violations, and brutal persecution and criminalization of land defenders.

The concentration of land in very few hands affects women in particular; despite being responsible for producing over half the food in the world, rural, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women hold only 18% of the land in the region, according to data provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). This study shows that, in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, 7 in 10 rural women have access to land to grow food, but the land is in their name in only 3 in 10 cases.

María Teresa García Jimenez and Rosa Agual Aguilar | Photo: Maria Torstensson





The lack of land access and control has a direct impact on the economic self-reliance of rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women. It also has an effect on their ability to claim other economic, political, social and cultural rights. The results of this study show that there is a direct relationship between inequality in land distribution, impoverishment of women and their communities, the lack of food security and sovereignty, and the risks that they are exposed to in their role as socioenvironmental leaders.

In El Salvador, 93% of respondents said they had access to land to grow food. In Bolivia and Honduras, it was 78% and 77% respectively, while this percentage drops to 54% in Guatemala and to 43% in Colombia. Although most of the countries in the study report high percentages of access to land for rural women, this is not synonymous with ownership, which leaves them exposed to situations such as precarious employment, and other violations of their economic, social and cultural rights, especially the right to food and economic self-reliance.

WAYS WOMEN ACCESS THE LAND

When digging deeper into the ways rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women access land, research shows that, overall, it is through inheriting farm plots. In Bolivia, it was

38% of respondents, 24% in Guatemala, 23% in El Salvador, 16% in Colombia, and 14% in Honduras. In many cases, this means that women are only able to access land ownership when they are widowers or orphans, and on many occasions, they have to overcome administrative or bureaucratic barriers to gain access to this common asset.

"My father was murdered when I was a little girl. The land was registered in his name, and they refused to give the my mother the rights, arguing that they had never married. They gave me the rights as his daughter, knowing full well that my mother worked shoulder to shoulder with my father. In my particular case, my husband was also murdered, and the State agencies denied me the right to his pension and/or compensation, arguing that I am not entitled because I had no children by him.

Focus Group Colombia

"The State has never given land to any woman in Honduras," states Yasmin Lopez, Coordinator General of the Council for Integral Development of the Peasant Woman (CODIMCA) in Honduras, during her interview for this study. The peasant leader condemned the Honduran government's failure to comply with the right to land ownership recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in the 2018 Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working

in Rural Areas (La Via Campesina, 2020). Although this research survey shows that 30% of women in this Central American country access land under the figure of ancestral territory that are managed collectively or by the community, with ownership by an organization in 92% of the cases, Yasmin Lopez notes that CODIMCA leases practically all farmland uses.

The landowners hold a large portion of productive land in private ownership in the Latin American region (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2011), and likewise, the land they lease to small farmers, families and coops are often not suited to farming. Peasant women work to

improve the quality of these soils using agroecological or traditional techniques, with no chemicals, but the land is appropriated when the lease ends, or when the owners decide to use the land for other purposes.

In all five countries in the study, no more than 7% of respondents had loans to access farmlands, **while leasing goes from 1% in Guatemala to 41% in El Salvador**, a significant state of affairs for many peasant and indigenous women who are members of historical organizations that have struggled for integral agrarian land reform and policies that guarantee land access and ownership in the region.

Ways women access the land					
Country	Purchase	Inheritance	Ancestral, collective, or community land	Lease	Grant or Loan
Total	15%	23%	12%	14%	4%
Bolivia	16%	38%	17%	5%	2%
Colombia	9%	16%	5%	6%	7%
El Salvador	19%	23%	4%	41%	6%
Guatemala	23%	24%	5%	1%	1%
Honduras	12%	12%	30%	20%	3%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

To secure farmland, women have to cultivate a space any close relative will allow them for a *milpa*¹, otherwise, they lease from third-parties; these lands tend to be inadequate for food production, either due to location or poor water access.

Data in this study show that of the 92% of the land in Honduras that is under ancestral territory ownership registered to an organization, 32% is registered to an indigenous organization, 29% to a mixed peasant organization, 23% to a peasant women's organization,

and 4% to an Afro-descendant organization; the remaining 4% is registered to a women's organization.

In the case of Guatemala, organizations like the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) and Mama Maquin Community Organization promote access to farmlands helping peasants join the country's Land Fund, which is no easy matter. The Report on *Women and Land in Guatemala* (We Effect and El Observador, 2019) notes that the 2008 National Agriculture Survey shows women accounting for 18,2% of food production

¹Milpa: Small- or medium scale farming system, reclaiming ancestral knowledge in peasant communities to grow sustainable crops under a food sovereignty model, prioritizing local farming to feed the local population.

in that country, and according to a 2013 study by the Presidential Secretariat for Women, it was more common for Guatemalan women to access land held in usufruct, or *colonato*², demonstrating their lack of power to decide over the land they work.

Access to land "is more difficult for us because there are no policies, institutions lack the political will to give women the right to access land, and the macho attitude runs through institutions," stated women in the focus group held in that country. "We had a working group the Land Fund set up with institutions like the Secretariat for Agrarian Affairs and the evicted communities, and it was very difficult to get the land in just the women's names, or for them to even be party to land ownership," they added.

"One of the high level men at the Land Fund shouted at us group of women, asking why we wanted the land to be in the women's name if they were for the head of household, in other words, the husband. And all the requirements they ask for: If she's a single mother, they want proof, or you have to be married, or you have to have children."

Focus Group Guatemala

Moreover, not only do they have to navigate administrative obstacles, they are faced with eviction by extraction projects, or ownership in the hands of landowner families. In Guatemala, 91.4% of census land area is in hands of private companies, and although Article 67 of the Constitution of the Republic recognizes ownership by indigenous agricultural cooperative and indigenous communities, these forms of access are frequently go unacknowledged by the Guatemalan State (We Effect and El Observador, 2019).

"The most fertile Guatemalan land is in hands of all the landholders, and business owners, who grow palm oil, and such products. So, to achieve access to land for and by the people, the large businessmen need to leave the lands they expropriated from the people."

María Rosario Barrera

**Member of the National Coordinator of
Widows de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)
Guatemala**

"As women, we have a right to work the land. In our organization, the majority of the women work the land, help the men to plant the maize, the beans, when there is a cardamom crop, we have our vegetable patch, but we do not have land, and we need it because money is tight. So, we have to plant our herbs to be able to harvest, and feed our children," the focus group in Guatemala elaborated.

Women who participated in the study focus group in El Salvador underscored the opportunity that founding of cooperatives represented as a way to access farmlands in the agrarian reform after the 1992 Peace Accords, although the majority of the members are still male. In addition, they noted that macho attitudes remain, such as, the general idea that the man has to own the land, rendering women's work on the land invisible: "It is said that men do everything, they can farm, but people do not know that women work beside them. They still see us as the weaker sex," they commented.

Another criticism they shared had to do with the quality of land they are allowed to access. As mentioned, peasant women tend to do things to improve the quality of the land they rent, borrow, inherent or access by government program. "They have often been given land in dangerous sites, or with no vital resources like water or power. So, what the

²Colonato: Farming system by means of colonos, farmworkers who are paid with housing or land use.

women do is relocate, because they can no longer live there, and then they have to put up with people saying: 'They were given land, and they weren't even able to stay there'."

The difficulties in land access and ownership that rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women face in El Salvador needs to be understood in the context of inequality, and land concentration in that Central American country, where 24,5% of land is managed as small farms with 335,020 production units, they have the lowest average surface in the region, while 28.6% of the land is concentrated in the 1% of the large farms, according to the Report on Women and Land (We Effect, FESPAD and CONFRAS, 2019).

ACCESS TO LAND IS NOT THE SAME AS OWNERSHIP

A small farm is estimated to cover 2 hectares, according to World Bank figures. In the case of rural and peasant women in Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, 72% of respondents stated they have access to less than one hectare to cultivate. Out of this total: 26% has access to less than a quarter of an hectare, 20% between a quarter and half a hectare, and 26% farm on half or one hectare. In addition, 21% have 1 to 5 hectares. Only 4% of respondents have access to 6 to 10 hectares, and a mere 3% to more than 10 hectares.

ACCESS TO LAND BY SIZE OF PLOT

Country	Less than ¼ hectare	Between ¼ and ½ hectare	Between ½ and 1 hectare	From 1 to 5 hectares	From 6 to 10 hectares	More than 10 hectares
Bolivia	21%	19%	22%	31%	4%	2%
Colombia	7%	9%	28%	34%	10%	11%
El Salvador	31%	23%	32%	11%	0,5%	1,5%
Guatemala	52%	15%	22,5%	8%	1%	0,5%
Honduras	17%	30%	24%	21,6%	7%	0,4%
Total	26%	20%	26%	21%	4%	3%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

Access to land is not the same as land ownership. **Only 26% of respondents in all five countries said the title to the land they farm was in**

their "own name;" out of these, 49% have a title for a mere one-fourth of a hectare, while 21% holds the title for 1 to 5 hectares³.

³The following chapter analyzes the way peasants exercise the right to food, and looks at the farming techniques they use (agroecological, conventional or traditional without chemical products) according to the form of ownership of the land.

"It's one thing having access to land to *farm*, another is access to land to *live*. Statistics from Honduras show a lot of land registered, but this is not agrarian reform land, a lot of the deeds are for land for development. A plot measuring 1,524 square meters/0.15 hectares, is enough space to build a small house, this is not a deed for farmland, but that is how it appears in the statistics."

Yasmín López

**Coordinator General of the Council for
Integral Development of the Peasant Woman
(CODIMCA)
Honduras**

Records are practically non-existent for Afro-descendant women who access land for food production. In the records that show ownership of between one-fourth and 5 hectares of productive land, there are only 6 afro-women from Colombia and 2 Garifuna women in Honduras, with less than a fourth of an hectare.

On the other hand, 18% of respondents stated that ownership of the land they work on is registered to the community where they live. Some 30% of these women have access to a plot of farmland that is 1 to 5 hectares in size. Although these percentages are not high, 3% of respondents stated that ownership of the land they work on is registered to the peasant/indigenous organization where they participate. This is characteristic of 5% of respondents in Colombia and Guatemala, and around 4% of Hondurans.

Being organized to guarantee access to land is one of We Effect's core commitments as a cooperative aid agency. This adds to transformative training and outreach processes for women leaders who

are indigenous, native, peasant, rural and Afro-descendants, living in poverty and extreme poverty, partnering with organizations that address these processes.

Notable among these women's organizations, according to We Effect representative Bertha Zapeta, are Mama Maquin and CONAVIGUA, but also there is a need to encourage female representation in mixed organizations, such as the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) "where we are aware of the challenges women face in positions of leadership."

"There are many women, who through training, learning about their rights, and identifying the types of violence occurring in different places they frequent, have taken courage and assumed leadership in their communities. They have also started their own initiatives, because they have realized that being informed and having their own economic resources affords them other ways to live as women. This has enabled them to become involved, and exercise voice and vote in different spaces in their community, overcoming fears they used to have of joining an organization. Despite the difficulty involved, women started small vegetable gardens and later diversified, planting fruit trees and medicinal plants, raising farm animals and achieving more sustainable production with a variety of foods."

María Rosario Barrera

**Member of the National Coordinator of
Widows de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)
Guatemala**

CARE ECONOMY AND THE CHALLENGE OF GUARANTEEING CO-RESPONSIBILITY

"In mixed organizations in the rural area, women's engagement is dependent on the tasks they need to finish at home before arriving at an organization meeting early in the day. This may cause them to be late, and be object of criticism of the men in hierarchical positions," asserted Sara Avilez, We Effect Projects and Gender Officer in Honduras. She carefully monitors We Effect's accompaniment processes in the region promoting women's leadership in mixed organizations and strengthening women's economic empowerment in those organizations and in women-only organizations.

We Effect support is characterized by a "fair resources" policy that proposes that 50% of the budget be assigned to women, with special emphasis on mixed organizations, deepens promotion of transformational leadership training schools, environmental sustainability, cooperativism training, and social and solidary economy, in order to accompany partner organizations, work more directly with women and generate collective training processes.

"I know cases of couples who have a lot of land, but women are unaware of how much land the husband has. When I was at the Territorial Space for Training and Reconciliation, I used to speak to my neighbors, and they were only in charge of vegetable patch, not farming the land with their husbands. I consider that, beyond how much land I have to farm and produce, this is a cultural matter, women need to make the best use of the land they are given."

Focus Group Colombia

Study respondent Avilez Tome reflected on the importance of the role of local feminist organizations that provide technical assistance for these processes, and take action to "reduce the work overload women tend to have," with a double and triple work shift, with redistribution being one of the most important challenges.

"We just work on the patch, not the plot, we cannot go because only the men go."

"Each is working at her own home, raising farm animals, and the men are working in the field. In order to attend this meeting, I left at three in the morning, because there are no roads, no drinking water, there is nothing. The houses are not decent; there was a settlement plan, but it was never completed, the land is not productive, there is lots of flooding, we lose crops."

Focus Group Guatemala

Achieving sustainable and fair transformation in the redistribution of unpaid care work, and their assumption as part of sustainability of life, involves deconstructing social imaginaries and dominant gender norms on femininity and masculinity, as well as resignifying care of life. Working with men, particularly young ones, is a key precondition to redistributing the workload that has been unfairly assigned only to women.

The expert considers that most mixed organizations still need to reflect about the condition of women, and the link between food production and their right to land access: "They consider land is for farming and exploiting, and, as in everything, they do not see women's relationship to this common asset. Organizations like CODIMCA and COPINH speak in terms of body-territory to think about exploitation and oppression of women's bodies, and disputed

territories, but this is not generally done in other organizations."

"The public sphere corresponds to man. They own the land, and therefore have a right to access loans. They decide and have the power. When the man dies, the land goes to the male children.

Women are caregivers of the children they bear, of the sick, the farm animals and food. Men have no responsibility there nowadays.

Their place as caregivers prevents women from deciding and occupying spaces for production and purchasing food and animals.

They have no place to get a treat for themselves after all their effort.

Women have no space in political participation, because they are involved in care work issues. On days for participation in community matters, women are responding to care work, which keeps them away from public spaces. If we women attend a meeting, then of course the food will not be ready, and there is no one to stay with and care for the children, and if we bring the children to meeting spaces, we are not allowed to join the meeting, because people at the meeting cannot concentrate."

Focus Group Colombia

SHARED OWNERSHIP OF LAND

Although one of the characteristic ways to access land in Guatemala is by collective or community management, "in terms of women's rights to access land, there are very few communities that have collective land ownership," warns Bertha Zapeta in her interview for this study.

"I think that this gap needs inevitably to be addressed, and you cannot fall back on a *romanticized* view of indigenous people, or talk about complementarity while there is inequality in women's access of land. What we have here is personal property, and women have no access to personal property; first, because they lack purchasing capacity to buy land, two because of deeply-rooted macho attitude and patriarchy in communities, and third because women are not seen as rights holders yet."

**Bertha Zapeta, We Effect
representative in Guatemala**

Zapeta explained that in recent years, the social movement in Guatemala has made efforts to negotiate with public land-grant agencies like the Land Fund, and have successfully established joint ownership for the acquisition of a reclaimed farm. "This is progress, because it means men are not the only owners, their life partner is too, but it has another consequence for women. CUC members have told us, "I cannot be the owner unless I am married. "Now they tell me I have to be married to own land. So, they put certain conditions on you anyway, and that's what we women have to deal with," she explained.

"Now women who own land simply have to be a widower or divorcée, or separated. That is the only way a woman can get her land."

**Ana Rosalía Tiul
Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC)
Guatemala**

Ana Rosalía Tiul has been a Guatemalan peasant member of CUC for the last five years. She currently

lives in the municipality of Panzos in Alta Verapaz, one of the communities that fights to reclaim land. The locality is also known as the site of the 29 May 1978 massacre that the army committed during a peasant Q'Eqchi' indigenous march demanding access to land. The mobilization was led by Adelina Caal, known as Mama Maquin, who was murdered along with 51 others.

Tiul and the organization she participates in, understand that difficulties for women to own land are structural, from a lack of gender-sensitive public policies and state violence against communities, to the patriarchal system that is mainstreamed in daily life.

"We have a State that has abandoned us, and we are also under the power of those who appropriated ancestral lands," Tiul states. And, she adds: "We have been unable to overcome the patriarchy paradigm; it comes from our grandparents who said the man is in charge, the only one who can get ahead, and has to own everything around us."

In Colombia, peasant women victims of the armed conflict in the regions of Meta, Caquetá, Putumayo, Montes de María and Cauca, who are participating in reintegration projects, and participated in the focus group to share their perceptions and experiences with this study, underscored that "women have not historically believed they owned land, because it has always been in the hands of men."

"Colombian peasant women find access to land very difficult, the majority are involved in care work, caring for children, the household, the husband and helping in field work as well.

But, because traditionally, land deeds were in men's names, women have no idea about issues such as farm extension and boundaries.

That is why, when their husbands are murdered or disappear, women and children who were displaced lose their lands."

Focus Group Colombia

The 2016 Peace Accord signed by the Colombian State and the FARC has Integral Rural Reform as a first item, "Toward a new Colombian farmland." Among the main consequences of failure to comply with the agreement was the lack of access to land for communities and FARC members who had decided to "reincorporate" politically and socioeconomically into civilian life, as part of the commitment to end the armed conflict.

The lack of access to- and ownership of farmland not only intensifies conditions of poverty, dispossession and displacement in these communities, but also increases vulnerability of women members of the communities of reincorporated persons that make up, for example, the New Regrouping Points (NPR) of Putumayo. As respondents of this study, they stated that they have no land on which to implement their farming projects, after enduring years of forced displacement.

"Displacement is very tough on rural women who used to grow their own food and were self-reliant. That there is our life plan. When they force us to relocate and move to the cities, they change our roles, and we can only get jobs as domestic workers, treated like slaves, this affects our food and our families. Life is affected overall, we are vulnerable, widowed, landless, paying rent. Women with no property, no access to resources or economic empowerment are more vulnerable to enduring all types of gender-based violence."

Focus Group Colombia

To the extent that the Colombian State fails to fulfill its part of the agreement and fails to provide farmland for reincorporating communities, leaders are particularly exposed to paramilitary organizations, drug-traffickers and law enforcement, with a rise in torture, harassment, criminalization and

murder of land defenders in Colombia. In February 2021, peasant leader Nury Martinez, president of Fensuagro, and member of *La Via Campesina*, reported to the United Nations⁴ that 1,140 peasant leaders had been murdered since 2016.

In addition to pointing out that they have no State support to access land, focus group participants in Colombia also noted that, "it is not in peasant hands for us to work it, it is concentrated in a few hands." **The 2014 Agricultural Census showed that 1% of large Colombian farms accounted for 81% of farmland, while 19% of the remaining land was divided among 99% of farms (Oxfam, 2017).** Some 70% of Agricultural Production Units spanned less than 5 hectares, and only 26% of them were managed by women, with less access to machinery, loans and technical assistance (Oxfam, 2017).

In Bolivia, 78% of respondents had access to land to grow food, and in most cases, they had accessed it by inheritance (38%). However, only 33% of the land deeds were in their own names. Analyzing land ownership, Bolivia and Honduras are notable for being countries with the highest (30%) percentage of communal land.

Bolivian data needs to be understood in context, remembering that one of the articles in the 2006 Law 3.545 on Community Reconstruction and Agrarian Reform establishes in that it, "guarantees and prioritizes participation of women in land titling and distributing processes." "In the case of marriages and common-law marriages or unions, the executory titles will be issued for both spouses or cohabitants working the land, with the name of the woman being given first. The same applies to other cases of female and male co-owners who are working the land, regardless of their marital status," as explained in the law. The report on *Land Ownership, Access and Control for Women* (We Effect and *Ciudadanía*, 2019) notes that this legislation provided a specific procedure for titling of rural property in favor of rural women in the Andean country.

Despite this community title, and legal recognition that territorial organizations enjoy in this Andean country, economist Alberto Lizarraga, member of Ciudadanía (Social Studies and Public Action Community) of Bolivia, asserted that there is still not sufficient recognition of rural and peasant women's work in food production and the country's economy. "In Bolivia we have a Law for a Productive Agricultural Revolution, that recognizes territorial organizations as agencies that generate value in terms of food production. This acknowledges that the economy runs on the large production in the east, and recognizes the importance of peasant organizations and families in generating food. But, although it acknowledges peasant families, the law does not give details about the importance of women's work," he explained.

"I really value what my ancestral leaders did, consolidated the territories, because that is fundamental for us. First, the space where we are, our great house. Then, you can talk about management, self-reliance, and the rest."

Wilma Mendoza Miro
President of the National Confederation
of Indigenous Women of Bolivia

In **Honduras**, 37% of respondents, particularly peasants and indigenous-peasants, stated the land is registered to the community, while 20% asserted that land is in the name of a national landowner individual or family.

In **Colombia**, most responses were divided between the land they work on is in their own name (23%) and it is registered to a national landowner individual or family (19%).

⁴Peasant leader Reports Systematic Violence in Colombia to UN Human Rights Council (in Spanish): <https://viacampesina.org/es/lider-campesina-denuncia-violencia-sistematica-en-colombia-ante-consejo-de-derechos-humanos-de-la-onu/>

In **Guatemala**, 41% responded that the land is registered in their own name, followed by 28% where it is registered to their husband or partner.

In **El Salvador**, peasant and rural women mostly responded that they have no title to the land, or do not know who owns the land they work (37%) and the next response is that it is registered to the rural woman and her partner (22%) and that the land is in their own name (20%).

"We want to make changes, to live better, we want our families to have land. Many of the working women are single mothers and this is not acknowledged. This notion that the man owns the land has been transmitted from one generation to the next. I think it is kind of macho to say the man 'does it all,' because that does not recognize that, right next to the man, there is the woman, the man may farm, but if the woman does not prepare the soil, we bite the dust. I feel like we have few resources to uphold our rights; there may be many organizations, but if the local government does not listen to them, it turns out to be very hard to change our situation."

Focus Group El Salvador

Previous studies by We Effect (2019) emphasized that the agrarian reform that started in 1980 in El Salvador had "a clear counterinsurgent objective" and "failed to make sustainable structural modifications, it neither made women visible nor gave them status as rights holders." Moreover, people and institutions who accessed land transfer programs as part of the Agrarian Transformation Process in this Central American country, "are mostly economically vulnerable, and consequently lack resources required to settle their

agrarian debt." This is the reason the authors of the We Effect report suggested that a reform to decree 263 be immediately proposed, making it possible to pay 10% of the debt on an ongoing basis, to contribute to activities in the agrarian sector, and consolidate the Process of Agrarian Transformation.

Continuing with the analysis of land tenure, the highest percentage of cases where the property is registered to the respondent's husband or partner is in Guatemala (28%), particularly among peasants and indigenous people, followed by Colombia (16%).

"The lands are ours, as indigenous people, but the landlords have appropriated them, that is why it is called 'plantation'. We have lived for over 20 years in the community, but we were evicted last year, and the women bore the brunt of it, because the houses were burned down, with all the belongings in them. There are also communities that have been manipulated by the landowners, where negotiations are set up, offering to provide a plot of land, but only for housing. We are fighting for not only housing, but also for planting. The family is aware that if they get a deed for that land, it will be in my name, not my husband's, because I have fought long and hard for the land that is for my family's wellbeing, not for business."

Focus Group Guatemala

It is plain that, for women, access to land for farming is not synonymous with owning the land they grow food on, or for selling it, instead, it ensures —above all— the family's self-reliance. Reflection about- and struggle for this right is present in women's- and mixed peasant organizations:

"Indigenous women should have that property deed, because she is in charge of the home, she struggles, she sees to her family's sustainability, so that the children do not lack anything."

Ana Rosalía Tiul
Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC)
Guatemala

In the five countries in this study, 13% of respondents said the land they farm is registered to the rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- woman's husband or partner, while 11% registered to both, and another 11% registered to a national landowner individual or family. In any event, a greater percentage of respondents (16%) declared no ownership over the land they farm, and/or being in the dark regarding its owner.

We Effect works to reduce gender-based inequality in land access and ownership by promoting economic initiatives that have enabled members of peasant and indigenous organizations to save, and use these savings to purchase land. Bertha Zapeta underscored the importance of proposing these initiatives responsibly and sustainably, so that women are able to, "generate income and visualize a future they want to invest in." "One woman told us 'I am not *playing* at farming, I want to get to where you are,' and we can't do this just with aid, we need to promote public-private partnerships to support the population's projects," added Zapeta.

The Mama Maquin organization encourages the members to become owners or co-owners. This is how peasant women in this organization sum it up: "There are some elder women who refused, because they depended on the men, but to me, it seems better if we are owners," said a woman in the Guatemala focus group. "Usually, men sell the land and you (are left with) nothing. It is important to analyze and organize ourselves in this struggle, because of our responsibility as women," she added.

Beyond the efforts organizations make, the road to becoming owners is not a straight line. Mama Maquin promotes land co-ownership or ownership, but not everyone has gotten the deed registered to the women: "We may be from the same community (Copala Esperanza), as young, recently-married women, recently attached, what we can count on is getting inheritance, if they give it to us, but we cannot count on getting land. The land is registered to the husbands, because they are men," said a participant in the Guatemala focus group.

Surveys, interviews and focus group reflections lay bare the differences in land "access" and ownership for rural-, peasant-, indigenous- and Afro-descendant women and men. Concentration of land in the hands of landowners and extractive companies is added to the lack of public policies that specifically promote individual or collective farmland ownership for women, economic and gender policy discrimination that reinforces social inequalities.

This makes it increasingly important to promote the demand for access to land and territory, including ownership, from an inter-sectional approach, as part of the enforceability of the right to a life of dignity, free from violence, that includes the right to housing, work, education and adequate food.



Marlene Nohemi Aguilar | Photo: Jesper Klemmedsson

RIGHT TO FOOD

The right to food is essential for a decent life, and vital to ensure many other human rights. It is not only about having enough nutrients to survive, but also to fully develop physical and mental capacities.

We Effect considers the right to food goes beyond food security, it involves a transformation in the way we produce, distribute and consume food. This requires a transformation in power relations, gender inequality, and climate injustice that perpetuate the denial of people's right to food.

The lack of policies to enforce this right, as well as the consequences of climate crisis affecting and reducing crops and the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19⁵ pandemic, have intensified hunger throughout the world, but particularly in five countries, three of which are part of this study: Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Haiti and Nicaragua, as reported by FAO and World Food Program in August 2021 (ONU, 2021).



Therefore they suggest governments take, "preventive actions to mitigate rainfall deficits during the agricultural season," and request support "for the most vulnerable farmers and stock-farmers, including delivering materials and tools to grow short-cycle varieties, home vegetable gardens, and support animal health to reduce drought-related mortality and morbidity." In addition to delivering "emergency response and support for small farmers and fishers to recover livelihoods after the impact of hurricanes in hardest hit areas in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua."

Against this backdrop, rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women in those countries look for ways to guarantee their families' right to food, despite the lack of public policies that ensure access to farmland.

Adequate food is a human right; therefore, the States have an obligation to guarantee it by facilitating and providing the population with access to food or enabling the conditions for them to generate their own sustenance.

Exercising this right involves guaranteeing "food security" for the population, namely, physical and economic access to food. In addition, people need to be allowed to exert their "food sovereignty," that is, their right to decide and define their own policies and strategies for sustainable production, distribution and consumption of food.

⁵See chapter on *Impact of COVID-19* in this study.

"In order to have food sovereignty, we need agrarian reform. Our peasant organizations submitted a proposal for a gender-sensitive Agrarian Reform Act for food sovereignty and rural development. This law proposes ways to generate livelihoods for peasants, such as creating local markets and artisan markets, and the way that the role we women have historically played in food production is addressed."

Yasmín López

**CCoordinator General of the Council for Integral Development of the Peasant Woman (CODIMCA)
Honduras**

DECISIONS REGARDING FOOD

"Women consider the family in their efforts, consider food security for the family, not men, they think a little more about commercialization."

Focus Group Guatemala

Exercising the right to food requires having access to food. Just as States need to guarantee this right, individuals need to be able to produce food and/or purchase it. This study looked into the ways rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women build food sovereignty, and how they ensure food sovereignty for themselves, their families and in many cases, the community. This involved inquiring into whether they use their output for self-consumption, how many of them have their own income, and how much of that income is assigned to purchasing food..

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WITH OWN INCOME

Country	Yes	No
Bolivia	88%	12%
Colombia	46%	54%
El Salvador	37%	63%
Guatemala	60%	40%
Honduras	49%	51%
Total	56%	44%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

WOMEN WHO HAVE THEIR OWN INCOME HOW MUCH MONEY DO WOMEN SPEND ON FOOD?

Country	All of the money is assigned to food	Almost all of the money is assigned to food	More than half of the money is assigned to food	Half of the money is assigned to food	Less than half of the money is assigned to food
Bolivia	4%	21%	23%	32%	20%
Colombia	1%	21%	21%	35%	22%
El Salvador	12%	22%	14%	37%	15%
Guatemala	7%	17%	21%	41%	14%
Honduras	16%	26%	19%	26%	13%
Total	8%	22%	20%	34%	16%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

WOMEN WITHOUT THEIR OWN INCOME
HOW MUCH MONEY DO WOMEN SPEND ON FOOD?

Country	All of the money is assigned to food	Almost all of the money is assigned to food	More than half of the money is assigned to food	Half of the money is assigned to food	Less than half of the money is assigned to food
Bolivia	6%	26%	16%	23%	29%
Colombia	18%	20%	27%	16%	19%
El Salvador	8%	23%	8%	38%	23%
Guatemala	7%	15%	27%	34%	17%
Honduras	6%	15%	11%	34%	34%
Total	11%	20%	19%	27%	23%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

Although 74% of all respondents asserted they decided how much of the family's money was assigned to food, a mere 56% had their own income.

In Honduras, 42% of respondents assigned all or almost all of their own income to purchasing food, while 32% and 41% of respondents in the rest of the countries assigned half of their income to this basic need.

As regards decisions about the family's money by country, and by land ownership, it is notable that in Bolivia, those who decide about the use of family money, 35% of them work on land registered in their own name, and 29% work on land that is held by the community.

In Guatemala, the highest percentage (51%) are those who work land that is registered in their own name. And in Honduras (37%) of those who decide how to use money are those who work lands owned by the community.

In Colombia, 23% of peasant women who decide over family income grow food on land registered in their own name.

In El Salvador, the decisions about family money are mostly made by those who lack ownership over the land they work on, or who do not know who owns it, which is 40% of respondents.

In Honduras, 42% of respondents assigned all or almost all of their own income to purchasing food, while 32% and 41% of respondents in the rest of the countries assigned half of their income to this basic need.

Women who do not have their own income, spend half or less of the family money on food. This covers 68% of peasant and indigenous women in Honduras, 61% in El Salvador, 52% in Guatemala and Bolivia, and 35% in Colombia. The latter country has the highest (27%) percentage of those who asserted they spend over half of the money on food.

How much does ownership of the land you work on influence the capacity to decide regarding family money and domestic economy? Certainly land ownership grants peasant women greater economic empowerment; **51% of women surveyed in Guatemala asserted that owning the land they worked allowed them to decide regarding the family money;** this was the same for 35% in

Bolivia, 23% in Colombia, 19% in El Salvador and 16% in Honduras. The explanation for the lower percentage in this Central American country is that the majority of those who can decide about the money in their family work on land registered to the community (37%), which is consistent with the balance between land ownership and ways of deciding how to allocate income to ensure the right to food in the community to which they belong.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food, produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. (...) Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. (...) Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations."

Nyéléni Declaration (2007)

LAND AND TERRITORY DEFENDERS GUARANTEE FOOD PRODUCTION

Food production is one of the tasks that is central to reproduction of life, and as Via Campesina has noted, "there is a direct relationship of solidarity between people who grow food and fight for food sovereignty and people who most need that food." (Capire, 2021). Given their own low income levels, women peasants guarantee the right to food for family and community by growing food on small plots that they can access.

In the department of El Cauca, located in southeast Colombia, women grow maize, yucca, tobacco, and raise local hens. They plant corn as an alternative means for self-sufficiency and for self-financing, since their sales increase in seasons when the weather is very dry. They use the corn to feed their hens or sell it, in turn, for other farm animals in the region.

In Polochic Valley, located 500 kilometers from Guatemala City, the major crop is maize, plantain, yucca, and other small vegetables that indigenous peasant women are able to grow in the land. "We do not do this for profit; here farmer production is very, let's say, regulated, because unfortunately the price of produce is too low for the communities," states Ana Rosalía Tiul of the Committee for Peasant Unity in Guatemala.

As previously stated in the introduction to this study, over half (57%) of the output produced by peasant women surveyed in the five countries is intended for family subsistence consumption. Moreover, 36% of respondents said the surplus food produced for self-consumption is sold on the market, and only 7% assigns output exclusively for sale on the market.

Although this last option had the lowest percentage among respondents in the countries studied, it is worth noting that Colombia and Bolivia assign 15%

and 11% of their respective output for the market. In the case of Bolivia, the percentage of output for self-consumption is high, and the surplus is destined for sale on the market (54%).

Conversely, in Honduras and El Salvador, most of the output is destined for self-consumption by the family to ensure subsistence: 70% of Honduran peasant production is used this way, and 78% in the case of El Salvador.

PEASANT FEMINISM AND AGRO-ECOLOGY TO COOL THE PLANET

Study results confirm what peasant organizations in Latin American and the Caribbean have been pointing out for years: Women drive agroecological

production in the region, placing them at the forefront in the struggle to build a new sustainable, gender equity-based agro-food paradigm.

Data shared in the report show that agroecological and organic techniques are used on land under female ownership. **In the farmlands owned by indigenous peasant women in Bolivia, 60% of these plots have had agroecological and organic techniques, and 30% traditional methods without chemicals.** It is the same with 43% of women who have land tenure over plots they work in Guatemala, and 39% of the same conditions for Honduran women; whereas, in El Salvador and Colombia agroecological production is used in 16% and 13% of the lands registered to peasant women.



Photo: Philip Krook

PRODUCTION METHOD

Countries	Agroecological or organic	Conventional (with technology package)	Traditional farming (no inputs)
Bolivia	8%	31%	61%
Colombia	25%	22%	53%
El Salvador	37%	6%	57%
Guatemala	66%	6%	28%
Honduras	16%	2%	82%
Total	29%	13%	58%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

Agroecological techniques are ways of reproducing soil fertility for the medium- and long term. When women work the land, they mostly employ traditional techniques, with no chemicals, using agroecological methods. As discussed in the chapter on Access to Land, peasant and indigenous women improve the quality of the land, even when they are not the owners of the land; therefore granting ownership in their own name would not only give them greater autonomy and economic empowerment, but would also increase the use of these techniques that allow for the sustainability of production systems and contribute to cooling the planet.

"Despite all the difficulties, they work the patch of land around the house and use almost all of it: When they throw out the dishwater, they water the vegetables, the fruit with it. The men go off to work on the plots, but they are not careful to diversify the crop for their own consumption, or to farm agroecologically."

Focus Group Guatemala

In Honduras, where the majority of peasant and indigenous women work on community-held land, 82% of these lands are worked in the traditional way (without chemicals).

Peasant and indigenous women participating in the focus group in Colombia analyzed their conditions, underscoring the way "agroecological nodes" work in that country's Caribbean region as a "tool for

self-organization, producing their own food, and mainstreaming gender equality through food production." These are spaces developed by families who work the land, providing women the opportunity to access a parcel on an egalitarian basis with men, they are able to make decisions about the land and even what they want to farm, prioritizing sustainable and diversified practices, and the way they want to use their output, either for self-consumption, community provisions, and/or sale on the local market. These are also spaces to learn, exchange experiences and build women's capacities for organization, not only linked to agricultural production, but also developing strategies to protect and defend their rights.

Strengthening women organizing is key for them to participate in the nodes. Women experience gender-based violence on a daily basis in these places, both at the level of the family, and at the hands of criminal groups that threaten the region where they live, that is why they try to, "avoid being the focus of attention of illegal armed groups and of the social punishment of men's macho practices," they explained in the Colombian focus group, and this makes it difficult for them to lead in promoting healthy, collective and community-based practices in food production. Having food security and sovereignty also requires public safety.

These agroecological nodes operate as bridges for communication between municipalities, promote a non-polluting, ecologically sustainable form of farming, involving equitable and egalitarian relations in production, distribution, commercialization

and consumption; they are a model to promote agroecological training in other countries as a tool to strengthen the exercise of food sovereignty.

"Training in food sovereignty goes hand in hand with land access, for agroecology-based farming. Work on the issue of ecology improves the quality of life for families."

Ana Rosalía Tiul

Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC)

Guatemala

The right to food is also affected by the worldwide climate crisis that affects food production at all levels. Increased temperatures and extreme weather phenomena like large floods or prolonged severe drought, bring about changes rainfall patterns, shifts in sowing and harvesting cycles, the rising sea levels reduce or restrict access to land for small farmers, jeopardizing soil quality and access to fresh water, in turn reducing the amount of food, and giving rise

to climate displacement and migration from the countryside to the city, or even other countries.

Agroecological production is a preferred technique for peasant-, indigenous-, Afro-descendant- and native women that has demonstrated to be a feasible way to sustainably manage agricultural land. Agroecology "cools" the planet, because it helps bring global temperature down, enabling communities most affected by climate change to take ownership of their own food production and consumption in a manner that is environmentally sustainable.

Healthy eating depends on an appropriately selecting and preparing food based on each population's eating habits. This requires that people share and assimilate knowledge about producing food, their nutritional value, that they have economic capacity to purchase and combine food in a balanced way, and ensure they have access to land for small and medium-sized farming, with a special emphasis on policies for youth and women, promoting the transition toward agroecology. Achieving the right to food is a crucial pillar to sustaining a gender-just world.



Nely Apaza Mamani | Photo: Jesper Klemmedsson

PANDEMIC IMPACT ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare and exacerbated huge inequalities at the worldwide level, and particularly in Latin American and the Caribbean, unfortunately notorious for being the region with most inequality in the world.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the pandemic drove up poverty and extreme poverty to levels that had not been seen in the region for 12 and 20 years, respectively. This commission estimates that, in 2020, the extreme poverty rate was 12,5%, and the poverty rate jumped to 34% in the Latin American population (ECLAC, 2021). This means that the total number of people living in poverty was 209 million in late 2020. This is 22 million more than the previous year. This includes 78 million people living in extreme poverty, equivalent to 8 million more than in 2019. ECLAC also notes that the region saw the deterioration of rates of inequality, of employment and labor participation rates, especially among women, despite certain emergency social protection measures adopted by some countries in the region to contain it; although, it should be noted that in very few cases have measures been implemented to address social protection from a gender justice perspective.

In this context, the poorest populations, like rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women were most affected by the health crisis and experienced a variety of impacts on their daily lives. The results of this study show that 44% of respondents in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador said they had no income of their own, whereas 26% asserted they had no influence on what is done with the family moneys.



Irma Torres | Photo: Philip Krook



In most cases, they dealt with this on their own or with their community, demonstrating the importance of networks for cooperation and solidarity that are built up in peasant communities.

Bolivia was the country with the highest percentage of rural women who said they had difficulty accessing food as a result of the health crisis (22%), followed by El Salvador (21%), Colombia (20%), Guatemala (19%), and, last Honduras (18%).

This data becomes even more relevant when taking into account that although enough food is produced for the worldwide population, in 2020, almost 811 million people in the world went hungry, 161 more than in 2019, according to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2021). The crisis that was created by COVID-19 uncovered the current agro-food system under multinational corporate control fails to guarantee the right to food nor does it ensure food security for the world population.

Ligia Granda is signatory of the Peace Accord, and legal representative of Caribbean Raices Corporation, an initiative of the FARC-EP ex-combatants who are in process of reincorporation in the department of Cordoba in the north of Colombia. This woman leader of the reincorporation process stated that the pandemic created difficulties in access to food, but she points to community organization as the fundamental tool to organize around the right to food during the health crisis. "My partner and I have an agroecological farm, and we set the example for

the community where 35 families live, and everyone has a hectare or half a hectare, and no one had planted anything. So, here they found eggs, plantain, eggplant, rice. We did not go hungry during the pandemic because we had what we needed there," she said during her interview for this report.

"In the community there was enough to eat because we grow maize, rice, beans. Economically it did affect us, because we were not able to sell our products, but, in terms of food, it is all around the house, plantains, lemons, oranges."

Focus Group El Salvador

Ligia Granda also explained that many neighbors who did not produce food started to grow their own vegetable gardens as a result of this situation. "This has also been a nice exercise, in the sense that people saw the need to start exchanging seeds, to figure out how to plant, and I have seen them become motivated to plant a vegetable garden." The community leader noted that "they have done everything by their own efforts," and denounced the Colombian state for not providing enough support for peasant communities during lockdown to prevent transmission of COVID-19. "There was not enough food to guarantee the lockdown, for instance, there was no guarantee to stay at home in quarantine, you had to go out and find food anyway. You had to go out looking for the food so that the family would not go hungry."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

In addition to the impact on the right to food, the economy took a direct hit during the pandemic, particularly rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-,

indigenous- and native women who had difficulties commercializing their output. Although 57% of respondents in the five countries in the study grew food for their own families, 36% sold the surplus on the market, and 7% grew food only for sale at the market.

TYPE OF PRODUCTION

Countries	Self-consumption, surplus sold at market	Family self-consumption (subsistence)	Market only
Bolivia	54%	35%	11%
Colombia	46%	39%	15%
El Salvador	18%	78%	4%
Guatemala	43%	52%	5%
Honduras	28%	70%	2%
Total	36%	57%	7%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

Lockdowns and social distancing mandated in most of the countries in the region during the COVID-19 pandemic affected commercialization channels for fruit, vegetables, grains, meats and other food grown in rural areas. Closure of points of sale, rise in price of agricultural supplies, difficulties accessing food other than what you grow yourself, and loss of work, particularly among males who tend to go into the cities to work, were some of the core concerns that emerged in the focus groups held for this study.

"It really affected us, we wanted to sell our produce, and it was really hard to sell, that is where we got the resources. They did not let us sell at market, we couldn't buy meat or anything."

Focus Group El Salvador

OVERLOAD OF CARE WORK

One of the pandemic's many social impacts was that unpaid domestic care work increased. COVID-19 exposed as never before the importance of care for the sustainability of life, and the way the economies throughout the region fail to recognize this kind of work, where women devote three times as much time to daily domestic and unpaid care work as men do, according to ECLAC data (2020).

In rural areas, the overload of care tasks tends to be greater as a result of inequality in access to basic services. In 2018, 13,5% of households in the region had no access to improved water sources, and this figure jumped to 25% in rural areas (ECLAC, 2020). This implies that women had to spend 5 to 12 hours a week on unpaid domestic and care work more than those who live in households with potable water.

Among women who answered the survey, 86% had sons and daughters under their care, 35% of them are married, while 28% are single. In addition, 20% stated they did not know how to read or write, and 18% said they had never had access to formal education. Often, this inequality in access to education, added to scarce connectivity and the digital gap, became an additional load for rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women trying to help their children with long-distance education during the lockdown, and while schools remained closed.

"Last year we ran a poll at the Collective about the impact of the pandemic on women, and one of the questions was precisely whether care work had increased for them. When we talked about the main effects of caring for their children, they told us about the frustration of not being able to help their children solve academic activities because, as they put it, 'I studied up to third

or fourth grade, and my son has to do homework that I know absolutely nothing about'. This frustrated them greatly," explained Alina Menjivar, reference person for Feminist Collective for Local Development in El Salvador. "In the end, what affected them more than the time dedicated to care work was the frustration of feeling powerless to help their children," explained the territorial development expert.

"Women's work trebled. Before the pandemic, women had to work on growing the food and raising farm animals; then the pandemic came and women had to take on roles as laborers, teachers, etcetera."

Focus Group Colombia



Celia Chen | Photo: Claudio Vasquez Bianchi

HIGH-RISK STRUGGLES

Lack of access to- or control of land by rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women, has a direct effect on their self-reliance and other economic and social rights of including the right to a life free of violence. They are usually at the lead in the defense of territories and the environment, as note in the report on *High-Risk Struggles* (We Effect, 2020). This condition makes them more vulnerable to threats, harassment, and other forms of violence experienced by defenders of land and territories in the region.

According to the 2021 Global Witness report, in 2020, there were 227 lethal attacks against land defenders worldwide, which translates to four people murdered on average each week. This is the highest figure on record since the registry began in 2012, and more than one-third of these fatal attacks were against indigenous people. The pandemic and social isolation measures did not put an end to these murders. The report states that 9 in 10 fatalities were men; however, women defenders of land and territories face specific forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

This study that We Effect y LatFem carried out in 2021 revealed that 30% of respondents in the five countries had experienced some type of violence as a result of their role in the community. Among those who experienced acts of violence or threats, 50% perceived "differences" in the type of violence "because they were women." Additionally, among those who experienced violence 58% of respondents indicated they had not reported experiences of harassment and threats, and 83% of those who reported it, felt that this had not been addressed in their country.

Underreporting poses a double conflict: On the one hand, there is no way to really get an idea of the violence rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women are exposed to in those countries due to their role as land and territory defenders, in turn, they prevent understanding the reasons women fail to report, and what the ties to the State are. Along these lines, the results of the study show that in the five countries, only 2 of the women surveyed stated they had gone to the press to report, showing the degree to which communities distrust the mass media. The insufficient data and lack of reporting leads to a third conflict: They are unprotected because these situations are not documented.

Of those who actually reported, the study finds that 16% went to the authorities (police, prosecutor, etc.), 9% to their mixed community organization, and 8% to more than one of these options. Only 3% appealed to national or international human rights organizations.

Study results show Colombia is the country with the worst violence against rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women;

60% of respondents in this coffee-exporting country stated they had received threats, harassment, and other types of violence due to their role as land and territory defenders.

This information coincides with reports by a variety of national and international organizations, and with the serious human rights violations that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)⁶ warns take place in the country, and that particularly affect indigenous people, women and Afro-descendant people. After Colombia is Guatemala (29%), Honduras (28%) and Bolivia (26%), and far behind is El Salvador (8%).

Percentage of women who experienced violence by country	
Bolivia	26%
Colombia	60%
El Salvador	8%
Guatemala	29%
Honduras	28%

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

In addition to the violence tied to land struggles and socioenvironmental activism, the groups expressed concern over the rise in macho violence in the domestic sphere during the COVID-19 related lockdown, particularly against young women. Some of the respondents stated they knew of cases in their communities and they stated they had even reported instances of domestic violence, but they said they had felt no support from the authorities.

"The upward trend in abuse of women (during the pandemic) was very relevant, added to the increased number of unwanted pregnancies."

Focus Group Colombia

In the case of Colombia, there has been a rise in violence against socioenvironmental-, peasant- and indigenous

activists since the Peace Accords were signed by the Colombian State and the FARC-EP. In recent years, the number of murders of defenders in this country has risen steadily, and in 2020, it had the most crimes registered worldwide, with 65 fatalities, according to the aforementioned Global Witness report. Nonetheless, this figure could double by the end of 2021 according to the Institute for Development and Peace Studies, from January 1 to October 19 that year, 142 social leaders and human rights defenders were murdered in Colombia. In 25% of the cases, the victims were indigenous leaders, and in 13,5%, women (INDEPAZ, 2021).

"In the context of the armed conflict, we women were considered spoils of war. Men were murdered or taken away, disappeared, but we faced sexual violence."

Focus Group Colombia

Flor Edilma Osorio, professor and researcher at the Environmental and Rural Studies Department of the Javeriana University of Colombia, considers that sexual violence is underreported in the context of territorial tensions and the armed conflict in the country. "Women experienced a great deal of shame, and are too exposed to being revictimized. This also happens in other places where there is no war, sexual violence is not easy to report, and not so easy to prove, but in these conditions, where power is with those who are armed, the decision to remain silent or expose yourself to the whole process of investigating and reporting is very imbalanced, I think" she explains.

When interviewed for this study, Osorio noted that forced displacement was one of the forms of violence particularly experienced by rural-, peasant- and indigenous communities in this context in Colombia. This researcher considers that displacement also serves as a strategy for transnational corporations

⁶IACHR Condemns Serious Human Rights Violations in the Protest Context in Colombia: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=en/iachr/media_center/preleases/2021/137.asp

to "empty out the territories" that are of interest to them. "This type of company is interested in having resource-rich, strategic sites, and they are interested in emptying them out, no people. And displacement is really efficient in this regard: They kill one, 500 clear out, so the territory is clean. So, I think we need to keep in mind the efficiency of forced displacement in emptying out land, as a strategy that will certainly continue to be used by economic interests, because it is really quite cost effective," she warned.

"Every day there are two or three leaders, peasants, indigenous- and Afro-descendant people murdered, or people in the periphery of the city who have been displaced, and do their own resistance exercises. The cost of defending the territories, continuing environmental defense, is very high and this does not look like it is going to stop."

Flor Edilma Osorio

**Professor and researcher at the
Environmental and Rural Studies Department
of the Javeriana University of Colombia**

In **Guatemala**, 29% of respondents said they had experienced violence due to their role as land and human rights defenders. In 80% of the cases, they were between the ages of 26 and 60, and 70% of them self-identify as peasant, Afro-descendant peasant or indigenous peasant. Guatemalans have asserted they experienced threats and harassment for defending their territories the most, after Colombians. To put this data in context, the *Report on Women and Land in Guatemala: current situation, institutional framework and experiences*. (We Effect and El Observador, 2019), this country, "has no institution in charge of inter-institutional coordination to respond

to rural- and peasant women's grievances. The Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM) and the Ombudsman's Office for Indigenous Women in Guatemala, who are responsible for these matters, are dependencies of the President of the Republic and have no political autonomy."

"The organization has seen a lot of criminalizing of women. There are women who have been threatened and had to abandon the fight for rights and territories. Our fight has been to defend the territories, because there are many mining licenses. What we have in our favor is that almost all municipalities have held good-faith deliberations, supported by ILO Convention 169⁷. By these means, we continue to fight the State that excludes us and discriminates against us, but we continue showing that we defend our land."

Focus Group Guatemala

In Honduras, where, in 2016, peasant leader Berta Caceres was murdered, becoming an example at the international level of the fight to defend land and human rights, 27% of respondents stated they had experienced some type of violence, threat or harassment due to their role in the community. As in the rest of the countries in this study, most of those who experienced violence are between 26 and 60 years of age, and self-identify as peasants (27%), indigenous- or native peasants (41%), rural women (15%) and indigenous- or native women (11%). Only 2% self-identified as Afro-descendants.

In this country, of the women surveyed who stated they had experienced violence, only 49% said they had reported it. In most of these cases, they approached

⁷El Convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT) sobre pueblos indígenas y tribales, también conocido como Convenio 169 de la OIT, es el principal instrumento internacional sobre derechos de los pueblos indígenas. El convenio fue adoptado en 1989 y reconoce el derecho de los pueblos indígenas a la tierra y al territorio, a la salud y a la educación, y determina la protección de sus "valores y prácticas sociales, culturales, religiosos y espirituales propios". Además, el convenio reconoce el derecho de los pueblos indígenas u originarios a ser consultados de forma previa sobre las medidas legislativas o administrativas que afecten directamente sus derechos colectivos, su existencia física, su identidad cultural, su calidad de vida y/o desarrollo.

more than one reporting institution, including community organizations, the authorities and human rights delegations at both the national and international levels. Nonetheless, only half of them perceived that their report was heard in their country.

Yasmín López, Coordinator General of the Council for Integral Development of the Peasant Woman (CODIMCA), has faced this herself since a very early age, the persecution that peasant communities in her country experience for defending land and territories. She grew up in a peasant settlement in Santa Barbara, where 35 peasant families were fighting to recover land through the Agrarian Reform. In 1992, the administration of Rafael Leonardo Callejas ordered their eviction from the settlement, and that is where she first experienced the impact of violence. "I experienced the issue of eviction and repression first hand in the '90s, under the Callejas administration, precisely the one who repealed the Law for Agrarian Reform, and approved the Law for Agricultural Modernization. We suffered brutally during the eviction, even underage children died from the beatings and raping at the hands of the military," recalled Yasmin Lopez when interviewed for this study.

The CODMICA reference person maintains that since then, "land became merchandise," and the gender gap in land ownership widened in her country. Lopez also noted that in Honduras the State bears enormous responsibility in acknowledging land tenure and distribution in that country: Since the '70s, the government has failed to carry out an agrarian census. In addition, she explained that this process of evictions and persecution against peasant leaders became stronger after the coup. "After 2009, human rights violations by the Honduran State intensified and worsened," she asserted.

In 2021, Yasmin again experience violence and persecution herself when, in April, a group met with her at the CODMICA office after reporting corruption

and misuse of funds by government officials⁸. "This is a long-term issue with the State and public officials, because I have faced them, and even in hearings they have said I should abandon my lawsuits because what happened to Bertha (Caceres) is going to happen to women like me. So, the threats were even made in public," she reported.

"Violent evictions have occurred throughout history in Honduras. After the coup against the government in 2009, there was a rise in the use of this technique that neoliberal governments had success in using as a way of persecuting leaders. The fight for land in Honduras is a very complex matter, very difficult, but it is also a matter of survival."

Yasmín Lopez
Coordinator General of the Council for
Integral Development of the Peasant Woman
(CODIMCA)
Honduras

In **El Salvador**, the perception of violence against rural-, peasant-, indigenous- and Afro-descendant women is much less than in the rest of the countries in this study. Only 7% of respondents said they had experienced some kind of violence as a consequence of their role in the community or for defending land and territories.

"As women, we are more vulnerable, and our rights are violated when we identify as human rights defenders (...) However, we continue fighting, because we know that without any land, without water, without nature, there is no life."

Focus Group El Salvador

⁸Why were CODMICA peasant women attacked? (in Spanish): <https://cespad.org.hn/2021/04/20/por-que-ocurrio-el-asalto-a-las-mujeres-campesinas-de-codimca/>

In **Bolivia**, 26% of respondents said they had experienced some kind of violence due to their activism as land and human rights defenders, but 55% did not report this. Those who did actually report it turned to a mixed community organization, the authorities and, to a lesser extent, women's organizations, but only 13.54% felt that their report was taken into account in their country.

In addition to institutional and/or company violence, another concern that came up during the study has to do with conflicts within the communities, that on occasion turn violent. Some 25% of the women surveyed identified conflicts among people in the community as one of the reasons for land access issues and food rights that rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant- and native women experience.

Wilma Mendoza Miro is President of the National Confederation of Indigenous Women of Bolivia (CNAMIB), an organization that brings together 34 nationalities that have a territorial base in that country. She considers that macho attitudes in the organizations themselves is a central concern for her as a community leader. "Violence in the territories is very difficult for a woman leader. You constantly experience violence, not only by the company authorities and the State, but also by our own authorities, that is, the men. They minimize you, and always say that we cannot do anything because they are the leaders, and they have the final word," shared Mendoza Miro during her interview for this report.

The CNAMIB reference person considers that on many occasions male community leaders ally themselves with companies and the State when women raise their voices to demand their collective rights, and free, prior and informed consent in the face of the incursion of extraction projects in the territories. These conflicts in the communities can give rise to harassment, threats and other types of violence that disproportionately affect rural-, peasant-, indigenous-

and native women and have a direct impact on their political rights, driving them to abandon their leadership roles in many instances.

"It is a way of intimidating the woman leader to stop her from continuing to speak out and communicating what is going on. So, this creates intimidation and they threaten your family, and when you're a mother you cannot keep up the fight. Really very few continue. My leaders said this is as far as I go, I can't keep this up, I'd rather protect my life and I have my small child, I'd rather leave the leadership. So, it's a way to make us quit advocating for collective rights."

Wilma Mendoza Miro

President of the National Confederation of Indigenous Women of Bolivia (CNAMIB)

People surveyed, as well as those in focus groups and interviewed affirmed the need to continue the fight to defend the land and territories, and to build up organizations and shore up cooperation as a strategy to safeguard against persecution, but they noted their concern at the lack of attention their reports are getting, and, the collusion between private and public sectors in these matters.

Study results show that there needs to be an urgent demand that the States in the region give priority to the safety, integrity and effective protection of land and human rights defenders, put an end to impunity in crimes against social leaders, peasant-, indigenous-, and Afro-descendant organizations, and that they formally recognize the right rural women have to land, and enable them to exercise the right to food, economic self-reliance, and to live free of violence.



Rosa Camaja | Photo: Jose Alfredo Pacajoj Carranza

CONCLUSIONS

- The results of this study point to the direct link between land access, the right to fair and adequate food, and economic self-reliance of rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native populations in Latin American and the Caribbean, and particularly for women in these populations.
- To the extent that they provide greater economic self-reliance and decision-making capacity over food production and family income, women's access to- and ownership of land helps to narrow the gap between women and men and to fight against extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition, as has been pointed out by various international organizations such as FAO and UN Women. This is also fundamental in achieving the goals adopted by the 193 member states of the United Nations in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- In addition, peasant-, rural-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women play a key role as defenders of the environment and guardians of biodiversity, therefore, ensuring they have control over the land and territories is also a fundamental tool to fight against the climate crisis and its consequences.
- This study shows that the lack of specific public policies to promote individual or collective farmland ownership for women in the region, an economic and political discrimination that reinforces gender inequalities for generations. This report also shows that the vast majority of rural- and peasant women do not feel that their demands or voices are taken into consideration by the States when making public policy for the rural sector, or when developing projects in the territories where their communities are. That makes it necessary for the States in the region, and international organizations to commit to actively promoting land ownership and access to territories for rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women, as a way of guaranteeing their right to fair and adequate food, work, economic self-reliance, adequate housing, education and a decent life free of violence.
- The pandemic laid bare the inequality in accessing and exercising fundamental human rights, like access to health, to education, to work and decent housing, and made it difficult to access basic services like potable water, particularly in rural communities and suburban sectors.
- As for the right to food, 57% of respondents stated they had difficulty accessing food during the COVID-19 crisis. This percentage shows that the current food system fails to supply the people, operating instead for the profit of global production chains. International institutions like the Committee on World Food Security (CFS, 2021) stated that, in the face of deepening hunger and food insecurity, responses should guide public policies to promote "sustainable, resilient and diversified agricultural and food systems, in particular through agroecological and other innovative approaches."
- Likewise, the pandemic caused an overload in unpaid care work for women, who do everything from cleaning and care to educational tasks, as shown by testimonies and responses in surveys administered for this study.
- The findings also show that women are exposed to violence as a result of their role as community leaders and environmental defenders in the region, considered the most dangerous in the world for those who defend land and territories. Threats, harassment, forced displacement, persecution, criminalization and even murder is

the price paid by defenders who raise their voices. This situation disproportionately affects women who must fight gender stereotypes and stigma due to their role as community leaders, exposing themselves to different forms of macho violence, including sexual violence.

- Results show that over half of those who experienced violence have not reported it, and the vast majority of those who did so, stated they felt their reports had not been taken into consideration in their countries. This situation shows the lack of trust and/or discontent of rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women with the authorities and

institutions responsible for their security and guaranteeing access to justice.

- The lack of justice in these human rights violations is particularly troublesome, because it operates like a kind of indoctrination for defenders, and it often leads to being expelled from political and community life. The States in the region must urgently implement measures to safeguard the integrity and effective protection of land and human rights defenders, put an end to impunity in crimes against social leaders, peasant-, indigenous-, and Afro-descendant organizations, in keeping with international agreements



Cesia Herrera | Photo: Anders Hansson

RECOMENDACIONES

We Effect and LatFem issue the following recommendations for States, decision makers, international aid agencies and mass media in the countries:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS

- Implement measures to strengthen and facilitate the influence communities have on the design and implementation of laws, public policies and programs that promote fair and equal land access and ownership.
- Promote laws to facilitate access and use of common assets by rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant populations, particularly by women.
- Promote economic empowerment initiatives, job training, and loan programs with a gender lens, particularly targeting rural-, peasant-, indigenous-, native and Afro-descendant women, to guarantee their self-reliance, and other economic, political, social, and cultural rights. This includes guaranteeing operation of markets that enable small farmers to sell their products at a fair price, without exploitation.
- Financial inclusion of small farmers is a fundamental tool to improve their exercise of the right to food, through sustainable agricultural production, increasing productivity, and adding value to their output, and committing to distributing food to markets. It is urgent for governments to secure the conditions necessary as part of policies and programs to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Act and intervene in climate change mitigation, adaptation, climate crisis risk reduction, taking into account gender equality and an inter-sectional perspective as the key to guaranteeing fair and sustainable food systems.
- Guarantee effective security, integrity and protection for women who are defenders of the land, territory, natural resources, and human rights. This also should include support and promotion of food sovereignty for the peoples, and recognizing the fundamental role women play in guaranteeing it.
- In contexts where big business' activities significantly affect local economies, the environment, land access and livelihoods, ensure processes with due diligence that include analysis of actual or potential adverse gender impacts; also, ensure that grievance mechanisms are gender-sensitive, taking into account inter-sectional aspects, and obstacles that might keep women from accessing them.
- Implement public policies that promote co-responsibility in unpaid care work, recognizing the economic and social value of these tasks that women have historically had to bear. This inequality in the time assigned to care and domestic work, reproduces and deepens socioeconomic and gender inequalities in the region; therefore, the States need to do their part to guarantee access to care services and social protection for the entire population, recognizing and adequately paying workers in that sector, with a gender and human-rights perspective.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL AID ORGANIZATIONS

- Promote and increase financing for programs that support peasant-, indigenous- and Afro-descendant organizations, women-led and mixed, that promote women and feminist leaders, that promote co-responsibility in unpaid care work, but also promote pro-care culture that transforms the imaginaries, social norms and gender norms in communities where they work.
- Facilitate discussions between government, civil society organizations, public and private institutions, to plan and implement actions and projects to promote land access and ownership for women and right to food for all people.
- Guarantee the participation of peasant-, indigenous-, native- and Afro-descendant women from an intersectional perspective, in the design of said programs and public policies, from a bottom-up perspective, to ensure their interests are represented.
- Support the transition to sustainable agriculture, like agroecology and other methods for sustainable farming, which are key to the protection of biodiversity and the fight against climate crisis, ensuring that support reaches small farmer women in particular.
- Prioritize programs that attempt to address the deep causes of food insecurity, like gender inequality and climate change, including the social, environmental, economic, gender, political impact of climate change,

and strengthen resilience in the communities at all levels: individual, social, material and environmental.

- Influence their respective countries and governments to adopt and implement regulations so that due diligence is a real commitment and effective practice in the countries of the global south and, in this way, to act in coherence with the scope of the gender-related international commitments subscribed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDIA

- Make it a priority on their agendas to report on proposals that are already underway in the territories to combat inequality in land access and its social, economic and political consequences, with an emphasis on the role of rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women in food production, fighting hunger and defending the environment and human rights.
- Include rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women's voices in coverage of climate change, recognizing their role as front-line environmental defenders of land and territories.
- Avoid victimizing narratives. It is necessary to denounce and document the persecution of rural-, peasant-, Afro-descendant-, indigenous- and native women, as well as environmental and territorial defenders in the region, and to shed light on their proposals for the construction of a decent life and a world with socioenvironmental justice and gender equity.

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ATTACHMENT

GLOSSARY

Afro-descendant: The Durban Declaration and Program of Action, adopted by consensus at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), defined Afro-descendant as a person of African origin who lives in the Americas and in region of the African Diaspora as a result of slavery, who has historically been denied the exercise of fundamental rights.

Peasant and Indigenous Agriculture Comprises small-scale agricultural, livestock and forestry production systems, oriented to food production for self-consumption and local and regional markets. This type of agriculture employs family and/or community labor, uses appropriate technologies adapted to agricultural ecosystems. In addition to being an economic activity, peasant and indigenous agriculture also entails the acknowledgment of the knowledge, history, cultures and cosmovisions of the people. It also generates work, stimulates the local economy, dignifies the lives of rural communities, promotes the organization and strengthening of the social fabric in contexts affected by war, megaprojects and potentially destructive natural events.

Agroecology: The FAO defines agroecology as a scientific discipline, a set of practices and a social movement. As a science, it studies interactions between the various components of the agroecosystem. As a set of practices, it promotes sustainable farming systems that optimize and stabilize production." Agroecological farming implies production, distribution, commercialization and consumption based on fair trade, social and

solidary economy, and protecting biodiversity, to contribute to mitigating the ecological crisis and its consequences.

Climate Change: A series of global modifications in the main rainfall and wind patterns, sea levels and variations in temperature, whose worldwide averages continue to rise. This took its natural course over thousands of years, but human action in the form of fossil fuel usage and activities like intense livestock farming, have accelerated the global warming of the planet and other effects. Variation in the state of the climate evident in variations in mean values and/or variability of its properties, persisting over long periods of time, generally decades or longer. Climate Change has become a primary concern for citizens worldwide, leading governments to commit to the **Paris Agreement** to reduce world greenhouse gas emissions and improve climate change adaptation of society and ecosystems. Science has indicated that a 50 percent reduction in global emissions must be achieved by 2030 in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change, which has the following consequences: higher average temperatures, longer and more severe heat waves, changes in the distribution of animal and plant species, rising sea levels, more erratic and torrential rainfall, more frequent and severe droughts, longer fire seasons, and larger and more destructive wildfires.

Climate Crisis: Not a synonym for climate change. Term used in politics to point to the negative consequences (environmental, social, economic,

human rights, etc.) associated with current climate change. A change could be positive and could occur "naturally," whereas a crisis identifies responsible parties and requires our intervention, and is a call to action.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas: Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 28 September 2018 Provides a definition for "peasant" as a subject of rights. "Peasant" is any person who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market, and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labor and other non-monetized ways of organizing labor, and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land. The present Declaration applies to any person engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering, and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area. It also applies to dependent family members of peasants; indigenous peoples and local communities working on the land, transhumant, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, and the landless, engaged in the above-mentioned activities; it applies to hired workers, including all migrant workers regardless of their migration status, and seasonal workers, on plantations, agricultural farms, forests and farms in aquaculture and in agro-industrial enterprises.

Garifuna The Garifuna are a people with an ancestral culture, whose origin is traced to the union of three cultures: African, Arawak and Caribes. This ethnic group has its own language, belief system, foods and ancestral practices in agriculture, dance, song and come together in their spirituality. They are found in Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Food Insecurity The insufficient intake of food that may be temporary (during a crisis), seasonal or chronic (ongoing). (FAO, World Food Summit, 1996).

Human Rights Defenders: These are people who individually or collectively act to defend, promote or protect one or several human rights.

Native Peoples: People who settled and lived in different places in the world prior to the Conquest. Not only a reference to the peoples of America.

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous Peoples are the inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and forms of relating to other people and the environment. They have preserved social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are different from those of dominant societies where they live.

Food Security: At the individual, household, nation and worldwide levels, it exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Food Sovereignty: The right of peoples to nutritious food, to decide on their food system and to define public policies in this regard. It involves new relationships, free from oppression and inequality, where local agricultural producers are the central stakeholders. Guarantees access to land, to territories, to water and biodiversity in the hands of those who produce adequate food. A strategy to resist and dismantle free trade and corporations and to foster local markets that are commercially fair and environmentally sustainable. (Nyéléni Declaration, 2007).

Land and Territory: The demand for land has historically been what peasant movements have demanded in Latin America, and it focused on

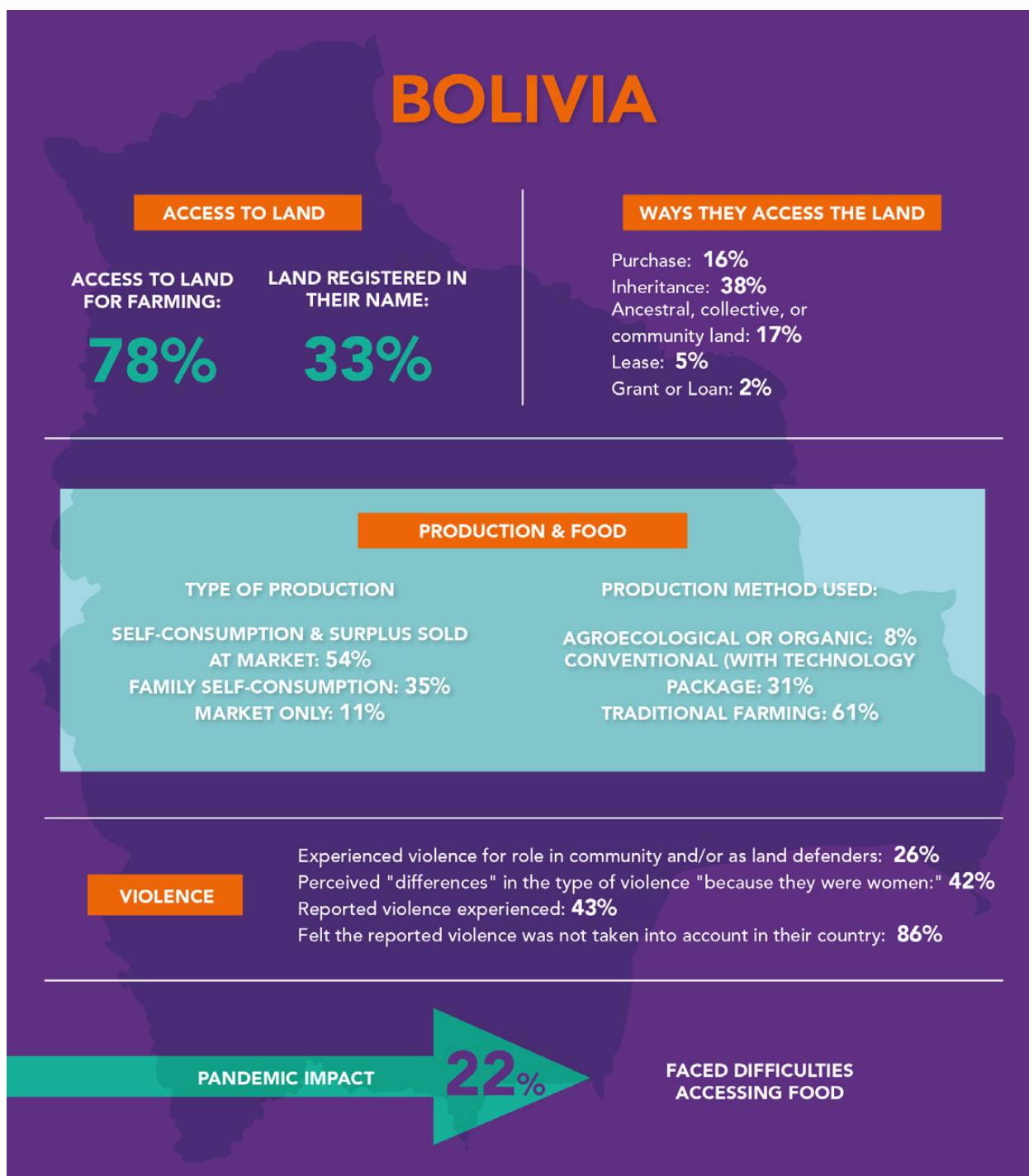
the right to occupy, enjoy and use the land and its resources like water, forest, flora and fauna. Traditionally, the States associated peasant demands with family access to land in the form of small agricultural plots. The sociopolitical emergency of native and Afro-descendant peoples demanding land rights for their survival has shed light on evidence of vertical integration of highland and lowland (and coastal land) ecosystems, which were traditionally used by indigenous people from a collective core of cohesion such as comarcas, ayllus, markas, ejidos,

resguardos, community councils, and others. The Andean or Mayan idea of space refers to the territory that has been socially incorporated and taken by local societies. That is to say that people create the territory, which cannot exist without them, and they cannot exist without their lands. This is a cultural event reproducing individual-community life, agricultural practices, trade routes, social rituals, world view and relationships of power. The productive aspect of land is part of the territory, including all rural livelihoods.

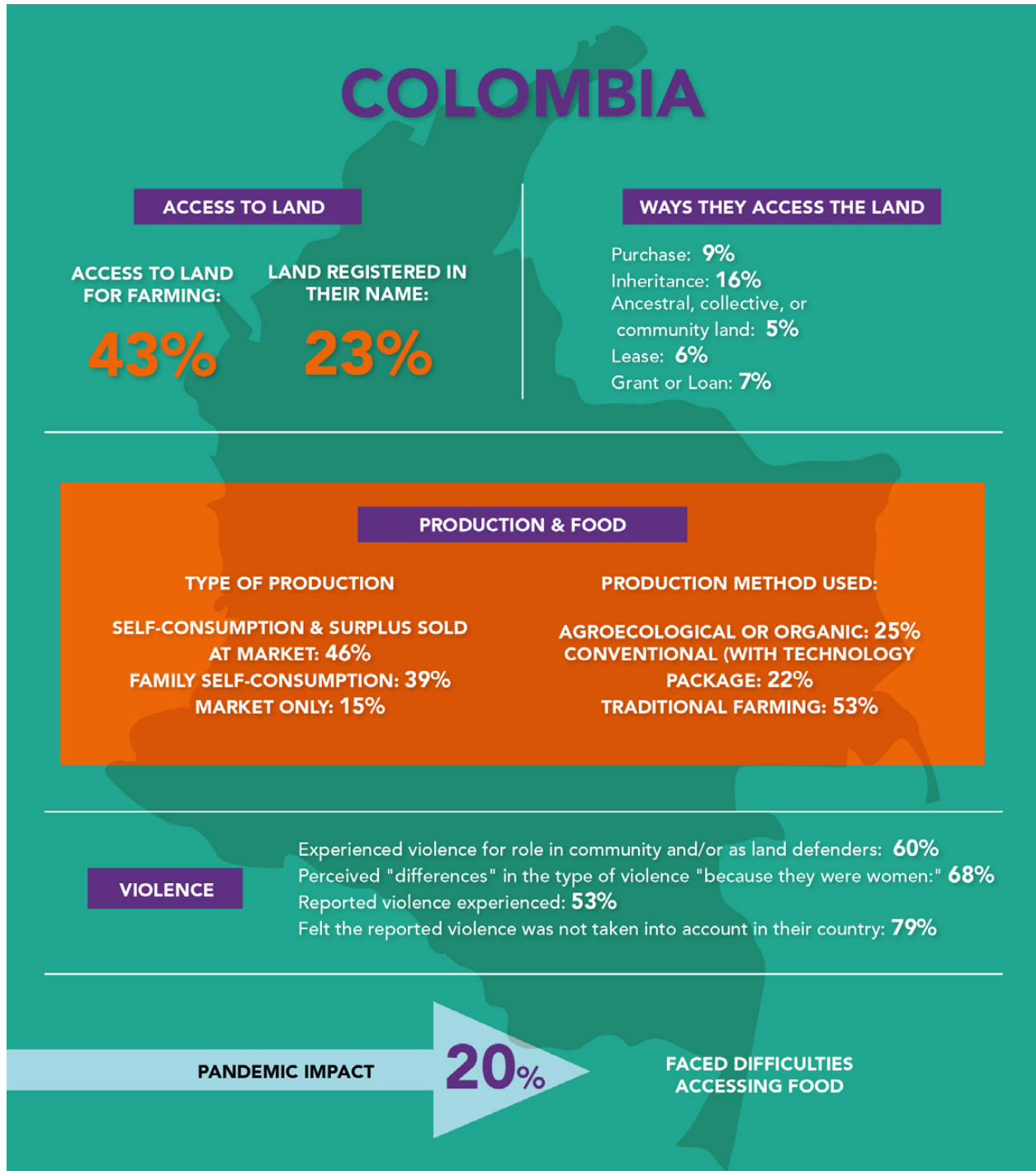


Irma Torres | Photo: Philip Krook

DATA SHEET BY COUNTRY



Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)



Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

EL SALVADOR

ACCESS TO LAND

ACCESS TO LAND
FOR FARMING:

93%

LAND REGISTERED IN
THEIR NAME:

20%

WAYS THEY ACCESS THE LAND

Purchase: **19%**
Inheritance: **23%**
Ancestral, collective, or
community land: **4%**
Lease: **41%**
Grant or Loan: **6%**

PRODUCTION & FOOD

TYPE OF PRODUCTION

SELF-CONSUMPTION & SURPLUS SOLD
AT MARKET: **18%**
FAMILY SELF-CONSUMPTION: **78%**
MARKET ONLY: **4%**

PRODUCTION METHOD USED:

AGROECOLOGICAL OR ORGANIC: **37%**
CONVENTIONAL (WITH TECHNOLOGY
PACKAGE: **6%**
TRADITIONAL FARMING: **57%**

VIOLENCE

Experienced violence for role in community and/or as land defenders: **8%**
Perceived "differences" in the type of violence "because they were women:" **15%**
Reported violence experienced: **16%**
Felt the reported violence was not taken into account in their country: **90%**

PANDEMIC IMPACT

21%

FACED DIFFICULTIES
ACCESSING FOOD

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

GUATEMALA

ACCESS TO LAND

ACCESS TO LAND
FOR FARMING:

54%

LAND REGISTERED IN
THEIR NAME:

41%

WAYS THEY ACCESS THE LAND

Purchase: **23%**
Inheritance: **24%**
Ancestral, collective, or
community land: **5%**
Lease: **1%**
Grant or Loan: **1%**

PRODUCTION & FOOD

TYPE OF PRODUCTION

SELF-CONSUMPTION & SURPLUS SOLD
AT MARKET: **43%**
FAMILY SELF-CONSUMPTION: **52%**
MARKET ONLY: **5%**

PRODUCTION METHOD USED:

AGROECOLOGICAL OR ORGANIC: **66%**
CONVENTIONAL (WITH TECHNOLOGY
PACKAGE: **6%**
TRADITIONAL FARMING: **28%**

VIOLENCE

Experienced violence for role in community and/or as land defenders: **29%**
Perceived "differences" in the type of violence "because they were women:" **74,5%**
Reported violence experienced: **19%**
Felt the reported violence was not taken into account in their country: **90%**

PANDEMIC IMPACT

19%

FACED DIFFICULTIES
ACCESSING FOOD

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)

HONDURAS

ACCESS TO LAND

ACCESS TO LAND
FOR FARMING:

77%

LAND REGISTERED IN
THEIR NAME:

16%

WAYS THEY ACCESS THE LAND

Purchase: **12%**
Inheritance: **12%**
Ancestral, collective, or
community land: **30%**
Lease: **20%**
Grant or Loan: **3%**

PRODUCTION & FOOD

TYPE OF PRODUCTION

SELF-CONSUMPTION & SURPLUS SOLD
AT MARKET: **28%**
FAMILY SELF-CONSUMPTION: **70%**
MARKET ONLY: **2%**

PRODUCTION METHOD USED:

AGROECOLOGICAL OR ORGANIC: **16%**
CONVENTIONAL (WITH TECHNOLOGY
PACKAGE: **2%**
TRADITIONAL FARMING: **82%**

VIOLENCE

Experienced violence for role in community and/or as land defenders: **28%**
Perceived "differences" in the type of violence "because they were women:" **57%**
Reported violence experienced: **51%**
Felt the reported violence was not taken into account in their country: **76%**

PANDEMIC IMPACT

18%

FACED DIFFICULTIES
ACCESSING FOOD

Source: LatFem & We Effect (2021)