

29890



VOICES OF THE POOR

in COLOMBIA

Strengthening Livelihoods, Families, and Communities

Jairo A. Arboleda
 Patti L. Petesch
 James Blackburn



Public Disclosure Authorized
 Public Disclosure Authorized
 Public Disclosure Authorized
 Public Disclosure Authorized
 Public Disclosure Authorized

VOICES OF THE POOR
in Colombia

VOICES OF THE POOR
in Colombia:

*Strengthening
Livelihoods,
Families, and
Communities*

Jairo A. Arboleda
Patti L. Petesch
James Blackburn



THE WORLD BANK

© 2004 The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20433
Telephone 202-473-1000
Internet www.worldbank.org
E-mail feedback@worldbank.org

All rights reserved.

1 2 3 4 07 06 05 04

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank or the governments they represent.

The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work. The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of the World Bank concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

Rights and Permissions

The material in this work is copyrighted. Copying and/or transmitting portions or all of this work without permission may be a violation of applicable law. The World Bank encourages dissemination of its work and will normally grant permission promptly.

For permission to photocopy or reprint any part of this work, please send a request with complete information to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, USA, telephone 978-750-8400, fax 978-750-4470, www.copyright.com.

All other queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to the Office of the Publisher, World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC, 20433, USA, fax 202-522-2422, e-mail pubrights@worldbank.org.

Cover design by Tomoko Hirata. Photographs courtesy of the World Bank Photo Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Arboleda, Jairo A., 1945-

Voices of the poor in Colombia: strengthening livelihoods, families, and communities /

Jairo A. Arboleda, Patti L. Petesch, James Blackburn.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographic references (p. 97) and index.

ISBN 0-8213-5802-2

1. Poverty—Colombia. 2. Poverty—Government policy—Colombia.
3. Poor—Colombia. I. Petesch, Patti L. II. Blackburn, James. III. Title.

HC200.P6A73 2004
362.5'09861—dc22

2004042077

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Terms and Abbreviations</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Chapter 1: The Colombia Study: Proposals for Action</i>	<i>1</i>
Country Context	3
Why a Participatory Approach?	4
<i>Chapter 2: Employment, Work, and Opportunities</i>	<i>7</i>
Urban Livelihoods: Informality on the Rise	8
Deterioration of Formal Employment	9
El Rebusque: Insecure and Low Paying	10
Barrio Stigma	11
The Strain of Changing Gender Roles	12
The World of Rural Work	14
Issues around Land	14
Marketing: The Missing Link	15
Environmental Degradation	15
Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Aspirations	17
Persistent Disadvantages for Rural Women	19
Children and Youths: At Work and Endangered	19
Organization and Capacity Building as Ways Forward	22
<i>Chapter 3: Violence and Insecurity</i>	<i>27</i>
The Backdrop of Political Violence	28
Fear and Impotence in the Battle for Territory	29
Vigilante Justice	32
Economic Impact of Violence	33
Families and Communities Uprooted: The Internally Displaced	35
Youths Caught Up in Violence	37
Rising Domestic Abuse: Forms and Causes	39
Abuse of Women	39
Many Triggers	41
Children Battered and Abandoned	42
Breaking the Chain of Violence	44
<i>Chapter 4: Education and Capacities</i>	<i>49</i>
High Hopes for Education	50
Schools Failing the Grade	52

Useless for Work	53
Little Learning, Unmotivated Teachers	53
Limited Access and Infrastructure	56
Unjustifiably Expensive	57
Another Battleground	57
The Shame of Discrimination	59
Pushed and Pulled Out of School	59
Vocational Education Valued but Scarce	62
Nonschool Actors in Education	62
Education Must Be Relevant	64
<i>Chapter 5: Institutional and Policy Challenges</i>	69
Weak Institutions: Keeping the Poor Poor	70
Unaccountable Politicians, Exclusionary Policies	71
Services Denied	72
Who Takes the Credit?	74
Mixed Reviews for NGOs	74
Stigmatized and Divided Communities, Fragile NGOs	75
Poor People's Proposals	77
Provide Support and Capacity Building for Work	79
Improve Schools	81
Strengthen Family and Community Institutions	83
Increase Public Safety	86
Implications for Policy Formulation: From Micro to Macro	87
Support Small Producers	88
Invest in Community-Driven Development	89
Target the Family as a Unit	90
Establish Inclusive Accountability Mechanisms across Government	93
Develop Tailored and Integrated Strategies	94
<i>References</i>	97
<i>Annex 1: Methodological Instrument for the Fieldwork</i>	99
Research Agenda	100
The Study Process	100
<i>Annex 2: Selection and Characteristics of Sites</i>	119
<i>List of Boxes</i>	
Box 1. Informal Recycling in Pasto	10
Box 2. An Urgent Need for Daycare	13
Box 3. Child Labor in the Harvest Season	20
Box 4. Asociación La Nueva Esperanza	23
Box 5. "Be Quiet and Silent"	31
Box 6. Vigilante Justice Leads to More Violence	33

Box 7. A Dangerous and Stigmatized Neighborhood	34
Box 8. Farming Skills of No Use in the City	37
Box 9. Alternatives to Juvenile Delinquency	38
Box 10. Education and Cultural Expression	52
Box 11. Child Hunger	55
Box 12. Children's Fears and Hopes in School	58
Box 13. Education in the Heart of the Community	65
Box 14. Proposals to Overcome Lack of Information	79
Box 15. Proposals to Reduce the Vulnerability of Youth	85
Box 16. Nonviolent Community Responses to Violence	86
Box 17. Magdalena Medio Project: Fostering Peace and Development amid Conflict	91

List of Figures

Figure 1. Youth Delinquency: The Cycle of Acceptance	21
Figure 2. Labor Trends among Women in Medellín	22
Figure 3. Opportunities and Obstacles: A Youth Training Proposal	24
Figure 4. The Rise of Neighborhood Violence, 1995–2002	29
Figure 5. Trends in Domestic Violence	40
Figure 6. The Chain of Violence	44
Figure 7. Opportunities and Obstacles: A Proposal to Reduce Domestic Violence	46
Figure 8. Opportunities and Obstacles: A Proposal for One-Stop Family Services	47
Figure 9. Causes and Effects of Dropping Out of School	61
Figure 10. Number and Type of Proposals	78
Figure 11. Opportunities and Obstacles: Proposal for an Association of Single-Mother Domestic Workers	81

List of Tables

Table 1. Nature under Pressure in Sanquianga	16
Table 2. Relative Importance of Educational Actors	63
Table 3. Attacking the Causes of High Dropout Rates	66
Table 4. Proposals to Support Employment	80
Table 5. Proposals to Build Capacity for Work	82
Table 6. Proposals to Improve Education	82
Table 7. Proposals to Support Families and Communities	84
Table 8. Proposals to Improve Public Safety	87

Foreword

I am pleased to present this important qualitative study of poverty and insecurity in Colombia. Inspired by the global *Voices of the Poor* study, research teams visited 10 poor Colombian communities to facilitate open discussions on three topics: work, security, and education. The research initiative then called upon local people to develop proposals that address their priorities. The results of this study are a welcome complement to the recently published *Colombia Poverty Report*. They bring to light the personal, cultural, familial, and other social manifestations of poverty that are usually hidden behind aggregate statistics.

In the chapters that follow, people of all ages describe their efforts to overcome often extreme disadvantages in their homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and villages. Poor Colombians face innumerable risks to their physical and emotional well-being, and they have painfully few opportunities to be productive and to gain self-respect. Many poor youths describe homes wracked with suffering and despair, and neighborhoods virtually under siege by drug traders, gangs, or armed groups. Their dreams of escaping poverty by obtaining an education are often crushed in classrooms beset with discrimination, unmotivated teachers, and overcrowding, and in job markets with little to offer even those with degrees. *Everyone* in the community suffers when the local youths lose hope.

Despite their many hardships, the 942 people who engaged in the study cling fiercely to their faith in themselves, their families, and their communities. They vividly describe how lack of adequate work, insecurity at home and on the streets, and substandard schools intersect and exacerbate one another. However, from their vantage point, public policies and development approaches remain blind to their interlocking needs. As a corrective, they want local institutions that can provide multiple, coordinated responses to problems. They challenge us to see development as a holistic process, to understand that fixing one problem here and there is not going to help them leave poverty behind. Poor people expect to be part of the hard work of reorienting the way development is promoted. Indeed, they want to get involved.

We must make a commitment to respond in practical and lasting ways to the problems of poverty and conflict. There is little doubt that enlarging people's well-being and security in Colombia will require finding more and better ways to amplify poor people's voices and to give youths an opportunity to regain hope. Action research such as this aspires to contribute to such processes. But it is only a first step. Poor people have and will continue to put forward many creative approaches to strengthening

their livelihoods, families, and communities. We must rise to their challenge and demonstrate that we have truly understood their messages. We must support their faith in themselves.

STEEN LAU JORGENSEN
Sector Director, Social Development Department
World Bank

Acknowledgments

This report is the outcome of a collaborative effort between the World Bank and Colombian stakeholders. The task team included Jairo Arboleda (Task Team Leader, LCC1C) and four consultants: James Blackburn served as Coordinator of the research team and prepared the first draft of the report; Patti Petesch, a key player in the *Global Voices of the Poor* study, provided support on study design, data analysis, and drafting the final version of the report; Jaime Andrés Gómez was the Field Coordinator; and Haidi Hernández prepared a first draft of the chapter on violence and supported the data analysis.

The study was carried out by the task team in collaboration with five teams of field researchers, two of them associated with Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá and Universidad del Valle in Cali, one from urban NGOs in Medellín, a team of social communicators from Bucaramanga, and a team of anthropologists from Bogotá. The field teams included the following members:

- ▶ *Universidad Javeriana*: Elsie Corrales (team leader), Manuel Pérez, Diana Lucía Maya, and Carlos Rondón
- ▶ *Universidad del Valle*: José J. Bayona (team leader), Rosa E. Bermúdez, Luis Alfonso Rodríguez, and Edgna Morales
- ▶ *Urban NGOs*: Carlos Enrique Arboleda (team leader), Luz Biviana Gómez, César Bedoya, and Luz Adriana Arcila
- ▶ *Social communicators*: Claudia Vicoria Téllez (team leader), Gladis Herrera, Javier Vesga, and Mariela Mantilla
- ▶ *Anthropologists*: Haidi Hernández (team leader), Angélica Acosta, Sandra Velásquez, and Mauricio Ríos.

The field teams received training and guidance from Iñigo Retolaza, a specialist in participation and development.

The design of the study also drew on guidance from Colombian scholars and policy experts, civil society leaders from diverse parts of the country, government officials, donors, and international participation specialists. Special recognition should be given to those who helped review the methodology and initial findings, including Alejandro Gaviria, Alfredo Sarmiento, Manuel Salazar, Consuelo Ballesteros, Luis Fernando Cruz, Margareth Florez, Jose Bernardo Toro, Fabio Velásquez, and Martha Eugenia Segura.

The World Bank's Country Management Unit (LCC1) provided all the funding for the study, and the Poverty Reduction Group supported a planning workshop. Vinh Nguyen, Alberto Chueca, and Connie Luff offered invaluable support and advice and showed a great deal of sensitivity and understanding of the task. Overall encouragement and support were provided by Country Directors Olivier Lafourcade and Isabel Guerrero.

World Bank Peer Reviewers were Katherine Bain, Steven Maber, and Jorge Franco. Jorge Franco also provided detailed advice on the presentation and analysis of findings.

Thanks to Beatriz Elena Franco, who contributed to the preparation of the draft reports, and to Kristin Rusch for the professional editing of the report.

Above all, we thank the many people in the 10 study sites in Colombia who participated in the research. They shared their perceptions, priorities, and proposals to overcome poverty and were extremely generous with their time and hospitality despite the adverse circumstances of their daily lives.

Terms and Abbreviations

<i>apertura</i>	free-market policy
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)
<i>bazuco</i>	coca paste
<i>cabildo</i>	council governing minga activities
CBO	community-based organization
CDC	Community Development Center
<i>comadre</i>	godmother, female benefactor
<i>comunas</i>	communities
<i>cupos</i>	cupons for government-provided goods and services
EBIDS	Escuelas Basicas Integradas de Desarrollo Sostenible (Integrated Basic Schools of Sustainable Development)
<i>educación integral</i>	education that encompasses life skills, academic skills, values, and citizenship
<i>empleo</i>	formal employment
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
GDP	gross domestic product
<i>hogares comunitarias</i>	ICBF daycare centers
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Family Welfare Institute)
JAC	Junta de Acción Comunal (Community Action Board)
<i>machista</i>	macho
<i>madres comunitarias</i>	women who operate ICBF daycare centers
<i>maraña</i>	informal work
<i>minga</i>	an indigenous practice of collective work
<i>minifundización</i>	the practice of subdividing land into smaller and smaller parcels at each inheritance
<i>minifundio</i>	small plots of land
<i>muchachos</i>	paramilitary groups
<i>paisa</i>	light-skinned person from the “Antioqueño” culture of Colombia
<i>parcelero</i>	sharecropper
<i>peones</i>	rural wage laborers
<i>raicero</i>	submerged mangrove roots
<i>rebusque</i>	informal work
<i>sacayucas</i>	country bumpkins, lit. manioc diggers
<i>sacapas</i>	country bumpkins, lit. potato diggers

SENA	Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Apprenticeship Service)
SISBEN	Sistema de Selección de Beneficiarios (Beneficiary Selection System)
<i>tener palanca</i>	insider connections
<i>trabajo</i>	self-employment
UMATA	Unidad Municipal de Asistencia Técnica (Municipal Technical Assistance Office)
<i>vacuna</i>	war fee
<i>verdes</i>	U.S. money
<i>zona roja</i>	conflict zone



Chapter 1

The Colombia Study: Proposals for Action

I would like to return, have a better economic future, have my children at home, be able to leave them alone and not worry that they will be in danger. [We need to have] organization, training, and work for productive projects . . . to be united and understand each other; to have clear rules from the beginning; to have trust, responsibility, and reliability; to be able to count on having greater information on projects and programs from the various entities so that they can exercise community oversight.

—Aspirations expressed by various study
participants of Cazucá

This study explores poverty from the perspectives of 942 poor women, men, youths, and children from different regions and ethnic groups of Colombia. The Colombian study is very much in the tradition of the global Voices of the Poor research conducted by the World Bank in 1999; that is, it uses a participatory approach designed to encourage local people to analyze and discuss their problems and priorities. The Colombian initiative, however, has two features that distinguish it from that earlier effort. First, it focuses on areas of particular relevance to poverty and development in Colombia: work and employment, violence and insecurity, and education and capacities. Second, the Colombia study was designed to elicit proposals from poor people on how to make their lives more prosperous and secure.

The fieldwork for the study took place in 10 poor communities in June–July 2002. The sites were selected to ensure representation of different regions, rural and urban contexts, diverse ethnic groups, special vulnerabilities, and high and low intensity of armed conflict. Research teams visited very poor *comunas* that are typical of Colombian urban areas in the cities of Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Medellín, and Pasto. Researchers also went to Altos de Cazucá, a periurban neighborhood of internally displaced families on the outskirts of Bogotá (Soacha municipality); Sanquianga, an Afro-Colombian fishing community on the Pacific coast (Nariño Department); villages in Girón (Santander Department) and Usme (Bogotá Department); and an Indian reserve in the northern Cauca Department. Both the study agenda and the methodology emerged out of an inclusive process that drew on guidance from Colombian scholars and policy experts, civil society leaders from diverse parts of the country, government officials, donors, and international specialists in participation. (See annex 1 for details on the methodology and annex 2 for a general description of the sampling criteria and communities.)

The coming of the Alvaro Uribe administration in August 2002 and the preparation of a new Country Assistance Strategy for Colombia in the same year provided an auspicious moment for undertaking this study. For both Colombia and the World Bank, the change in the country's leadership offered an opportunity to focus greater attention on Colombia's disturbing poverty trends and continuing civil conflicts. It was also an opportunity to assess strategies for more effective poverty reduction and peace building over the next four years. We hope that this study will contribute to such processes by raising awareness of poor people's views on the causes of, and most promising solutions to, violence, unemployment, and powerlessness.

Country Context

During the 1980s and early 1990s, when much of Latin America was experiencing a “lost decade,” Colombia’s economic performance remained strong and resulted in remarkable poverty reduction and social progress. These advances, however, proved fragile.

Until 1996, Colombia enjoyed high, sustained, and very stable growth. The general poverty rate fell from 80 percent in 1978 to 60 percent in 1995.¹ During the same period, the share of Colombians living in extreme poverty fell from 45 percent to 21 percent, while impressive gains were achieved in primary and secondary school completion, health insurance coverage, access to basic infrastructure, and life expectancy. In addition, rates of child labor and infant mortality fell.

Much of this progress can be attributed to three decades of progressive social policies. Colombia’s strong economic performance allowed for a dramatic expansion of social expenditures during the 1990s, which substantially benefited the poor. Driven by mandates in the 1991 Constitution and a series of related laws, public spending on social programs (involving health, education, housing, public services, and social security) doubled between 1992 and 1997. Public expenditures for these programs increased their share of gross domestic product (GDP) from 8 percent to 15 percent. Likewise, the share of overall public expenditure dedicated to social programs increased from 30 to 35 percent (Giugale, Lafourcade, and Luff 2003). The new constitution and accompanying legislation also brought major changes in the administration of health and education services and public utilities, mainly because of the decentralization of power to the departmental and municipal levels of government.

However, the most severe economic crisis to hit Colombia since the 1930s struck in the second half of the 1990s. After decades of positive and sustained growth, economic activity in Colombia began to decline in 1997 and turned negative in 1999, bringing the country’s ambitious social policy agenda to a halt. Macroeconomic performance deteriorated significantly, growth rates plummeted, and the unemployment rate escalated to almost 20 percent.

The poor were hardest hit. The economic collapse not only worsened unemployment but also widened inequality and reversed the positive poverty reduction trends observed since the 1970s. By 1999, among Colombia’s 41.4 million people, 64 percent (26.5 million people) lived in poverty, and 23 percent (9.5 million people) lived in extreme poverty (World Bank 2002a). Long-standing poverty programs became overburdened. Many efforts at peacemaking also faltered. The recession and rising violence contributed to the deterioration of key human development indicators and left some groups in a highly vulnerable situation, notably young children, adolescents, and internally displaced people.

The sudden deterioration of economic and social conditions should be understood in the context of a much longer crisis in the country's public and private institutions, especially with regard to the state's governance capacity. This is perhaps most obvious in the government's decreasing ability over the last two decades to contain armed violence, guarantee rule of law, and exercise justice in ever-larger portions of its territory as irregular armed forces of guerrillas, paramilitary units, and drug groups battle for territorial control.

It is widely agreed that drug trafficking has been one of the most damaging factors in Colombia's economic, social, and institutional crisis. The growth of the drug business has intensified armed conflict by providing a permanent source of funding to guerrilla and paramilitary groups. It is also directly linked to the increase in homicide rates in areas of heavy trafficking, to the inefficiency of the judicial system, and to increasing corruption and impunity. Eliminating the drug business will not end the country's poverty and armed conflict. However, most people accept that it is a necessary first step toward ending the costly war and overcoming the corrosive effect of drug money on the political and economic management of the country (Garfield and Arboleda 2003). The Uribe administration—elected with a clear mandate to strengthen state authority, undertake political reform, and fight corruption—faces numerous challenges. It must design and implement a framework for restoring peace and improving governance while confronting an intensified armed conflict, a social and humanitarian crisis, and a discredited political system. But a severe fiscal deficit and mounting public debt hamper the government's capacity to work in these areas and rebuild the economy. It is against this difficult backdrop that a large share of the poor people who participated in this study expresses very little confidence in their government or hope for a better future.

Why a Participatory Approach?

The findings presented here are not representative of poverty in Colombia in any statistical sense. Rather, qualitative and participatory methods are valuable because they bring information to light that is gathered with the "informants" playing an *active* role, as opposed to a more passive one of answering a standardized set of questions with a standardized set of responses. With the purposive selection of study communities and participants and a more open toolbox of methods, participatory researchers forego the possibility of being able to generalize their results to wider populations. But researchers gain a key advantage of remaining firmly grounded in individual experiences and local contexts throughout the data collection and analysis. The result is often more accurate and meaningful findings that both enrich

and broaden the understanding of poverty and provide an invaluable complement to quantitative studies. Qualitative tools reveal important but hitherto unknown information hidden behind aggregate data; they show the faces of real people and the nuances of social and cultural dimensions that are impossible to see in statistics.

The intention of the study approach is to let poor people speak for themselves and to use their means of organizing information and their own vocabulary. To do this rigorously requires an iterative and painstaking process of repeated crosschecking during data collection and content analysis to uncover important patterns and differences. The many layers of triangulation are the nuts and bolts of rigorous qualitative research and a key means used by qualitative analysts to minimize the impact of their preconceptions and biases and place in the world, which can exert tremendous influence over the “findings” they produce. Such tensions between data and analysis are no less real in the quantitative field. Learning to grasp what we do not know or intuitively understand is a very hard thing for all of us.

But the aim of this study is not just an enriched and robust data set. Participatory poverty research has a bigger agenda: creating more informed and inclusive policymaking processes. There are no sure-fire ways to achieve this, but steps have been taken in the research design to increase the possibility of such innovations (see annex 1). Policy officials, development experts, and a broad cross-section of civic groups in Colombia helped to plan the study, and some even participated in the fieldwork and analysis.

The action proposals from this work largely complement the analyses and recommendations of development experts. But a striking finding is the very high consistency with which poor people call for approaches that directly support families, are managed locally by community-driven processes, and can address problems affecting work, violence, and education in a more integrated fashion than do current poverty-reduction programs in the country. The proposals reflect poor people’s sense that households are the critical arenas where development problems begin, that responsive and effective local institutions are extremely important if poor communities are to become more prosperous, and that advances on livelihoods, security, and education will have to be made simultaneously if any progress is to be made at all. These points so crucial for the poor are not reflected in the analysis or recommendations of most poverty reports.

Indeed, the findings suggest a different way of understanding poverty in Colombia and point to new directions for action. Now the challenge is to develop processes in which poor people can influence those in positions of power and build partnerships with them more systematically. Such changes will be vital to reshaping local, national, and global policies and

programs in ways that are far more responsive to the needs and aspirations of poor Colombians.

Notes

1. The poverty line is based on an estimate of the income needed to purchase a hypothetical “family basket of goods” (food, education, rent, and other), calculated periodically. The extreme poverty line is defined based on the cost of food as a percentage of the entire family basket. Households that would have to spend all their income to obtain the food component of the basket are considered extremely poor.



Chapter 2

Employment, Work, and Opportunities

Well-being is having a job. Work is the basis for supporting the family.

—A woman from Barrancabermeja

With a job, you live happily.

—A young man from a barrio of Medellín

A job that offers a decent and stable income—not just any job—is the number one condition for well-being, according to both male and female participants in the study. Conversely, the absence of adequate work is seen as the chief source of fear and despair. “Without work,” says a man from Cazucá, on the outskirts of Bogotá, “there is nothing to eat and you can’t educate your children. That’s why unemployment is like terrorism. Terrorism is not only when there are weapons; it’s when you’re terrified by the situation, and you’re terrified about not being able to resolve it.”

Work opportunities have been changing rapidly, and this change has brought difficult transitions in family and community life. With informal labor largely replacing formal employment, people struggle to be creative and entrepreneurial, but say there are few rewards. Earnings have dropped or remain consistently low. Men are reported to be deeply discouraged, resorting more frequently to antisocial behavior, which in turn heightens tensions in and outside the home. Women, with more work options, do whatever it takes to keep the household going and are in many cases becoming their family’s principal breadwinner. Poor people also say crime and prostitution have become increasingly acceptable ways to make a living, especially among youths. Children and teenagers across the study communities are reported to be leaving school to enter the labor market.

Quantitative data on unemployment corroborate many of the study’s findings on labor trends. According to the *Colombia Poverty Report* (World Bank 2002a), most of the 7.5 percent increase in the urban poverty rate between 1995 and 1999 can be attributed to the loss of employment, and the remainder to falling wages. Some members of households that lost their breadwinner have managed to become self-employed, but at the price of a steep drop in earnings. The rest have been left without any labor income.¹

Urban Livelihoods: Informality on the Rise

We used to earn more. Now it is difficult for employers to pay, and the only thing left is to look for any kind of informal work on a day-to-day basis [el rebusque]. —A former builder turned vendor in Cartagena

Almost all of us here live by el rebusque. —A young Afro-Colombian man from a barrio of Cali

My husband used to work at a hotel, and with the salary he earned we were able to pay for our children’s schooling. I expected that my children would become professionals, but now that seems very unlikely. My children’s future appears

completely bleak . . . Up until two years ago I had social security, accident insurance, and assistance for my children, but now I have none of that . . . Now we are really poor.

—A woman from Cartagena

For the overwhelming majority of study participants across the six poor urban neighborhoods, formal employment is a thing of the past. Many who are technically unemployed are in fact employed in conditions that do not meet the requirements of law, or, much more commonly, are self-employed as microentrepreneurs. A common feature is the informal and insecure nature of their working lives.

With resignation and resentment, study participants commonly refer to informal work as *el rebusque* or *la maraña*. In practice, such work encompasses a diverse set of activities. Across the urban communities visited, women work as clothes washers, cooks, domestics, fruit sellers, recyclers, hairdressers, dressmakers, child care providers, street vendors, manicurists, street sweepers, and sex workers. Men work as day laborers in construction and as drivers, bakers, mechanics' assistants, mattress makers, recyclers, vendors, informal security guards, lottery ticket sellers, gardeners, painters, woodworkers, car guards, porters in the market, and sand diggers. Because these activities rarely involve a contractual relationship, people commonly report that they are paid late, less than what was agreed upon, or not at all.

Deterioration of Formal Employment

Study participants distinguish clearly between *trabajo* (informal self-employment), and *empleo* (formal employment). They report that employment conditions have worsened over the past few years, and that it is generally better to work for oneself in the present environment, though self-employment is risky and difficult. Employers are cutting corners more and more, hiring fewer people to work longer hours, while offering lower wages and few, if any, benefits. The days of employment with full mandatory benefits—"when a salary was paid with severance, vacations, insurance, bonuses," in the words of a Cazucá resident—are all but gone.

When discussing the effects of the economic recession, study participants frequently point to the disappearance of valued construction jobs, which may not have been permanent but typically offered good pay. The construction boom of the early 1990s, fueled by an unsustainable burst of capital inflows, budget deficits, and drug money, ended after 1995. There are reports of job losses in many other sectors as well. According to a Cartagena woman, "Ten years ago [the owners of a hotel] had a cleaning staff of four; now they contract one. Before, they had a cleaning woman for each floor; now each person has five floors to clean. Overwork!"

It has also become common practice for employers to pay so-called “all-in” wages, which supposedly cover medical insurance. In practice, employees have to accept what is offered, even if their wages do not in fact cover medical expenses. A 50-year-old man from Barrancabermeja, a sand digger, is one such employee:

I will quit this job because it’s very hard. In addition, the sand dust causes many muscle and lung ailments . . . and this job doesn’t provide any medical insurance or anything like that . . . except whatever medicine the employer or workmates want to offer if one is sick.

El Rebusque: Insecure and Low Paying

There is much competition nowadays due to unemployment. People who want work done will get three or four bids . . . Because there are so few employment opportunities, workers have to beg the person who is offering a job and accept whatever that person wants to pay. —A poor man from Medellín

The rapid growth of the informal economy in the wake of the economic crisis has meant rising insecurity for poor workers (see box 1). While people acknowledge some benefits of self-employment, such as greater independence, they overwhelmingly describe the experience as harsh. Many juggle multiple activities to eke out a living. “With the lack of employment opportunities,

Box 1. Informal Recycling in Pasto

A female youth from Pasto says: “Today you can get Col\$100 [less than a nickel] for a kilo of cardboard. It’s not enough, but we don’t have any other choice if we don’t want to die of hunger.” With rising unemployment, the number of recyclers increased sharply in the Pasto barrio after 1997. Now there is intense competition among residents as most struggle to make a living by recycling. “Recycling is the only thing that lets us buy food,” explains a community leader. Recycling cooperatives have formed, creating tension between those who have permits to engage in recycling and those who do not. According to the community leader, “We don’t have uniforms or documents, so we don’t have the right to recycle. This is why we work at night.”

one has to change jobs constantly,” laments a woman from Pasto. Such versatility is not compensated with higher earnings. Workers in the urban barrios consider Col\$10,000 a day (less than US\$4) to be a good wage, and Col\$5,000 or less is not unusual. A woman from Medellín describes the scramble to patch together adequate work:

People seek any means to earn a few cents: selling tamales or blood sausages, performing housekeeping jobs by the day, selling newspapers and handicrafts. I, for example, go out to the streets on festival days trying to sell anything I can. But things have become much worse. It’s terrible when you work so hard and earn less than before . . . You feel despair, because no matter how stupid you are, you can see that something is happening and someone should take the blame for it.

A woman from Cazucá explains that her entire family must work to make ends meet: “With my dressmaking business, I earn money to pay the rent. My husband sells small hoses—he earns Col\$3,000 a day—and one of my sons works as a street vendor, so with that we can eat soup . . . The rest is tightening our belts an additional notch.”

Adding to the difficulties, people say the informal economy is greatly affected by continuing hardship in the wider economy. A woman from Cartagena explains: “In the past, a street vendor depended upon workers [to purchase goods] . . . There used to be magazine sellers close to Alcalis; they also sold shoes on credit and you paid them later . . . but now a vendor works more and earns less.” The slow economy is also reported to be putting vital inputs for productive activities out of the reach of many vendors.

Barrio Stigma

Study participants in five of the six urban barrios in the study, as well as migrant workers in the rural communities studied, report that they are often refused work if their prospective employer finds out where they live.² Living in a poor barrio carries an especially severe stigma because such neighborhoods are commonly thought to be populated by criminals, thieves, and supporters of guerrilla or paramilitary groups. A man from a rural pocket just outside Bogotá remarked, “They say to us, ‘Ah! You’re from there, where the guerrillas are?’ . . . Yes, but that doesn’t mean I’m a guerrilla myself.”

It is not uncommon for those looking for work to lie about where they live in order to secure a job. “If you’re from a place with a bad reputation or from a poor neighborhood like this one, if you want to get a job or something, you have to lie and claim you’re from someplace else,” says a young Afro-Colombian man from Cali. Another young Cazucá man reports that his barrio has a long history of exclusion:

Although our barrio is surrounded by industries, we have no access to jobs there because our neighborhood is stigmatized. It has been this way from the time it was founded, when it was considered a *zona roja* [conflict zone], until today, when it's also seen as a center of crime.

The Strain of Changing Gender Roles

When there is no work, we have to go hungry or sell anything we can on the streets—empanadas or anything else. Men feel ashamed of selling food on the streets, but women have no problem with it. —A woman from Barrancabermeja

Let's face reality . . . Nowadays many of our wives have taken on the role of household providers, and we men have been forced to assume their domestic roles . . . which means that we have to stay at home doing women's work. —A man from Cazucá

Women in the study's six urban neighborhoods are increasingly working outside their homes. Participants say the shift was an inevitable result of men losing the formal employment they once enjoyed, increasing the need for women to contribute financially. It is also the case that there is more work available in activities that have traditionally been the preserve of women, such as domestic work, washing, cooking, waiting tables, and selling food on the street or in markets. In some cases household roles are being reversed, and both men and women are finding it a difficult adjustment.

A woman from Cazucá explains female advantages in the labor market: "We are hired faster . . . A man doesn't wash clothes or take care of children, much less work as a maid or something like that." According to a Cartagena woman, "Men can't stand for the neighbors to know they are unemployed, much less see them begging . . . I on the other hand do whatever I need to do; I've even had to beg in the street. My husband considers that repugnant and prefers to sit at home."

With these changes, daycare for the young children of working mothers has become a pressing need (see box 2). And though more and more women earn incomes, their economic and social status is changing more slowly: women continue to earn less than men who remain employed, and they still shoulder a far larger share of household responsibilities. In Cali, for example, a discussion group reported that the average weekly income for men who work is Col\$70,000 (US\$25), and for women, Col\$40,000 (US\$14). Moreover, as explored in the next chapter, loss of employment for

Box 2. An Urgent Need for Daycare

Poor women throughout the neighborhoods visited say that daycare is an especially important issue. Forced to spend much of the day or night earning income outside the home, women seek assistance from the state to help keep their children off the streets. In particular, they plead for expanded services from the ICBF, the Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Family Welfare Institute). This demand is a constant in the study, cutting across discussions of work, violence, and education. Single mothers in several of the communities call for the creation of family centers, including nurseries, or simply for expanded coverage of the ICBF daycare centers known as *hogares comunitarias*. These centers are typically residences run on behalf of nearby families by women known as *madres comunitarias*. Without such support, mothers say, they go to work fearful that their unsupervised children will pick up bad habits on the street or fall prey to abuse at home.

men and changing roles are viewed as major sources of tension in the household, and there are widespread reports of rising drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence by men.

Given male unemployment, significant gender inequities, domestic abuse, and violence on the streets, it is not surprising that study participants report a growing number of female-headed households in their communities, especially in Medellín, Cali, and Cartagena. These households are described as extremely poor and insecure. A woman from Cartagena sums up the plight of many: “The man left, was killed, was displaced, or went off with another woman . . . The woman has to struggle on alone.”

Gender changes in the labor force are also reflected in quantitative studies of labor and socioeconomic trends. Most of the jobs available to women have been in middle- to low-skill occupations, which pay poorly. Women’s increasing numbers in the workforce seem to be the result of their replacing male workers in low-paid jobs. In addition, surveys find that women who are heads of household, separated, or divorced have great difficulties finding work and tend to be poor. The differential between men’s and women’s earnings has narrowed, however, with women’s rising education and decreased fertility (World Bank 2002a).

The World of Rural Work

Well-being is having a house and a plot of land to cultivate so our children don't wind up on the street.

—Cauca community leader

Since we don't own the land, anything we want to do must be authorized by the landlord. Each landlord has up to 400 tenants under his charge, but landlords visit the village area only twice a month, to collect rent.

—A 45-year-old man from Girón

In the rural communities studied, possession of sufficient land to earn a living is the foremost aspiration. There are many obstacles to land ownership, however. Some villages are struggling with land scarcity as populations grow; others face tenure problems and highly unequal relations with distant landlords. Poor rural areas are also disadvantaged by weak access to markets, environmental decline, and long-standing ethnic and gender inequities.

Issues Around Land

Problems related to land scarcity or insecure tenure are concerns in all four rural communities studied. People in a rural hamlet in Girón are sharecroppers, who do not own the land they cultivate and depend on a small number of large landowners for their access to land, agricultural inputs, and markets for their crops. Their pressing desire is to become landowners themselves. As discussion group participants attest, “Having one’s own land, that is well-being . . . Our dream is to have property, to leave it to our children so that they are not forced to work the land of others all their lives.”

In sharecropping communities, farmers report that they must ask permission from their largely absent landlords to make improvements to their dwellings, plant fruit trees for home consumption, or even build a latrine. (“The owner doesn’t live here, so she is not interested in building a latrine,” reports a 33-year-old father.) Neither are farmers allowed to breed cattle or fish without express permission from the landowner. Residents also assert that owners impose “unreasonable” restrictions on their access to water. Such a quasi-feudal arrangement is typical of rural communities in much of Colombia. Many sharecroppers want to purchase land of their own, but the prime agricultural land they cultivate is not for sale, nor is it in the interest of the owners to sell it.

In the indigenous community in Cauca, community lands have become extremely scarce due to population growth, and many young people

are forced to migrate to earn a living. Most farmers in Usme own the land they work. But family landholdings traditionally are partitioned and passed on to multiple offspring through inheritance. As a result, many plots are becoming too small to support a family. This process, known as *minifundización*, is forcing the young to migrate to the city or live on their parents' farm and work as landless laborers. A farmer from Usme explains:

The farms are small. They don't have the capacity to support the whole family. If we plant one arroba, it is not enough. The landowners have one or at most two acres. A few people have farms of up to 50 acres, but they divide them among 10 children. Only about three or four people have large landholdings. The largest owner has 300 acres.

Marketing: The Missing Link

In all the rural communities studied, difficult marketing conditions are identified as a key obstacle to well-being. Several proposals formulated by study participants focus on improving the position of producers in their negotiations with traders, and helping them bring high-quality produce to market, without intermediaries, when prices are high.

In Usme, farmers express anger at their continuing dependence on truckers who pay well below market prices for a load of potatoes. The age-old dilemma facing farmers—that a good harvest usually means lower prices—is also mentioned. But still more detrimental, say farmers, is the fact that cheap imports keep prices down. According to a farmer from Usme, “Potato prices have been stuck at the same level for 20 years. The farmer is losing money as a result. Day by day, he grows poorer, but the farmer continues planting because he says, ‘I will see if I get it back.’ Lies!”

Sharecroppers in Girón report that they would prefer to organize their own marketing strategies. But they fear that bankers and input suppliers, with the support of large landowners, would likely make it very difficult for them to obtain the financing and inputs they need to produce and market bumper harvests.

Environmental Degradation

*In the 1970s we used to take in four tons of fish in two boats.
Now we take in just half a ton, and this resource is still
dwindling. —A poor Sanquianga fisherman*

In three of the four rural communities studied, as well as in Cartagena, where fishing is also a means of earning a livelihood, environmental degradation

due to overfishing, soil exhaustion, and chemical contamination of natural resources is endangering livelihoods and intensifying poverty.

Residents of Sanquianga on the Pacific Coast derive about 90 percent of their income from fishing and shellfish harvesting. However, since the late 1970s both fish stocks and earnings have been falling steadily as a result of natural disasters, contamination from shipping and oil spills, and overharvesting by the community's growing population. In table 1, adults in Sanquianga graphically depict the relationship between these factors and the community's declining natural resources. Residents say that there is strong environmental awareness in the face of the declining stocks, but illegal use of dragnets, dynamite, and other "high-tech" practices continues. Study participants report that some conservation measures are in place, such as training from Sanquianga National Park officials, monitoring each other's catch, and constructing a community refuse treatment system to reduce pollution. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to identify other income sources for the community's growing number of very poor people.

Table 1. Nature under Pressure in Sanquianga

	1977	1978	1985	1993	1998	2002
	Patía River flooded	Earthquake	El Niño phenomenon	Policy on Afro-Colombians	Crude oil spill	El Niño phenomenon
Population						
Mangroves (natural habitat of shellfish)						
Fish						
Shellfish						

Source: Discussion group of women and men in Sanquianga.

In some parts of the country, marine pollution is making fish unsafe to eat. In the Cartagena barrio, residents report that they can no longer fish to supplement their family's food or income. "Now fishing is forbidden in the bay because some biologists made a study and concluded the water is polluted . . . Sometimes the fish tastes of gas, but people eat it anyway."

Likewise, on land, the intensive application of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides is having a profound effect on farmers' lives in the sharecropping community of Girón and in the Cauca indigenous community. Farmers are aware of the health hazards involved in working with agrochemicals, and some in the study report bouts of nausea and headaches. People consider organic production to be a way of avoiding these risks, but they fear that yields will be too low to repay their debts. A farmer explains:

Tomato crops should be sprayed continuously to avoid diseases and to control freezing . . . It's also necessary to apply chemical fertilizers every 10 or 12 days during a two-month period . . . The most expensive item is [pesticide/insecticide], but if you don't spray you don't get crops . . . The agronomist is married to Bayer, so he comes here promoting the poison . . . The manufacturers are making money off it.

Agrochemical costs are reported to be rising in both these communities at a faster and steadier rate than crop prices. Farmers describe being trapped in a cycle of paying for agrochemicals on the basis of future crop yields. As one farmer explains, "The problem is that what we sell has no fixed price, but what we buy does have a price, and each day the price is higher."

Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Aspirations

Land is our mother, the basis of life . . . An indigenous person has known since childhood that his land is sacred, that it is not for sale or mortgage. We have an ancestral vision of the land . . . The indigenous person is interested in land for working it, living on it, and living together with it.

—Discussion group participants in Cauca

In Cauca's indigenous community, the link between identity and land is strong. Similarly, the Afro-Colombian inhabitants of Sanquianga, a fishing community on the Pacific coast, view land not just as an economic asset but as a source of identity and spirituality. Nevertheless, while both groups continue to draw strength from their cultural and spiritual traditions, they express a strong desire for deeper and more productive ties with the wider economy. Although Colombia's ethnic groups have a long history of exclusion

from the mainstream economic, social, and political life of the country, provisions in the 1991 Constitution began to address the status of indigenous people and Afro-Colombians in an effort to integrate them more fully into the society.

The settlement of the Guambian Indians in Cauca is legally recognized as a collectively owned *territorio de paz y convivencia* (territory of peace and harmony). The available land has not been sufficient to sustain new generations, however, and 66 young families are now landless. As a community leader explains, “Children grow up and one hectare is too small for the family to work . . . The young people get bored and go out to do day labor on other farms, or they leave the community. The family gets bigger and the plot of land is not sufficient any more.” The community is now developing a strategy to acquire more land in an effort to curtail the emigration of young people. In addition, the community council is pushing to return to traditional organic farming techniques to help tap new markets, but there are concerns about an initial decline in output and quality. The community is also aware that it suffers economically because it lacks the technology to dry and roast the coffee beans it grows, and to market coffee directly to consumers. “We lose half the price [that we could receive] if we could sell it dry,” says a community leader. Guambian women, for their part, propose to revive the community’s Arts and Crafts Committee, both to preserve local identity and to bring in extra income.

As the Afro-Colombian community of Sanquianga lives principally from fishing and shellfish collection, land is not as vital as in the other villages studied. But declining stocks of fish and shellfish are endangering local livelihoods, and study participants say they urgently need economic alternatives. A discussion group of women, for instance, propose initiatives that would build skills and offer startup funding to launch new productive activities, such as ecotourism:

A woman should be trained to raise chickens, pigs, and other things so that the [marine] resources can rest. If women had other activities for supporting their families, we would not have to go to the *raicero* to collect shellfish. We could go there only a few days a week and allow the mangrove to rest.

Study participants in Sanquianga also see economic potential in showcasing their culture. A young woman proposes that they should take advantage of local resources and make crafts out of shells: “That would provide us other income, and if the area is good for eco-tourism, so much the better. We would have a market and we would also recover our customs, dances, and songs.”

Moreover, recent legislation known as Law 70 allows Afro-Colombian communities to opt for collective land ownership. This should help facilitate

access to project funding for environmental conservation and sustainable resource development. Residents also expect that collective land titling will increase their bargaining power with the state and NGOs.

Persistent Disadvantages for Rural Women

If I see that my husband has money, I, as a woman, have the right to ask him to give me some. If I wash and take care of the children, then I am working also . . . We don't have the same rights. Men go out fishing and women go out collecting shellfish, and when we arrive home, the man lies down and waits for the woman to prepare food, take care of the children, and clean the house. —A Sanquianga woman

The truth is that women's work is not appreciated here. They take care of children; care for the house, the family. The man earns a low salary, this is true, but whatever he earns he spends on alcohol and women. —A Sanquianga woman

In contrast to urban neighborhoods, where women's work prospects seem to be catching up with men's or even surpassing them in some cases, traditional gender inequities loom large in the rural communities studied. Rural women not only work as hard as men for less money, but also, like their urban counterparts, shoulder household responsibilities—washing, cleaning, cooking, buying food, and looking after children.

In three of the four rural communities studied, men earn more than women for agricultural day labor. In the Cauca Indian community, for example, men earn Col\$5,000 and women Col\$3,000 (about US\$2.00 and US\$1.50) for a day's work. In the sharecropping community of Girón, women's agricultural work is restricted to "softer" and very poorly paid chores such as harvesting tomatoes. In Sanquianga, fishing is the exclusive preserve of men, while shellfish collecting, which is far less lucrative, is done mainly by women.

Children and Youths: At Work and Endangered

I don't justify criminal activity, but . . . in the face of extreme poverty, people find other ways to make a living . . . The oldest son must bring in money. —A Cali mother

Since 1995, children have been working because they can't count on their fathers . . . and those children assume the role of family providers. The mothers also oblige their children to work. —A man from Medellín

One of the more troubling findings of the study is that demeaning and illegal ways of earning money are increasingly considered to be acceptable and legitimate activities for young people. Men and women across the urban communities visited, and in some rural zones as well, conclude that increasing incidents of prostitution, theft, assault, and drug peddling are the inevitable result of inadequate educational and work opportunities for youths. Urban participants in particular attribute rises in child labor and youth delinquency to the economic downturn.³ People also recognize that the relative absence of police in their neighborhoods, combined with the growing intrusion of paramilitary organizations, guerrillas, and drug gangs that offer tempting salaries, leave young people with little hope of avoiding dangerous and illegal work.

In rural communities, it has long been normal practice for children to labor in agricultural and household tasks. In Usme, boys work in the fields from a very early age, harvesting beans and potatoes and taking care of animals. Girls help in the home, doing chores and looking after their younger brothers and sisters. Children carry out similar responsibilities in Cauca (see box 3). Everyone is aware of the harmful consequences of child labor for children's education and for their futures. Some parents in Cauca recommend that the school calendar be adapted to the agricultural cycle by scheduling vacations at times when children's labor is needed.⁴

In urban areas, numerous discussion groups report that child labor has become an indispensable supplement to family incomes since 1995. In Cartagena, Pasto, Medellín, Cali, and Cazucá, children are selling fruit, matches, water, pens, cookies, sweets, bottles, hammers, nails, and newspapers. Children usually hawk their wares on the street, sometimes by a traffic light, and on buses. Packing customers' purchases in markets and helping

Box 3. Child Labor in the Harvest Season

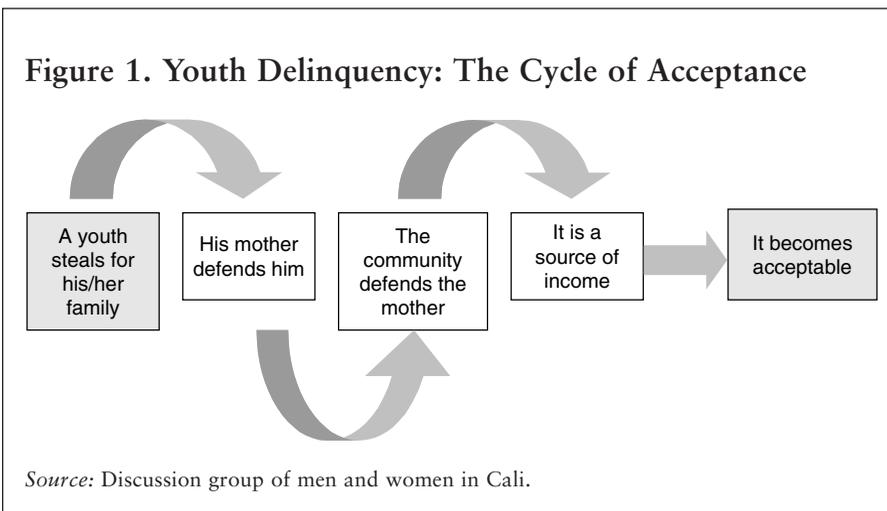
Research team field notes: "We arrived at a house in the Cauca indigenous community and found the father, mother, and children making colored seed bracelets. The parents were taking a break from the fields where the whole family has been pruning coffee plants. The oldest girl is 11 years old. Her hands were covered with wounds and blisters, as she had spent the previous days helping to prune the coffee. On this day, her job was preparing lunch and taking care of her younger siblings, an activity she alternated with making her share of the bracelets."

parents with recycling activities are also common. In two locations, people report children stealing and begging to help sustain their families. A discussion group of adults in Cazucá estimate that up to 30 percent of the neighborhood's children under age 13 work on the streets as recyclers of glass, cardboard, and plastic. Others sell sweets, work as assistants on buses, or sell ice cream at traffic intersections.

In addition to economic hardship, participants say, family breakdown is driving larger numbers of children to seek work. "Many children in this neighborhood grow up without a mother . . . They have to go out and work," say Medellín residents. A resident of Cali explains, "Some children work because their parents have no way to support them . . . Sometimes their parents are vagrants and drunks, so children wind up on the streets looking for odd jobs." In Cazucá, the story is similar: "Some girls work because they have degenerate, good-for-nothing parents, so they have to work on the weekends in order to obtain food."

In both Pasto and Medellín, discussion groups of youths report that gang-related crime such as theft, assault, and drug peddling have risen in tandem with unemployment in recent years. Poor people say that crime is in fact the most effective means of earning income in Cali. The peak times for income from stealing, according to participants in a discussion group there, are the months of December (Christmas holidays), July (school vacation), and March (Holy Week). From figure 1 and other work in discussion groups, it appears that such practices among youths are increasingly accepted as normal in the community.

In at least four of the 10 communities studied, participants mention prostitution as another increasingly acceptable way to make a living. In



Cartagena, most study participants see prostitution as a way of helping family finances. Some also argue that teenage girls are motivated by the desire to purchase expensive fashion items, “to have shoes and designer jeans and to compete with other girls.” In the Medellín barrio, striptease and prostitution are seen by some as the only alternatives for young women. One discussion group there rated the frequency of these activities on a scale of 1–10, showing that these activities have risen sharply since 1993 (figure 2).

Organization and Capacity Building as Ways Forward

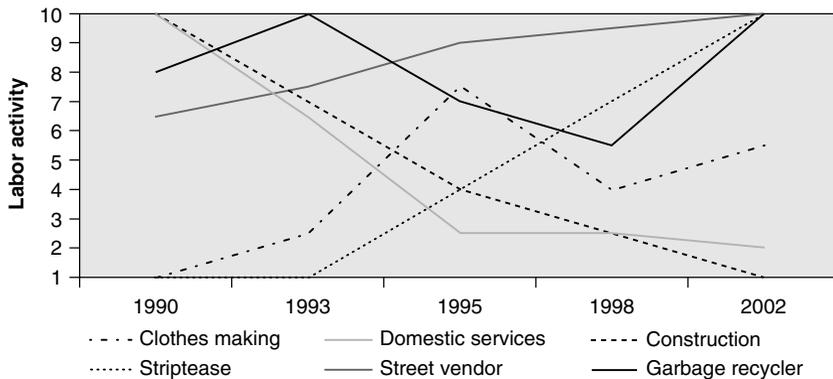
Organization and working together are the best ways to advance. —A 60-year-old woman from Sanquianga

When asked to make proposals for improving work opportunities, study participants across the communities single out the importance of *organizaci3n*. They interweave livelihood and organizational recommendations to such an extent that at times it is difficult to differentiate them. In addition, they call for expanding poor people’s access to financing, other productive inputs, and markets, and for improving the relevance of work-related training and education.

In Sanquianga, a local man suggests:

I believe that if we have good community organization, things will improve and we will deal with issues and we will all benefit, without

Figure 2. Labor Trends among Women in Medellín



Source: Discussion group of women in Medellín.

Box 4. Asociación La Nueva Esperanza

“It gives us an opportunity to improve our situation,” says a Sanquianga woman about the Asociación La Nueva Esperanza, or New Hope Association. The association reforested a mangrove marsh, planting 3,000 trees with the help of local people, who also lent a boat, gas, and food to the effort. In addition, the association established internal rules restricting the harvesting of shellfish in the mangrove to three days a week, and it has helped to build awareness in the community about appropriate mangrove management. The members also receive training and engage in other community work, and have improved their incomes. With these activities, say the women, “We feel people appreciate us and value us more, and we also value ourselves more. We feel more important and better as women.”

excluding anyone . . . Here, we all fish, and with organization we could have cold storage rooms, marketing channels, and processing industries. That would enable us to accumulate savings and have permanent incomes to improve living conditions for our families.

Box 4 describes diverse activities by a women’s association in Sanquianga to regenerate shellfish stocks and boost local incomes from the mangrove.

Indeed, numerous proposals emphasize the need to build “good organizations” that can help people find or create work opportunities or improve the work they have. In the sharecropping community of Girón, study participants propose to create a farmers’ association to market their produce independently, without intermediaries. Participants in Barrancabermeja put forward recommendations to form a cooperative to produce and market detergent and textile items. In the Cauca Indian community, participants plan to market organic coffee internationally. In Medellín, women propose to create an association of single mothers for domestic and cleaning work. In every case the common denominator is organization to help people work together to improve their livelihoods.

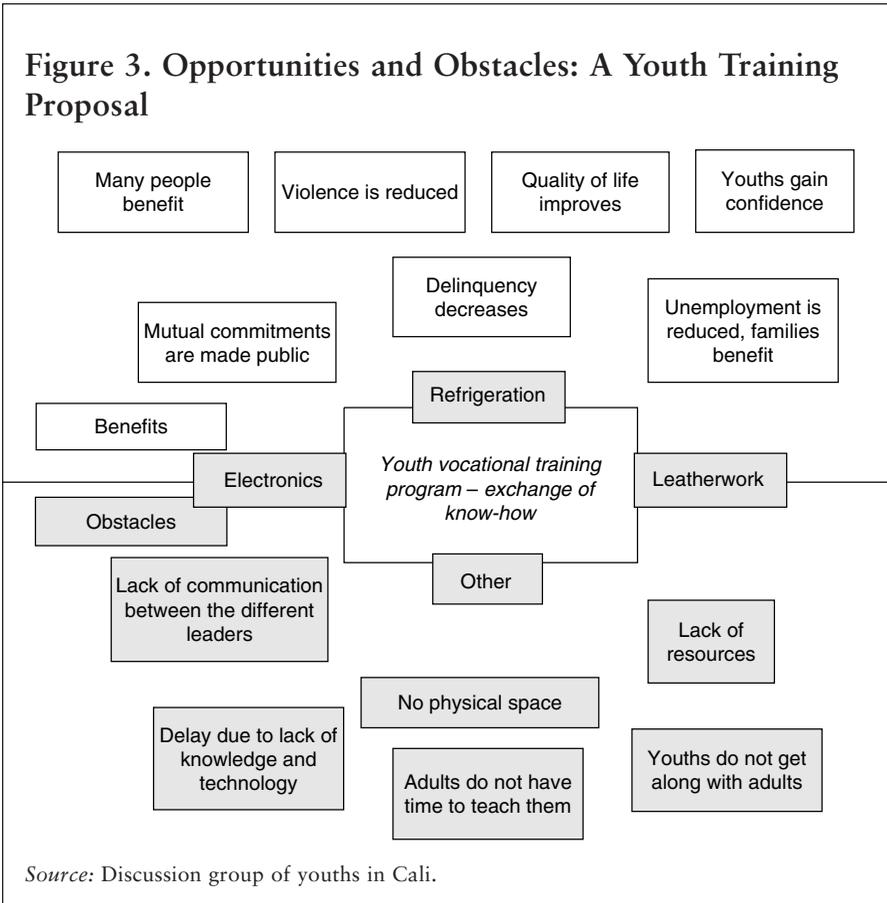
Strong community organization already exists in the Cauca indigenous community, with its deep-rooted *minga* system of collective work and its active council, the *cabildo*. In other places, however, formal community-based organizations are weak, with low attendance rates, leaders who are divided and unresponsive to their members’ interests, and poor records of bringing

improvements to communities. (Such local institutional challenges and systemic problems in the wider environment are discussed in the final chapter.)

In addition to community organization, men and women, young and old, repeatedly state that education and skills are key to finding decent work. “We can’t work because we don’t know how to read and write,” says a member of a discussion group of women in Pasto. A young man from the same area sums up the feeling of many study participants with the observation, “If more education were available, we would have more opportunities.” Access to skills training in jobs for which there is local demand, and improvement in production and marketing of goods and services, emerge repeatedly as priorities for government action to help people lift themselves out of poverty.

“Less education means less work, but also less work means fewer opportunities to get an education,” insists a young community leader in Cali. Indeed, many in the study perceive a dynamic and multidimensional relationship between work and education. Figure 3, depicting a proposal by

Figure 3. Opportunities and Obstacles: A Youth Training Proposal



Cali youths to build skills in such areas as electronics, refrigeration, and leatherwork, illustrates poor people's view that work-related training might help to pry apart the interlocking disadvantages of unemployment, community violence, and low education.

Notes

1. The poverty report raises particular concern about the increase in unemployment among low-skilled household heads during the recession. They lost not only their wages but also the social security benefits associated with formal employment.

2. Similar findings are reported by Moser and McIlwaine (2000) and in the Voices of the Poor studies.

3. Extremely poor families in the study reported an increase in child labor since the 1995 economic crisis, a trend consistent with findings from a study on the social dimensions of the economic crisis (González 2001). In contrast, statistical work for the *Colombia Poverty Report* (World Bank 2002a: 27) found a decrease in child labor during recession periods, seeing overall reductions from 1978 to 1999. Perhaps breaking down the data on child labor by socioeconomic level and poverty ranking would help researchers understand differences in responses from different types of families, which may be masked when using aggregate numbers.

4. The Escuela Nueva system, established in 1975, allows rural children to take part in planting and harvesting activities. Children may leave school to work and come back to continue their studies when they are done. This is made possible by the modular, self-instructional, and interactive educational materials, and the openness of the teachers. The Escuela Nueva system was found at only one of the study sites, however.



Chapter 3

Violence and Insecurity

In the midst of so much wealth, we also have the highest poverty rates. Today there is more hunger, more pain, all caused by a political system that does not reflect territorial realities.

—A Cauca leader

For me violence is nothing strange. I started living it when I was three years old.

—Youth from a Cali barrio

People are sickened by powerlessness and fear. Nobody dares to denounce [criminals] and sometimes people are pressured to collaborate. The worst is that this fear has spread to every village in Colombia.

—A Cali schoolteacher

It is difficult to overestimate the cost of violence for Colombia. Since 1980 some 100,000 people have died as a direct result of the political conflict. Two million people have been displaced internally and have been pushed to the margins of society, having lost their jobs, their homes, and increasingly, their hope. Another million people—perhaps the most educated—have left the country. By some calculations, the conflict dampens GDP growth by 2 full percentage points a year. There are also less quantifiable but even more disturbing repercussions of the political conflict: these include an increase in other forms of violence (notably common crime and domestic assault) and the fracturing of Colombians' basic trust in the societal contracts and institutions that are essential to the successful functioning of families, communities, and nations (Giugale 2003). In this chapter we explore how poor people across the study communities perceive the different forms of violence that permeate their daily lives, and the actions that they propose to resist them.

According to study participants, violence spiked upward beginning in 1995. This contrasts with findings in the *Colombia Poverty Report*, which show a small increase in 1995 and a decrease after that (World Bank 2002a, figure 12). The disparity is likely attributable to different indicators used by the two sources. Whereas the poverty report uses only official homicide rates, poor people often weave together political, social, economic, and domestic forms of violence, which may include—but are not limited to—officially reported homicides. Other statistics verify that domestic abuse rates have indeed risen with the recession and worsening poverty.

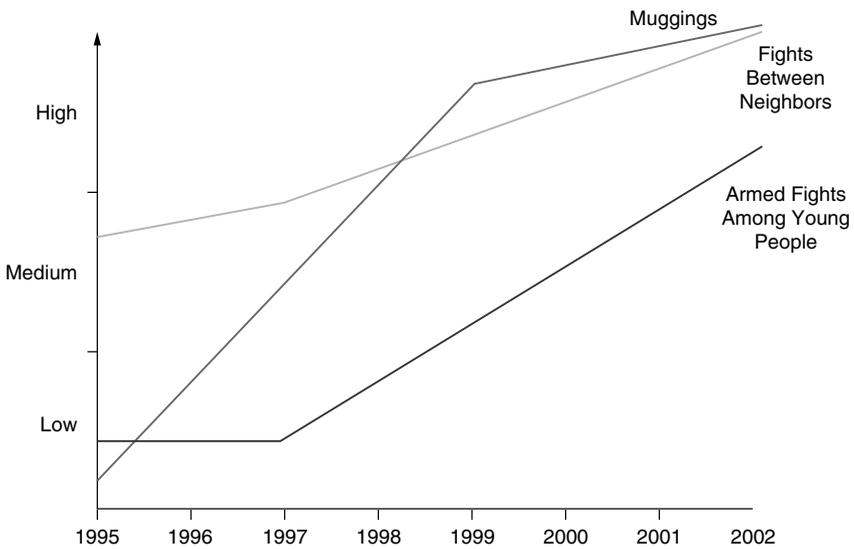
A discussion group of women and female youths in Pasto identified three forms of violence that are common in their community, and they reported marked increases for all three since 1995 (figure 4). Like many other study participants, these girls and women linked the rise in violence to the start of the economic crisis.

Political violence has increased over the past decade as well. The most significant indicator of this violence is forced internal displacement, which has shown a sharp and continuing increase since 1997. The human rights organization CODHES and the Colombian government's Red de Solidaridad Social show a 50 percent increase in the displaced population, from 1.25 million in 1997 to 2.5 million in 2001 (Documento Nacional de Planeación 2004). Study participants emphasize that political violence fuels criminal and domestic violence and youth delinquency.

The Backdrop of Political Violence

In three of the 10 communities studied, guerrilla and paramilitary units are competing actively for territorial control, and armed groups sporadically threaten an additional five communities. Since the mid-1980s, the

Figure 4. The Rise of Neighborhood Violence, 1995–2002



Source: Discussion group of women and female youths, ages 11 to 27, Pasto.

principal conflict—strongly tied to the drug trade—has been between the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia). This pervasive insecurity has devastating effects on local people: popular leaders have been hunted down and assassinated, whole communities and families have been torn apart, investors have been forced to flee. Poor people are caught in the middle. Especially vulnerable groups include poor youths and rural populations caught in the crossfire. All barrios in the study report that they are receiving some of these displaced groups.

Fear and Impotence in the Battle for Territory

All the actors who foment violence are equally guilty of violating human rights. They all threaten and frighten people.

—Group of children and parents in an indigenous community in the Cauca

As is well known, over the last 60 years Colombia has been a battleground of ideologies and economic interests, with land at the center of most conflicts.

Even urban settlements included in this study have been the scenes of struggles over land. The settlements are first occupied illegally by squatters, with residents gradually gaining property rights over time. But the struggle for control of the settlements continues, with self-defense forces, militias, criminal groups, and youth gangs all fighting for dominion of local drug and gun markets.

Residents may legally own their plots, but in practice they enjoy very few rights. According to a community leader in Cazucá, “The paramilitaries own the whole area; the community members are no longer owners. We live and support ourselves, but others are the real owners because they are in command. They have the power and the weapons to rule.”

These armed groups formulate local public policy, hand out jobs, and administer justice, including “sentencing” people to death. But conflict between the different groups is a constant. “Whenever a new gang arrives, its members fight with the gang already there for control of the territory,” says a 20-year-old in Cazucá. Conflict means loss of life and pervasive fear. Speaking of the paramilitaries, a young mother from the same community says: “Sometimes I think *los muchachos* [paramilitary groups] are heartless. They kill without mercy. But I also know that they offer work to some youths who are in the drug business.”

In urban areas, study participants speak of death lists. A young man from Cazucá explains, “We live anxiously every minute around here . . . If you are careless you may end up on a list, and they’ll show up at your house and kill you.” The list names those considered “undesirable” and “worthy of punishment” (usually death) by so-called social cleansing groups that operate in poor neighborhoods. A community worker from a barrio in Cartagena explains how the list works: “In each neighborhood they prepare a list of people with the names and the reasons they will kill them: some girls who play Quitball; others because they are tramps; one guy because he hits his wife or mistreats his mother; others for selling drugs; or another for being homosexual.”

In Cazucá, the elimination of undesirables on the list is a particularly sordid affair. Victims are shot in the face at close range. Threats are written on walls and posted in bars and other public places: “Death to perverts,” “Death to those who help the guerrillas,” and “If you don’t behave, you die.” Attempting to wipe the graffiti away also exposes one to the risk of punishment by paramilitary members.

In rural areas, fear builds with the continuous battling and reprisals among guerrilla, government, and paramilitary forces. A fisherman from Sanquianga paints a grim picture: “For some time now, corpses have been floating down the Patía River carrying signs saying that anybody who buries them will die, too.” The conflict, says a young man, permeates everyday life:

“Before, we could go anywhere we wanted, but now we can’t . . . Nobody goes up to the mountain, not even to get a Christmas tree. In years past you could go to a party, but now it’s impossible because people are watching you.” The violence also undermines community bonds and collective action. The same young man says, “We’re afraid to get organized, because we have the feeling that the paramilitaries are watching us, and they don’t like organized communities.” (Chapter 5 discusses some community proposals to organize in spite of these threats.)

In Sanquianga, where guerrillas and paramilitaries are in open conflict over the control of coca plantations, “the armed conflict deepens the crisis and increases poverty,” say a discussion group of men and women. People have become too afraid to leave their villages and come into town to purchase goods, and commerce has suffered as a result. According to a municipal town council member:

The paramilitaries come into the municipalities to control the drug trade . . . They terrify people and then take advantage of that; they take over the houses people have abandoned and settle right in. They demand things from merchants—goods, food—and they never pay. They use people’s boats to travel or carry packages [of coca] to Ecuador . . . That business moves a lot of money, and as there are no police controls either, nothing can be done.

During discussions for the study, people residing in areas of high conflict were often afraid to speak about the violence, saying that “walls have ears” (see box 5). But in Cazucá, in the midst of the terrified silence, some spoke out, exhorting their neighbors, “Let’s speak up, friends; let’s not allow ourselves to be consumed by fear.”

Box 5. “Be Quiet and Silent”

A 64-year-old unemployed woman from Cazucá: “When night falls, we hear shots and people’s screams. The next day corpses appear and it’s as if nothing had happened! People don’t say anything. That’s very sad. You see people you know die, and you have to remain silent in order not to create problems for yourself . . . You have to know how to survive: don’t get involved with anybody, and run away from danger. Although you see things, you have to get away . . . Many times our worst enemy is our own tongues. Be quiet and silent and don’t get involved in gossip.”

In another case, an entire community has come together to resist the violence. In the Cauca, Guambian and Páez Indians along with a small population of mestizo peasants have led the struggle to retain control of land and resist the militias. The armed conflict is seen there as an affront to long-time residents' territorial rights and to their sense of dignity, as well as an attack on the local economy. In a historic session of Congress, indigenous authorities from the region united to gain legislation recognizing their lands as a "territory of peace." This legal status offers a degree of protection for youths under pressure to join competing armed groups. "We have not raised our children for war," insists a Cauca woman.

Vigilante Justice

The police and other justice authorities are absent from the 10 communities studied. In many cases, vigilante groups fill the vacuum. In any given community, these might include *los muchachos*, guerrilla groups, or other gangs that seek to enlist young locals and extend their influence in poor neighborhoods.

In Cartagena, Pasto, and Cazucá, people report that the police simply refuse to come when crimes are committed. A single mother stated succinctly: "Police do not respond to requests to come to our neighborhood . . . They only come here when someone is killed." In Cali, people suggest that the police are themselves heavily involved in crime. A young black man explains that people do not trust the police because "they used to come to our neighborhood to sell weapons and collect bribes for allowing narcotics to be sold and delivered." In Cartagena, residents say the police actually encourage them to keep order and seek justice on their own. "Regarding the rape that occurred a month ago, the police said the parents [of the raped girl] should settle the matter. The police even said that we should seek justice ourselves, by killing the rapists," says a *madre comunitaria* (a local woman trained by the ICBF to care for children in her own home).

In Barrancabermeja, some express support for the "cleansing" work of the armed groups, which includes expelling or executing those who are "harming the community," in the words of local people. This violence, suggests a resident, "is violence that benefits the community." Similarly, a Medellín mother of seven declares, "Now *los muchachos* protect the neighborhood from invasion by street boys . . . they keep our neighborhood clean of criminals and drug addicts. When a man behaves badly, the women tell *los muchachos*, and they talk to him."

Others in the study express profound disapproval of social cleansing, arguing that the taking of life should never be decided so casually (see box 6). In Cazucá, some argue that the problem is that no one expresses outrage at the murder of their young, and they urge that "we should march together—women, men, children—to draw attention to everything that is happening to us."

Box 6. Vigilante Justice Leads to More Violence

The rise in crime and the absence of an effective state left residents of a barrio in Cali no alternative but to organize their own protection. Calling themselves *los caballos*, a group of parents began in 1996 to patrol the barrio, guns at the ready. “This group, with their own guns and without permission from community leaders, started making night rounds. They chased out gangs and controlled the neighborhood,” recalls a young man.

For the next two years, residents paid a fee for this protection. But when clashes with gangs resulted in the murder by *los caballos* of a community leader’s two sons, residents refused to pay for their services anymore.

Los caballos then became armed criminals themselves. Numerous other criminal gangs began to flourish as well, including “those who steal in the neighborhood, those who steal outside and are organized with other gangs, those who burglarize apartments, those who rob banks and financial institutions and are involved in drug trafficking,” according to participants of a discussion group. Some of the gangs even began attacking taxis at the entrance to the barrio, prompting a violent response from outraged taxi drivers. One driver told researchers: “One day . . . about 50 of us arrived with guns and gasoline and we started a fire in that camp where [the gangs] were hiding.” Vigilante justice in the barrio has only bred more violence.

Typically, though, community leaders dismiss such proposals, pointing out that they would be endangered by allowing such open opposition to *los muchachos*.

Economic Impact of Violence

Until 1994, the guerrillas in Barrancabermeja controlled the job market in the city. One of the study participants explains that in those days, jobs were usually reserved for supporters of the guerrillas, while others seeking work had to pay the guerrillas a fee, the so-called *vacuna*. Today, employment is controlled by the paramilitaries. “Starting around 1998, the paramilitaries arrived in Barrancabermeja. They are still handling the job scene, but the situation is the same; employment continues to be bad,” says a resident. A group of residents tried without success to create their own job association. A young man remarked, “Look, let’s be clear: there is no way to set up another one,

Box 7. A Dangerous and Stigmatized Neighborhood

Research team field notes: “The entrance to an Afro-Colombian barrio in Cali is a corner in a wide street leading to the Ciudad de Cali highway. There is a store with doors closed and locked; customers are served by passing money and goods between the bars of a security gate. Our taxi driver says he will drive no farther than that corner. ‘I don’t go in there for any reason. If you go in, you don’t come out. It’s off-limits for us; the people in that neighborhood are fierce.’ By prearrangement, we call from a pay telephone to one of the youths from the Community Development Center so he can come and escort us into the barrio. As outsiders, we have been told, we must enter and leave only accompanied by someone from the neighborhood—never alone.

“This dangerous street is known for its robberies. Cars speed by as fast as possible so they will not be stopped and held up. If a car is stopped, the assailants will steal the radio, the driver’s and passengers’ money, and anything else of value. . . . Men are hanging out on the corner. A group of eight or 10 men sit on the ground, playing dominoes from morning until night. There are drug users too, smelling of marijuana and *bazuco* [coca paste].

“The streets and alleys of the barrio are twisted, labyrinthine. Houses are jumbled together with no clear boundaries between them, one atop another. All the doors and windows are open and people move freely between the dwellings. Naked, shoeless children run about, their hair brittle, their thin bodies and swollen bellies telltale signs of malnutrition.

“On the far side of the barrio is an earthen embankment and a massive mountain of garbage. Directly across a paved street is the Villa del Lago development, a gated apartment complex. We catch a glimpse of the immense wall built by the developers so that their tenants will not have to see their neighbors . . .”

because [employment] is controlled by the self-defense groups and they will not allow it.”

Poor people throughout the study communities express a profound sense of abandonment and exclusion from the wider society due to the violence (see box 7). When *los muchachos* arrived in the Medellín barrio in 2000, they booted out the local militia, closed down local businesses under militia control, and killed the president of the neighborhood association. A local

leader reports a major effect of this takeover: “Because we no longer had a community action board, we couldn’t register in the Colombia Plan, and we lost the opportunity to get jobs.” People indicate that the shutdown of economic opportunities and many public services has deepened poverty throughout the barrio. “Do you know the only thing that is in excess around here? Hunger, tears, and despair,” says a female community leader.

In three urban neighborhoods, residents say, foreign investors have fled due to fears of kidnapping and extortion. The resulting capital flight means fewer jobs for both skilled and unskilled workers. An unemployed resident of Cartagena states, “Foreign companies that used to operate here have left because they are afraid of kidnapping. A COMECA manager is in the hands of kidnapers now, and the company says it will close.”

Similarly, in Usme, better-off farmers abandoned their lands when guerrilla groups arrived, and many agricultural workers on the larger farms lost their jobs as a result. According to a 45-year-old campesino, “They were forced to flee from bribery and extortion . . . In this rural area 70 percent of workers are unemployed. About 10 years ago, a landlord would hire from 20 to 25 workers. Now, five, if any.” In addition, the municipal government can no longer respond to local people’s requests, and it is all but closed after the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) demanded the immediate resignation of high-ranking municipal officials. “The mayor’s office is now empty,” reports a local authority.

Families and Communities Uprooted: The Internally Displaced

Violence in the countryside forces people to flee, and to live here in overcrowded conditions. The guerrillas have forced us to feed 22 more mouths, aside from the 10 we already had . . . They come here and there is no work for so many people.
—A discussion group of men and women in Cartagena

People are often forced to abandon their homes after receiving a written note, signed by an armed group or left anonymously. A 22-year-old woman from Cazucá shares her experience with the AUC:

On December 24 last year we received a letter from the AUC telling us that we were helping the guerrillas and we must leave, or they will kill us. Later we received the same letter, this time with flowers. That was enough: we decided to run.

Pressure is sometimes applied differently, through extortion and threats. Youths are forced into service. “The guerrillas started by saying they would charge us 10 percent of each arroba of coffee, one work day, and they will take one child,” says a 35-year-old resident of Cazucá.

When people must flee in search of safety, their primary assets—land and housing—are lost, along with family and community ties. “Those men entered the farms and stole everything: chickens, cattle, horses, pigs, ducks, everything we had,” reports a woman now living in Cazucá. People displaced by violence usually try to remain as close to their former homes as possible, moving within the same region, from rural areas to towns and cities, or within the same urban locality. Nonetheless, once resettled, the displaced face steep barriers to accessing adequate housing, jobs, and basic services, and to participating in community life. Moreover, many have limited assets, skills, and education to help them rebuild their lives. Of the 2 million internally displaced people in Colombia in 2002, 56 percent were female, and 48 percent were under age 18. A 1995 study of displaced populations showed unemployment rates climbing from 6.2 to 34 percent among people who moved, most of them from rural areas to the urban periphery (Arboleda and Correa 2003).

Internal displacement also strains the receiving families and communities. For households, taking in relatives often brings overcrowding; on the community level, labor markets and limited municipal budgets are squeezed. In rural Bazán, where some 1,700 people are settled in 75 houses, there is too little room to build new homes. Each extended family has had to take in yet more relatives who have been forced to flee the Río Tapaje region. “Violence and clashes between guerrilla and paramilitary groups are forcing people to leave Tapaje and come to the beaches, and that’s a problem. The beach has no sewage system or running water . . . It’s also difficult to find fish for everyone,” says a 40-year-old trader from Cartagena.¹ The pressures on receiving communities were further compounded during the recession by the lack of funding for social assistance programs targeting displaced people (World Bank 2002b).

The displaced in Cazucá say they do not feel as though they belong to their new communities, and they report difficulties adapting to their new lives. Local leaders openly reject them, and many others make them feel unwelcome. Life in the city is fast-paced and presents new and unfamiliar risks. Many displaced rural people lack the skills needed for urban livelihoods (box 8). Children and teenagers feel alienated in a world where there are no places to play out in the open, and where even walking to school is dangerous. Teachers and local children laugh at them for their country ways, calling them *sacayucas* or *sacapapas* (literally, manioc diggers and potato diggers; figuratively, country bumpkins), to which their response is understandably aggressive. Thus, the cycle of prejudice and discrimination goes on.

Longing to return to his home, a displaced person now residing in Barrancabermeja recalls,

I had my small plot of land, and although I was poor, we lived well there. I grew *plátano* [plantains], and with the money I received

Box 8. Farming Skills of No Use in the City

For internally displaced people who recently fled the Cauca to live in the Cazucá district of Bogotá, the distinction between employment and work is particularly harrowing. They find that their agricultural skills are useless in the city, and they have no alternative but to scrape together a living doing unskilled work such as carrying loads in the market, lifting bags of sand on construction sites, or filling mattresses. To make matters worse, they are despised and discriminated against by other neighborhood residents, who call them criminals, guerrillas, or paramilitaries.

Manuel tells his story: “I know how to work the land, but now that I am displaced I’m only making mattresses. This doesn’t make me feel good. You can’t live well here because you’re always remembering what you used to have and how you lost it, and all we can do is long for what we once had. The people in this neighborhood don’t approve of us. To them we are terrorists.”

I could pay my children’s school fees and buy clothes for my wife. [Paramilitary groups] gave me 24 hours to leave or they would kill me. Now I have nothing, and I do nothing all day. I feel very bad. I don’t know what to do. I’m desperate . . . You arrive here and want to lash out against people because they see you differently. We say hello, but because we are peasants, they ignore us.

Youths Caught Up in Violence

Listen, listen, listen. Many voices are asking for mercy; they are children outcast by the damned violence, the poorest of the poor. —A youth from a Cali barrio

We have no choice but to risk our lives . . . Out of whatever I collect, I give part to my mother; another part I use to party, to buy drugs; and the rest is to purchase elegant clothes so I don’t walk around looking like a beggar. —A Cali youth

In the six urban study sites, people say that youths are drawn into petty crimes such as pickpocketing, as well as into organized criminal activities

Box 9. Alternatives to Juvenile Delinquency

In Cali, where the incidence of youth crime is particularly high, some young men and women are recovering a sense of their Afro-Colombian identity through dance. “This is a way to express our sorrow, our rebellion, our feelings about exclusion and abandonment—but without violence,” says a member of a dance group.

Youth crime can be avoided, another believes: “I decided not to steal any more; I don’t want to do it again. What you gain is spent on drugs and alcohol; nothing goes to the family. Otherwise, why is it that when we are killed, people in the neighborhood have to take up a collection for our funerals?”

such as the arms and drug trade overseen by paramilitary and guerrilla groups, or planned assaults and burglaries carried out by various organized bands. With legitimate work opportunities extremely scarce, these activities have become widely acceptable ways to make a living, particularly among young people. Poor people view youths as the main instigators of violence, as well as its principal victims.

Many of the urban teenagers and youths in the study readily admit that they are caught up in violent crime, but say that the blame is not theirs alone. They mention their traumatic home lives, extensive unemployment, the pervasive political violence, and easy money to be made on the streets. Some youths do mention efforts to resist lives of crime despite these pressures (box 9).

Drug use among young people is said to be widespread and an important trigger of violence. Drug-related violence includes gang warfare to control drug markets, robberies and assaults to fund drug habits, murder of drug addicts by social cleansing groups, and constant and sometimes physically violent quarrels in the home.² “I don’t want my son to go on like that, I’d rather see him dead . . . He wasn’t always like that; bad friends damaged him,” says the mother of a teenage drug addict in Medellín.

In cities such as Barrancabermeja, participants report that the paramilitaries and other armed groups actively seek out young recruits from poor barrios, and youths from single-parent homes are especially easy prey. The paramilitaries offer better salaries than can be found in the job market. They also provide “protection” and, perhaps most important of all, a sense of identity, as symbolized in the gift of a gun.

Many in the study express concern that the growing consumer culture also fuels the violence. According to participants in Cali, for example, “Many young people have been caught up in the drug trade and its mentality . . . They got used to a certain lifestyle, the easy life, and so they turned to crime.” Similarly, a youth from Pasto points out, “Young people have TV as a reference, consumerism. They are fascinated with *los verdes* [U.S. money], shoes, jeans that cost Col\$70,000 [about US\$25]. They want to have all that others have, and this is why they steal.”

Problems of growing criminality are not confined to urban areas. Residents of Usme say they are frequently victims of incursions by thugs from nearby barrios. “The city is right on top of us, this is the problem . . . When there were no urban barrios, nothing happened here, everything was fine,” remarks a peasant woman. Local people endure the theft of farm animals, household goods, and clothes. Sporadic theft and burglary by urban delinquents are also reported in rural areas outside Bucaramanga. Even in the Cauca indigenous community, shortage of land and lack of work opportunities push some of the young into crime. “Young people choose to go out and rob and steal, as a result of advice given by the bad company they keep. They say: ‘Let’s go hold someone up, and things will be better for us,’” explains a father of troubled youths.

Rising Domestic Abuse: Forms and Causes

My son used to tell me that when he grew up, he would become a guerrilla fighter in order to kill his father so he wouldn’t hit me anymore. Everything goes to their heads and that damages them. —A woman from Cazucá

“In most homes, violence is continuous,” says a Cali woman. Indeed, in nine of the 10 communities under study, participants report that problems of domestic abuse are widespread and growing worse. According to both victims and perpetrators, the principal cause for this disturbing trend is the lack of adequate work for men. Other factors include alcohol and drug abuse, long-standing *machista* (macho) cultural norms, and changing gender roles in the household as women become the main breadwinners.

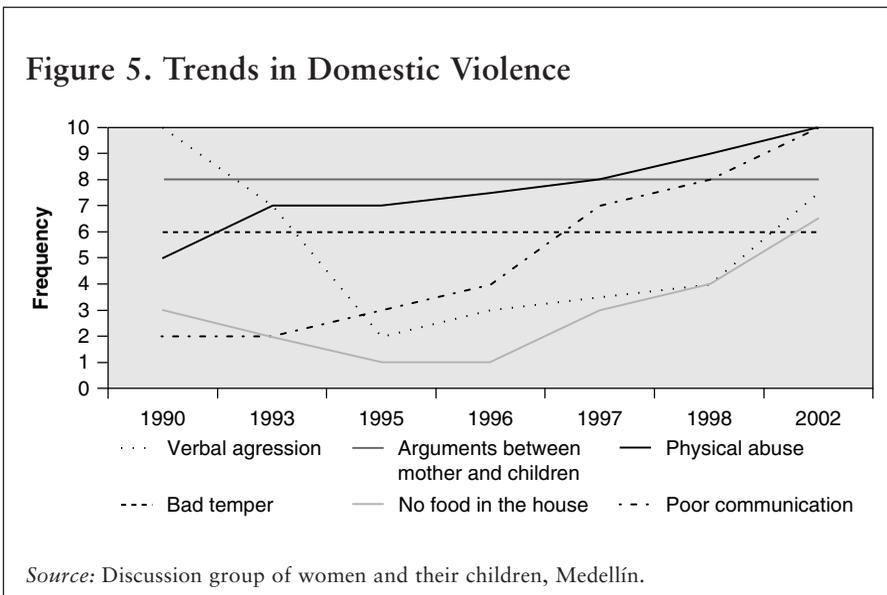
Abuse of Women

A large number of women in the study report having been struck by male family members on repeated occasions, in some cases requiring hospital treatment. The assailant is almost always the husband, father, or stepfather. Victims of domestic abuse rarely seek justice, however, and they say that legal complaints are often ignored or not taken seriously. It is more common for battered women to seek solace in a friend, *comadre* (godmother),

or relative, leaving the home for a few days to recover, and not broaching the subject with their partner upon their return so as not to aggravate the situation. Women also remain quiet about abuse in order to avoid public ostracism. A woman from the Pacific coast shares a common view: “I thought about separating, but it isn’t well regarded. We are taught to stay with our husbands all our lives, no matter what happens. For parents, it’s a source of pride to say they have married daughters—it doesn’t matter how they live!” Mothers advise their married daughters to be patient and endure beatings, assuring them that with time their partners will tire of quarreling and the abuse will gradually stop. Overwhelmingly, the women interviewed say they do not speak out because they do not want their private troubles to be aired in the community.

Women in four communities report being forced by their husbands to have sex against their will, another common form of abuse. Rarely is such behavior discussed among close friends, and even more rarely are police involved. Such behavior is generally accepted because “the man gives the orders, especially if he comes home drunk,” as a Cali woman points out. In a few cases in Cartagena, Pasto, and Sanquianga, however, women report that they are defending themselves and confronting men with force. “They throw stones [at the men], hit them with sticks, and throw them out of the house,” says a woman from Pasto.

A discussion group of Medellín women and some of their children identified six forms of domestic abuse and described worsening trends since 1990 in most of these areas (figure 5). By their definition, “lack of food” in



the home is a type of domestic violence, and this, along with poor communication, verbal aggression, and physical assaults, increased with the onset of the economic crisis. Similar trends are reported by a large share of the discussion groups in the study, with the exception of the indigenous community in the Cauca region, where domestic violence is reported to be rare.

Many Triggers

The father is not working, so the mother takes it out on her children. —Madre comunitaria from Cartagena

Women are very unhappy and discouraged . . . You earn something during the week and they want you to pay for everything. —Internally displaced man in Cazucá

Many participants say that the stress of joblessness is much harder on men than on women. Frustrated by unemployment, poor men are lashing out with abusive behaviors toward loved ones and are turning more and more to alcohol and drugs.

Poor men and women both suggest that women's new roles as the principal income earners in their households serve to heighten domestic tensions. In Cazucá, where displaced male farmers lack the skills needed to do well in the urban informal economy, gender roles are being reversed, and both men and women are finding it difficult to adjust. For some women, men who can no longer provide are seen as a burden or a "parasite in the house." A woman turned sole wage earner in Sanquianga remarks, "Women feel that the whole economic load is on us and this causes problems at home. There are blows, bad words."

In the rural communities of Sanquianga, Usme, and Girón, alcohol abuse by men is viewed as an important, if not the principal, immediate trigger of domestic strife. Women see alcohol as the enemy of the family because it consumes income and often leads to jealousy, physical aggression, gossip by neighbors, and an overpowering sense of impotence. Once a man begins a drinking bout, women say, there is simply nothing to be done. Discussion group participants in Sanquianga observe:

Men take their anger out on their wives. When they come home drunk, there is always trouble . . . In this area men have four or five women. They demand that all their women take care of the children and keep house, but they spend all of their money on alcohol.

Long-standing social and cultural practices also contribute to domestic abuse. Study participants in seven communities associate violence in the

home with the predominant *machista* culture, which drives such practices as paternal despotism, verbal assault, boastful infidelity, and refusal to use contraceptives. For many women, survival without a man in the family is inconceivable despite the risks of bearing unwanted children, physical abuse, and abandonment. In Cazucá, participants mention the harsh plight of women who have children with different men. In an extreme case in rural Girón, several women claim to have had 15 or more children, while acknowledging that half that number would be quite enough. Study participants report that each new husband or boyfriend wants to have a child to demonstrate control of the woman, while women often consent as a means to “tie down” their partners. “For the sake of the children you endure a great deal . . . I wouldn’t like my children to grow up without a father,” a peasant woman explains.

Nonetheless, in five of the six urban neighborhoods, participants indicate that the traditional two-parent household is fast giving way to single-headed households and grandmother-grandchild arrangements. These are emerging in response to the rising number of breakups among couples and the disappearance of men due to violence, displacement, or infidelity. More and more, women are choosing the difficult path of raising children on their own. These households, however, are described as especially poor and insecure.

Children Battered and Abandoned

They grow up without rules, the street is their home . . . Girls get boyfriends at very young ages, and there is no one to guide them or take care of them . . . It’s a complete mess.

—A Cali schoolteacher

I want to be a soldier, have a gun and kill all the bad guys, shoot like crazy . . . —An 11-year-old boy from Cazucá

A couple of weeks ago, a 6-year-old child was raped by his stepfather. The neighbors almost lynched him and the guy took off. The mother went to the family welfare institute but nothing happened; the mother is still living with the guy . . .

—A women’s discussion group participant, Cali

In eight of the 10 communities, study participants stress that poor children are extremely vulnerable to violence by family members, and many have been semi-abandoned to be “raised by the streets.” The belief that striking,

whipping, and smacking are good childrearing practices is prevalent. “Violence is part of a good upbringing,” explains a father in Barrancabermeja. But children replicate the behavior they experience. A teacher from Barrancabermeja observes, “If parents are quarrelling all the time, then the children imitate this behavior . . . and they also imitate it with their brothers and sisters.”

Many children in this study shared their pains and fears about family violence, noting that their parents—in particular fathers and stepfathers—are often very violent when administering punishment. Reports of especially severe physical punishment emerge from the rural areas visited. A member of a women’s discussion group in Sanquianga reports that “a girl was burned on her face with a firebrand because she was very disobedient, and another child who took some coins got a horrible beating.” A child in Sanquianga says, “There are children who are hung from their arms for a long time, others are lashed, others are forced to carry bricks, and so on.” Speaking as if such forms of punishment were quite normal, a 12-year-old campesina girl from Cauca states, “Once my father hit me with a machete on my left hand . . . Another day he hit my oldest brother with a machete on his back.”

Sexual abuse of girls by stepfathers and fathers is another form of violence mentioned in many communities. In Cartagena, a *madre comunitaria* provides a matter-of-fact explanation for abuse by stepfathers: “Many men who are raising other people’s daughters think that before they are ‘for others,’ they should be ‘for them.’” In Cazucá, a father is reported to have raped his 10-year-old daughter. Participants in a discussion group of girls from Pasto report having been molested by their fathers. Most cases go unreported. The same girls add, “Those who rape them tell them not to talk, so they are afraid of talking.”

In Cartagena, Cazucá, Cali, and Barrancabermeja, people stress that children themselves are behaving violently, and some suggest that the myriad forms of violence they experience in their early years manifest as difficult, “tough guy” behaviors around the age of 12. In Cali, Cartagena, and Cazucá, children report that older brothers can be very abusive to their siblings. “When they come home doped up, they kick them, hit them with their fists, with anything they can get . . . That’s how my brother is with me,” states an 11-year-old girl from Cali. According to teachers in Cali, “Children show aggression very easily, and their play includes a lot of fighting. Their vocabulary is aggressive and rude from an early age . . . They get enraged easily . . . They see violence everywhere . . . They live in an environment of fear.”

As highlighted in chapter 2, women across the study communities express extreme concern about needing to work and leaving their children

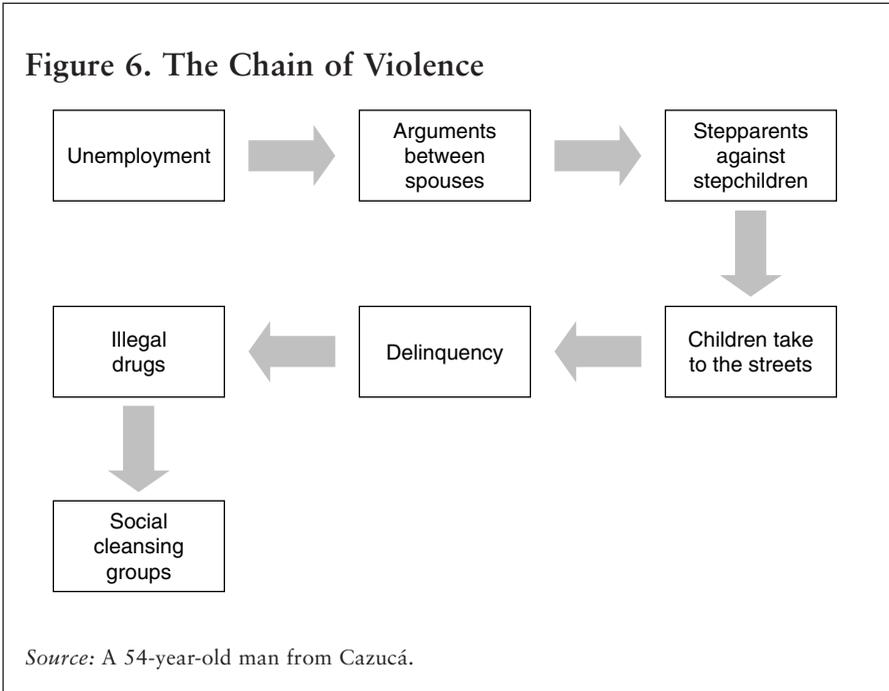
unattended and exposed to danger inside and outside their homes. Teenagers in Barrancabermeja insist, however, that parents are irresponsible: “Fathers neglect their children by drinking and mothers by gossiping. Children go barefoot, dirty, naked or badly dressed . . . They are abandoned, undernourished.”

Breaking the Chain of Violence

We want a comprehensive program that restores our hopes.
—Participant in a women’s discussion group, Cali

A 54-year-old internally displaced man, now living in Cazucá, describes violence as a chain that begins with unemployment and ends with political violence by the so-called social cleansing groups (figure 6). The sequence highlights the vulnerability of youths to becoming deeply entangled in the chain of violence.

Based on their perception of the interlocking triggers of violence, poor people’s proposals to reduce violence emphasize measures to



strengthen family and community institutions. From their vantage point, these very local investments are essential to building more secure and peaceful lives. The proposals also reveal clearly that the state must play a supportive role. It is somewhat surprising, however, that the emphasis here is *not* on law and order measures by government to end the wider political conflict.

Instead, poor people focus on families as the main target of efforts to reduce violence. For example, in Pasto, which hosts a large displaced population, a discussion group of men and women called for making psychological counseling available to family members (figure 7). The measure would, they believe, help people recover the moral qualities that families used to possess before violence became pervasive. Overwhelmed by family conflicts, study participants there and in other communities express tremendous faith in the benefits of psychological assistance. As the diagram shows, they believe that such support could build people's self-esteem, reduce fighting in the household, recover children who become involved in dangerous activities, improve health, and create more peace and happiness in the neighborhood. Even if such help were offered, however, study participants recognize that many obstacles will have to be overcome before people will be able to take advantage of the services. For example, there is shame in seeking help, people lack time, many have become apathetic in the face of so many problems, and there is little communication between parents and children.

In Cali, where violence is severe, study participants see the family as key, as well; yet they stress a need for greater unity and organizational capacity in the community. Study participants there propose that an integrated program of family support provided by a single local agency could begin to address pressing problems relating to service delivery, political interference in projects, insecurity, discord among leaders, discrimination, and lack of resources (figure 8). In their view, providing these services to families would help to make community interests and unity a priority, and push community leaders to work together and support decisions based on objective criteria, among other benefits.

A sound family, say the poor, is one in which there is love and understanding between the partners, and protection and nurturing for children and youths. "Well-being is when my parents don't quarrel and I can go to school," states a child of 7 from a poor and violent Cali barrio. Harmony in the family leads to better health, improved capacity for education and training, more work opportunities, and more effective means to resist violence outside the household. Despite the wider political conflict, from poor people's vantage point weak families and local institutions are the critical areas for action.

Figure 7. Opportunities and Obstacles: A Proposal to Reduce Domestic Violence

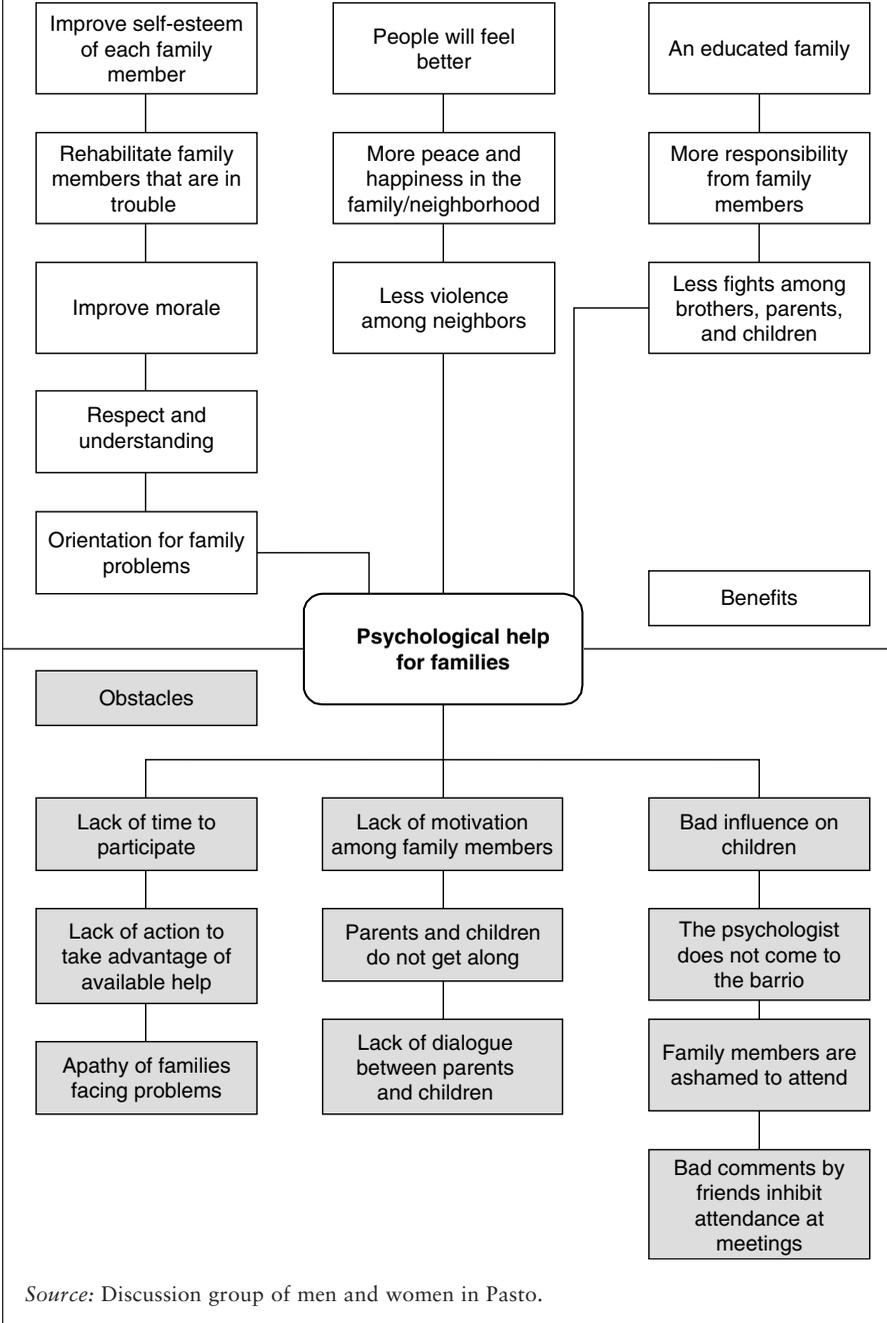
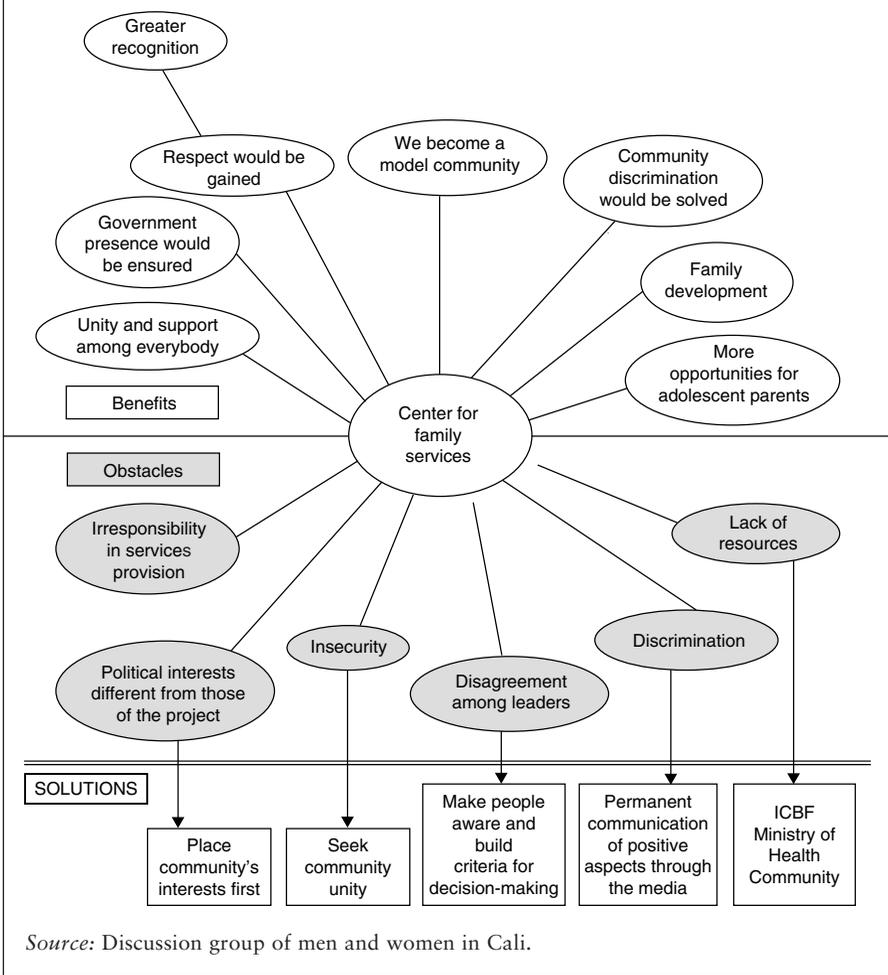


Figure 8. Opportunities and Obstacles: A Proposal for One-Stop Family Services



Notes

1. In Medellín, where the situation is particularly acute, the municipal government took the drastic measure of evicting some displaced groups from the city on the grounds that their presence presented a risk to public order and could cause a natural disaster because they built settlements in geologically unstable areas.

2. These findings are consistent with results in Moser and McIlwaine (2000).



Chapter 4

Education and Capacities

If I don't go to school, I can't get a job.

—Youth from Cartagena

What's the purpose of graduating from high school if at the end you're in the same situation—without a job, living from el rebusque? That's the reason I left school.

—A Medellín teenager

Throughout the communities studied, women, men, youths, and children identify education as a key means to combat poverty, and statistical evidence strongly supports their views. The *Colombia Poverty Report* finds that an individual's level of education is directly associated with employability, household and per capita income, and the reduction of fertility among women, a factor that in turn contributes to greater income per capita (World Bank 2002a). Yet the gap between study participants' educational aspirations on the one hand and their learning opportunities on the other is extremely wide.

Poor people above all want education to help them obtain work, but what they find, overwhelmingly, is that public education is failing to equip them with the skills the labor market demands. Education is also idealized as a vehicle for promoting values, civic engagement, personal development, better social relations, and cultural identity, but in practice these goals are also far from being achieved. Many teachers lack training and dedication, classes are overcrowded, instruction is dull and disconnected from students' needs, access beyond primary education is severely restricted, and schools do not shelter poor children from violence and discrimination. With rising economic hardship and widespread concerns about the value of current educational opportunities, poor people say more and more children and youths are skipping classes or dropping out of school altogether to work or hang out on the streets. People associate poor schools with rising juvenile delinquency, crime, and violence in their neighborhoods.

Educational data underscore study participants' disappointment with their schooling experiences. Despite large and increasing expenditures on public education, 50 percent of public schools in Colombia report low achievement on assessment tests, up from 30 percent in the 1980s. There are high rates of failure in all grades, but especially in the primary grades, leading to grade repetition and ultimately to high dropout rates. Public school students are at a disadvantage compared with private school pupils, and rural children are the most disadvantaged of all. Such disparities fuel a vicious cycle of inequality and enduring poverty (Vélez 2003: 611–13, 620–21).¹

High Hopes for Education

The educated person is more prepared to face life.

—Community leader from Sanquianga

Above all, education is valued as a vital tool for escaping poverty by opening up better work prospects. A woman from Pasto insists, “If you know how to read and write, you can get a job, but if you say that you have not attended school, they won't even give you a broom.” And a youth

from Barrancabermeja explains, “Our parents educate us so we’ll become someone in life, become more than they are . . . My parents always say that the best inheritance they can leave us is education.”

Again and again, parents and students hold out the idea that schools should advance *educación integral*, comprehensive education. The meaning and priorities of an *educación integral* vary among the communities, but at a minimum it implies a complete education that begins in kindergarten and ends with university graduation. But university training is not available locally in the rural sites, and in at least two locations secondary schooling is not available either.

When people speak of an *educación integral*, they also refer to the need to teach values. According to a mother in Cali, “A good education starts with values, first at home and then at school.” Medellín parents want schools to help keep teenagers away from dangerous streets and teach them values to make them better people. A mother says, “They say that if children go to school they improve themselves, are well occupied, and don’t get into trouble.” Spirituality is seen as a dimension of education that needs more emphasis, along with sex education to curb teen pregnancies.

An *educación integral* should advance personal development, self-esteem, and political influence, and “make you somebody.” A participant from Barrancabermeja says, “The important thing is feeling good as a person, and education provides that.” By bringing people together, education is also seen as a means to improve communication and harmony in families and in the community. Education fosters not only self-respect but also respect from others, including those in authority. “If you are poor and uneducated, you are nothing to a politician,” comments a young man. In Barrancabermeja and Sanquianga, people stress education’s role in building citizenship. “It is important to know what democracy is and what being a leader means,” says a woman from Barrancabermeja. She adds, “If you know how the municipality operates, you know where to take your petitions and projects . . . We complain about our leaders, and this is why it is important to learn how to elect them.” In a similar vein, a teacher from Sanquianga calls for greater understanding of the municipal government:

Can you imagine having the mayor give a lecture to the students about his duties and the role of the mayor’s office in the municipality, bringing people close to government officials, the authorities, the hospital, the business sector, the UMATA [technical assistance office], the utility service companies . . . Well, out of this I think we are building trust in institutions.

In the three study communities with ethnically distinct populations (Afro-Colombian on the Pacific coast and in a Cali barrio, and indigenous people in the Cauca region), *educación integral* is also about recovering ethnic and

Box 10. Education and Cultural Expression

A teacher from Sanquianga: “There is a lack of identity; identity is part of what parents and teachers no longer encourage in children. The other day, at a cultural event, one of the black children was passed over when it was his turn to go to the stage to make his presentation. He said nothing because he has been taught that he is worthless.

“It is important to recover the culture of our area, which is disappearing. We should promote playing the *marimba*, the *arulllos*, *bundes*, *jugas*, and *currulaos* [musical instruments]. The Cultural House has published books of essays, and organized activities and meetings such as the presentation by Petronio Alvarez. There was also a festival of traditional food, to highlight products such as *plátano* and sugarcane. But these things are not done anymore.”

regional pride and identity. People feel strongly that school curricula are imposed inappropriately from the outside, do not correspond to regional realities, and erode rather than strengthen local identity. A community leader in Cauca recommends that a good education be made available locally, so that “youths will not leave the reserve [but will] stay in the community and feel useful. It also serves to recover the culture that is being lost and [helps] the community to gain identity.” A similar view of education’s contribution to culture emerges in Sanquianga (box 10). In Cali, researchers found black youths promoting a local version of breakdance and rap as an integral part of their education in the barrio.

Schools Failing the Grade

It is impossible to teach well when a classroom has 50 or more students. —A teacher from Sanquianga

The education I received in high school isn’t helping me to get a job because the jobs I can get are as a watchman or messenger, and for that I don’t need a high school diploma.

—A Cazucá youth

People’s aspirations for education notwithstanding, there is a strong perception throughout the study communities that schools are failing on

many fronts. Specific concerns include curricula that do not prepare graduates to compete for jobs, low levels of learning, poor teaching, high costs, insufficient access and overcrowding, and problems of discrimination and violence.

Useless for Work

Four youths completed high school and they have been unable to find jobs. There are many examples like this, so why bother?
—Discussion group on education with Cali youths

What they are teaching me at school is useless as far as work. This is very serious because job opportunities are scarce and school does not open the few doors that exist. —A woman from Medellín

School is good for nothing. You graduate and it doesn't even get you a job in construction. —A young man from Barrancabermeja

Across the 10 communities, there are repeated reports that public education is not helping poor people to secure what they need most: work. A youth from Sanquianga expresses a view held by many: “What we learn in school does not enable us to work.” Similarly, a Cali youth adds, “A high school diploma is not sufficient for a good job . . . It's important to have up-to-date training, such as in computers.”

Little Learning, Unmotivated Teachers

[My school] is very mediocre. I want to quit. I feel I'm getting behind . . . This education is useless. Education should open people's eyes to the world.
—Teenager from Sanquianga

There are many mediocre teachers who are only going through the motions . . . Some of them just give out homework assignments and then dismiss the students . . . Others have bad tempers and shout. In such an environment you're afraid and can't learn.
—A group of pupils from Barrancabermeja

In Cali, parents and students decry low achievement in school. A parent tells researchers, “By fourth or fifth grade they don't know how to read well or how to multiply or do basic arithmetic . . . They're in for trouble.”

In several places, study participants mentioned the low scores on standardized tests administered by the Instituto Colombiano de Fomento para la Educación Superior.

Poor people cite a high student-teacher ratio as a major cause of low achievement, and they identify numerous other gaps. In Sanquianga, for example, a mother reports, “There are around 300 pupils and only four teachers for high school, which leads one to believe that the education is not very good. How can they teach all the subjects?” Rules that require the automatic promotion of students to the next grade level are also cited in four out of the 10 communities under study as “reproducing mediocrity.”

In Cartagena, Medellín, and Sanquianga, there are repeated reports that teachers lack skills and dedication. According to a 40-year-old vendor from Sanquianga, “Education here is poor. Teachers are not well trained; several of them have been trained using distance education, which is not sufficient.” Teenagers from Sanquianga share similar frustrations: “A good education should teach us to be creative, should be more dynamic. Children should learn through games or things like that. School is so boring sometimes that many kids drop out and don’t even complete primary school.”

Teacher absenteeism is noted in several of the study communities. Parents specifically charge that good teachers do not want to come to work. “They’re afraid to come to dangerous neighborhoods,” says a parent. In Girón and Cazucá, people say teachers are unwilling to travel regularly to their schools because of poor transport as well as safety risks. A group of parents in Sanquianga traces low teacher attendance to other factors: “There are teachers who seem to be fooling around. They hide . . . There are no good control mechanisms. The community does not report them but tolerates the teachers’ behavior.”

In Sanquianga and elsewhere, people say that some teachers go into teaching simply as a last resort for employment, especially in rural areas. In some cases they secure these positions through the patronage system, which permeates school administration. Some see teaching mainly as a way to gain connections with the mayor and other local officials and powerbrokers.

The question of teachers’ pay generated much debate. Some people think teachers are underpaid. A resident of Sanquianga said, “Education is mediocre because teachers are not well paid. Their pay comes late and they don’t have access to in-service training. The government should think about all of that.” But many others point out that teachers’ pay represents most of the education budget. “School budgets are just enough to cover the teacher payroll, so nothing is left for infrastructure and school improvements,” states a participant from Cartagena.

In rural Girón, participants express concern about the increasingly common practice of offering teachers short-term contracts of only a few months, a practice affecting roughly 30 percent of all teachers countrywide.

Box 11. Child Hunger

In at least five of the study communities, malnutrition is identified as a serious problem that affects schooling as well as child development more generally. In Cartagena, Cauca, Cali, Medellín, and Sanquianga, teachers report that a significant number of children find it difficult to concentrate in class. In the Cauca community, people say that due to economic hardship their diet has become very low in protein and fruit. “Now we eat much more rice. There are many undernourished children because on the farms there is only yucca or coffee and a few *plátanos* . . . You almost never see fruit,” says a teacher. In Cali, a community leader asks, “How can we expect students to perform well if they aren’t eating well? They can’t concentrate, so they fall behind. Then they drop out at 13 or 14 years old, and don’t attend school any more.” While schools are lacking in many respects, they at least provide a midday meal, many parents say. A Medellín father confides, “I send my children to school so they can eat lunch every day.”

ICBF centers are also appreciated for the nutrition support they provide, even if it is not always sufficient. A *madre comunitaria* from the Cauca explains, “Although we have a nutritional snack program, some children arrive very badly malnourished. An undernourished child cannot perform well. ICBF provides the snack for 70 children, but we have 178. To complement that allocation, we ask the children to contribute something.”

A woman reports that teachers on short-term contracts are frequently absent, adding, “The ideal would be for a teacher to be appointed on a full-year contract.” A man elaborates, “The first and fourth grades are without a teacher. Their contracts expired. [The government] gives them three-month contracts to avoid paying social benefits and vacation, which are required by law . . . Then they say the children are stupid, but how can they learn if the teachers are absent?”

Children’s learning, of course, is not just a function of what happens *inside* the schools. Malnutrition (box 11), inadequate nurturing and supervision, and perhaps violence at home, along with the many other disadvantages facing poor children, can severely impede their academic progress. A teacher from a Cali neighborhood speaks of the adjustment problems of six-year-olds who are just starting primary school: “They are not motivated, which is the

result of physical and emotional abandonment by their parents. The children feel very lonely.” And in Barrancabermeja, a *madre comunitaria* describes the desolate state of many of the children on the street: “You see them throwing stones, naked, barefoot, playing in the dirt.”

Limited Access and Infrastructure

Nine of the 10 localities in the study had primary schools; only a poor Medellín neighborhood lacked its own school. Insufficient access to education beyond the primary years is a pressing concern, however. In rural Girón and in the Cauca, local schooling is not available after eighth grade. For residents of rural areas that do not have post-primary schools, going to the city to finish high school often represents an insurmountable obstacle. In Cartagena and Cali, study participants report that there are not enough school vacancies to satisfy demand. “In addition, school slots are politicized,” says a man from Cali, hinting that entry to secondary schools is gained not on merit or right, but on the basis of a favor or payment to the relevant politician or authority.

Data on school enrollment reveal that poor families face significant barriers, particularly in rural areas. Enrollment at the primary level in 2001 was 88 percent of primary-age children overall, but just 70 percent in the rural areas. Of the 12 percent of children ages 6 to 11 who remain out of school, nearly all are from the lowest-income groups. The secondary and tertiary levels of education show overall enrollment rates of 54 percent and 15 percent respectively, with children of poor families again largely excluded. In rural areas less than 15 percent of the school-age population is enrolled in secondary education, while an insignificant percentage is enrolled at the tertiary level (Vélez 2003: 611–13).

In addition to problems of access, inadequate school infrastructure is reported in several communities. In a Cali neighborhood, lack of space in the local public school forces school administrators to divide the day into two parts in order to offer the entire primary cycle, with grades 0, 1, and 2 attending in the morning, and grades 3, 4, and 5 in the afternoon. And in the indigenous community in the Cauca region, a group of pupils report, “There are no sports facilities, no audiovisual equipment, no laboratories. There is only one computer . . . so it’s really very difficult.” Similar deficiencies are found in the sharecropping community in Girón, as well as in most of the urban neighborhoods studied.

The absence of recreational space is of particular concern. In Cali, a group of youths who are now caught up in crime say, “We never had a basketball court, or a soccer field, or a bicycle track.” Here, as well as in Medellín, Cazucá, and Cartagena, a number of proposals focus on setting aside recreational areas as a way of reducing violence. A Cali teacher ex-

plains, “It’s very important to have recreational space,” not so much for its educational value, but because recreation keeps children and teenagers away from the temptations of delinquency.

Unjustifiably Expensive

Household surveys indicate that urban families spend as much as 20 percent of their incomes on education. Poor households must allot an even higher proportion. Indeed, in seven of the 10 communities, parents and students express deep concerns about the prohibitive cost of school materials, uniforms, registration fees, transport for pupils, and “top-ups” to teachers. Moreover, the greatest expense (school registration, uniforms, and materials) comes for many at a critical time in the year, just after the considerable expenses of Christmas and New Year. In Cartagena, a parent who lives *del rebusque* tells researchers that “materials and tuition cost around 30,000 to 40,000 pesos in elementary school and in high school 60,000, 70,000, and even 80,000 pesos”—roughly US\$12 to US\$15 per student, a prohibitive sum for a family that survives on informal labor. The benefits of education are insufficient to justify these expenses, say some parents in the study.

In the sharecropping community in Girón, parents mention having to make private payments to teachers to make sure their child can continue in school. “Sometimes the students have had to pay the teacher, for example 400,000 pesos to the mathematics teacher, 200,000 pesos to the physics teacher, and 600,000 pesos to chemistry teacher. In addition, families provide the teacher’s food and lodging.” In several other places, participants mention unreasonable requests for money made by teachers for a whole range of “events.”

Another Battleground

*There are teachers who tell children that they are no good,
or who tell the parents, “Your child is worthless.”*

—A Pasto resident

Study participants also share concerns about the conduct of teachers in the classroom. Pupils express dissatisfaction that teachers are often impatient, insensitive, and uninterested in whether or not they are learning. A girl from Cartagena says, “You need trust between teacher and students so the students won’t be afraid to tell the teacher that they don’t understand something.”

In at least three communities, study participants report that teachers abuse children emotionally and physically. Researchers asked schoolchildren in Barrancabermeja to identify forms of punishment as well as the qualities of exceptional teachers. On the latter question, children focused on teachers’ attitudes and behaviors in the classroom (box 12). Their list is

Box 12. Children's Fears and Hopes in School

Students described the following forms of punishment as commonly applied in schools:

- ▶ Putting a hat on a child who does not know the answer to identify him as a dunce
- ▶ Calling a child a *burro* (donkey)
- ▶ Threatening to send a child to the principal
- ▶ Knocking the wind out of a student by hitting his middle with two fingers
- ▶ Forcing a child to hold two bricks in his hands outside the classroom
- ▶ Forcing a child to put a finger on the ground and turn around until a hole is made
- ▶ Hitting a child with a ruler, mainly on the hands, sometimes using a wet ruler to cause more pain
- ▶ Slapping a child's face.

The following were identified as qualities of an exemplary teacher:

- ▶ Having a good disposition, being warm and friendly toward students
- ▶ Accepting that he or she can make a mistake
- ▶ Being a guide, not a dictator
- ▶ Being a friend before being a teacher
- ▶ Being dynamic in the classroom and not just dictating from a book.

consistent with the performance criteria for evaluating institutions identified by poor people in the global Voices of the Poor study. People everywhere long to be treated with respect and dignity—even children.

Another difficulty, some study participants say, is that children reproduce in school the violence they experience at home, and teachers add to these tensions with further scolding. According to a nine-year-old from Cazucá, “When I was at school, children used to fight a lot and teachers always scolded me. That’s why I don’t go to school any more. I don’t miss school. It was very boring.” A teacher in Sanquianga remarks, “Kids grow up in a violent environment, and they replicate that behavior at school, attacking their classmates and their teachers.”

The Shame of Discrimination

One of the most difficult problems has been getting the rest of the school to accept the situation of these [displaced] children.

—A schoolteacher from Cazucá

Poor children from Barrancabermeja, Cali, Sanquianga, Girón, and Cazucá inform researchers repeatedly that other children, and sometimes teachers, treat them very badly. Poor clothing (beneath the uniform), tattered shoes, a different accent, rural origin, darker skin, and at times a slower learning rate, are all objects of ridicule and reprimand.

In Sanquianga, a discussion group of parents deplore “the attitude of many teachers who discriminate against black children in front of a *paisa* child, for example. This discourages the students from staying in school.” Black children from the poorest families have real problems even securing admission to a school. In an Afro-Colombian barrio of Cali, teenagers say they are forced to lie about where they come from. A youth says, “If I had said that I’m from this neighborhood, they wouldn’t have taken me. I went all the way through high school and they never knew where I was from.”

Displaced children in Cazucá also feel deeply excluded. “They call us *sacayucas* because we come from the countryside,” says a girl. These children long to return to the schools they attended before being displaced. According to a displaced boy, “I don’t like school here. I don’t like being locked in. There, I could ride my bicycle with my friends and be happy, but not here.” And a teenager adds, “Why do they treat us badly for being displaced? We are human beings and deserve respect. We are not responsible for this situation.”

Cazucá study participants say that teachers often turn a blind eye to the constant fights among pupils who are dealing with the turmoil of displacement. An 11-year-old boy says, “The kids fight too much at my school . . . They fight over ice cream and other things. Teachers never say anything, they don’t make note of the behavior or write it in the observation book because if they do, you could be suspended for about 10 days.” A teacher mentions that some efforts, albeit belated, have been taken to build understanding in the school system about the particular needs of displaced children, and a student mentoring program has started in the Cazucá school.

Pushed and Pulled Out of School

If families had better incomes, that would prevent students from dropping out of school. —A man from Cartagena

The advantage of not attending school is that you can work and earn money. —A youth from Girón

Most children here think it's more important to make money than to go to school. —A parent from Usme

In every study community without exception, the overwhelming majority of children do not complete secondary school. The qualitative data gathered for this study suggest that the average age at which students drop out of school is 13, but there is considerable evidence that some children leave school as early as age 8 or 9. For every 10 students who enroll in primary school, six will complete the primary cycle and only three will graduate from secondary school.

The dropout problem is just one part of a complex picture. Study participants reveal that most children attend school erratically for many years before they leave for good. The need to work is cited as the most common reason for poor attendance and dropping out, but a host of other problems, including lack of parental support, teen pregnancy, and the lure of fast money and drugs on the streets also cause children and youths to cut short their education.

Despite the evident sacrifices made by a very large share of poor families to send children to school, urban and rural children and adults nevertheless say that some parents do not prioritize education sufficiently. In the two rural communities of Girón and the Cauca region, participants assert that parents with low levels of education themselves are much less likely to show interest in their children's schooling. A boy from Girón contends, "Your first learning is from your parents. If your parents did not go to school, they won't be able to teach you well." In the Cauca indigenous community, researchers discovered that of a sample of 93 parents, only three had completed grade 11, another three had made it to grade 7, and the rest had not reached grade 5. A local teacher explains, "More education is needed in order to understand the importance of education for success . . . This is why some parents don't show interest in [their children's] school attendance."

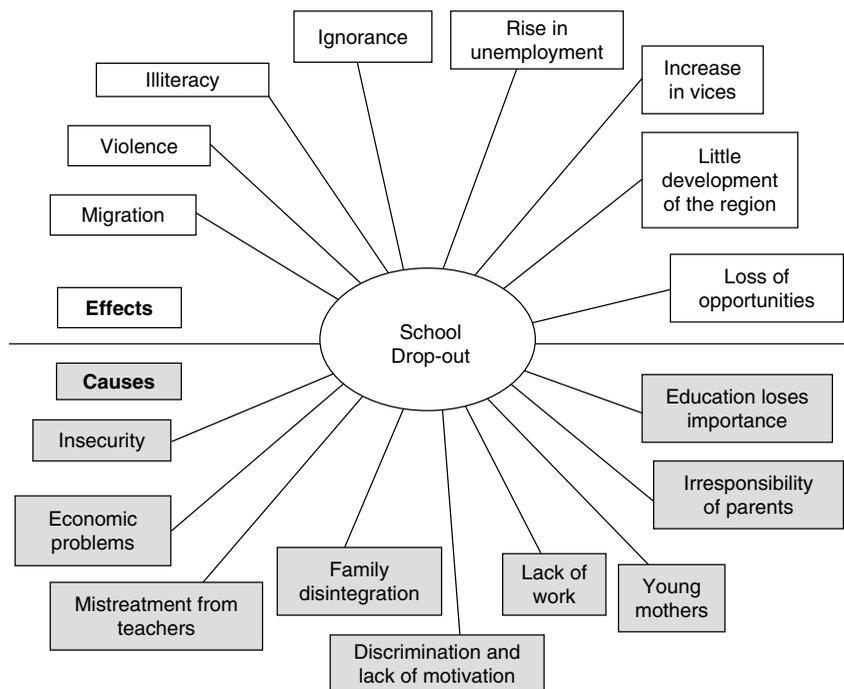
Rural children typically help with agricultural work and, like their urban counterparts, may also be engaged in petty vending, such as selling coal in Sanquianga. A teacher from Girón laments, "For example, there's a child who has not come to school because they have him harvesting tomatoes. He is 10 years old and in the third grade. Some parents are like that. For them the most important thing is work, and they don't even send an explanation to the teacher." Sanquianga parents also point out that many children leave school of their own accord: "The loss of identity suffered by our youths makes them value money more than school. They would rather work on illegal plantations, where they can earn money, than attend school, where they earn nothing."

In urban communities as well, lack of parental concern for education and a need for children to work emerge as obstacles to keeping youths in school. In a barrio of Cali, a group of teenagers state, “Parents don’t give priority to school expenses over other expenses. In addition, you can buy liquor on credit, but not notebooks.” The attractions of drugs, alcohol, “easy money,” and consumerism are also said to draw many away from school. In Barrancabermeja, teenagers admit, “Some of us are addicted to drugs and alcohol. We start liking to have money, and then we stop going to school.”

Teenage pregnancies are mentioned in most places as another important cause of the high dropout rate. In Cali, teenage pregnancy is unusually prevalent. A young mother says, “Most of them get pregnant at 13, 14, and 15. Teenagers live very free . . . A boy gets his girlfriend pregnant and drops out of school, and she leaves school too.”

In Medellín, a discussion group of men and women explored the causes and impacts of the school dropout rate, summarizing the diverse challenges to educating children in the study communities (figure 9). This

Figure 9. Causes and Effects of Dropping Out of School



Source: Discussion group of men and women in Medellín.

web of interconnected causes and effects shows that poor people do not see education through a sectoral lens, but as part of a broader system that hampers their capacity to take control of their lives, develop, and prosper.

Vocational Education Valued but Scarce

Education is useful when you are taught something that helps you get work. —A young woman from Medellín

Nowadays at school they don't even teach you how to sew on a button. They don't teach practical skills.

—A woman from Girón

Whether focused on improving livelihoods, reducing violence, or reforming schools, the proposals that poor people developed for this study frequently call for expanded vocational education. The proposals particularly stress training in skills that have an immediate market value. Youths from Girón, for example, would like to receive training locally in “sewing, hairdressing, cooking, baking, accounting, mechanics, and electronics.”

The national vocational training program known as SENA (Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje) is mentioned favorably in four communities. A woman from Barrancabermeja says, “[SENA] is very good because they teach several things, from dressmaking to metal mechanics . . . executive secretarial training, practical things.” But the requirement that trainees have completed ninth grade restricts access to SENA courses.

Youths in Action, a program that provides a stipend to students while they receive work-related training, is found only in Cazucá. The current courses on “computer systems, hairdressing, and painting” offered by the program are thought to be useful, but entry is limited. A woman in a discussion group explains, “Many youths are registering, but there are few openings and some students cannot afford transportation to training locations.” In addition to calling for improved access to courses, teenagers and adults in the study propose that the training be held during evening hours to accommodate work schedules.

Nonschool Actors in Education

I am poor . . . I have no money but I have always sent my children to school. The issue is willingness, confronting the problem, talking to whoever can get them a place in school.

—A mother from Barrancabermeja

Researchers asked discussion groups of pupils and parents to describe and rank other actors (besides formal teachers and trainers) who play

Table 2. Relative Importance of Educational Actors

Criterion	Parents	Friends	Educational institutions	Television
Spiritual tranquility	72	72	0	26
Conflict resolution	72	62	28	22
Tolerance	67	40	30	20
Differentiating fact from fiction	63	38	34	36
Motivation, work capacity, and guidance	56	31	43	21
Valuing life, respect, and dignity	72	50	55	26
Knowledge	66	47	60	63
Total	468	340	280	214

Note: Values are the sums of the scores of 30+ participants in the discussion group who ranked educational actors on a scale of 0 (low) to 3 (high).

Source: Discussion group of youths, Cartagena.

important educational roles in their communities. Those most frequently mentioned are parents and grandparents, the *madres comunitarias* of the ICBF program, and television.

A group of Cartagena youths identified four actors that play an important role in their education, and developed specific criteria to evaluate them. The youths, a large discussion group of more than 30, then individually rated each actor’s importance on a scale of 0 to 3, with 3 being the most important. In almost every case, parents emerge as the top educators (table 2).

Indeed, children throughout the study speak repeatedly of the importance of family members as educators and caretakers. “Teachers, parents, and grandparents are those who teach the most—70 percent the family and 30 percent school,” asserts a child in Sanquianga. Grandmothers also play a vital role as caretakers of their daughters’ children while the daughters are at work. “I have to raise [my granddaughter] because my daughter works all day long,” says a grandmother in Medellín.

In all the urban neighborhoods, the *madres comunitarias* of ICBF are valued very highly for their care and guidance of young children under 8 years old. For the great majority of single mothers in barrios such as Medellín, Cali, and Cazucá, the *hogares comunitarios* provide essential services that enable them to work. “*Hogares comunitarios* educate the children. This is their first education outside the home. They are not expensive, so that mothers who work can leave their children there. It’s in these homes that they begin their socialization,” says a young single mother in Medellín.

Finally, the television receives numerous but mixed reviews in discussions about its central role in children's education. In Cali, youths mention the educational value of Discovery Channel programs on cable TV. But in Sanquianga, a teacher warns, "Parents don't pay attention to the TV shows their children watch, and in what they watch there is always opportunism, love tragedies, and violence."

Education Must Be Relevant

The family is the basis of a child's formation. From there, a child can develop better, learn new things. Education should help us to be somebody in life, to be well-adjusted. That's why it's so important for the school and the family to collaborate.
—A girl from Cartagena

When you live in the countryside, it's also important to attend school and learn, because mathematics, for example, is useful for calculating the price of crops. If you can't do math, you may lose out, because you have to accept whatever the other person says and they may cheat you.
—A 29-year-old man from Girón

Despite everything, poor Colombians continue to hold out hope that education will help them and their children climb up and out of poverty. Study participants first and foremost want schools to help them improve their work prospects. Among various proposals on education by participants in Cartagena, for instance, a call for education to improve job opportunities ranks first by a large margin. Other priorities that are consistent with findings mentioned throughout this chapter include measures to expand access to schools and educational opportunities, reduce costs of school attendance, open community daycare centers, and increase vocational training.

The top-ranking proposal in Pasto calls for building an educational center in the barrio to offer workshops in vocational skills to children, youths, and adults, to help people "learn and get a job." Participants say that if they knew how to read and write, youths and women could find jobs more easily. Such a center would increase the self-esteem of the community and people's sense of self-worth. But Pasto participants also identify significant obstacles to launching their plan, including difficulties obtaining needed resources, lack of support from local authorities, and lack of unity in the community.

Similarly, a discussion group in Cali focuses on their local community development center (CDC) as a place to provide educational programs. In this case, participants stress that the center could also improve communication

Box 13. Education in the Heart of the Community

A discussion group in Cali: “The CDC is the heart of our barrio . . . The barrio needs educational programs for work and culture, so we can change the negative factors and the poor image of the neighborhood, and above all the stigma about who and what we are. You don’t tell people you are from here because it makes a bad impression. A project to strengthen the CDC would help to bring the community together, since there is a lot of rivalry and not much unity among the leaders . . . not only among leaders but throughout the community. That’s why we need a communication program to bring us together, to improve the entire community and help to solve the rivalry problem, which keeps us from progressing. . . . Young people would have more opportunities and a better education because what they study at school is of no use as far as work is concerned. . . . The quality of life would improve for the entire community.”

among local people and help to address problems of rivalry and lack of unity in the community (box 13).

Participants also offer proposals for reducing dropout rates, and these are equally crosscutting, addressing problems of child labor, teen pregnancy, and physical abuse by teachers. In Girón, where the dropout rate is very high, students and parents identified a set of very specific measures that parents, educators, students, and the state could take to keep more children in school (table 3).

Study participants in several communities also suggest measures to reduce the burden of school costs by staggering payments throughout the year and expanding the provision of free school texts. They also recommend more evening educational and training opportunities.

In sum, people say education is failing children and youths for reasons that include but also extend well beyond what happens in the classroom. They insist that schools cannot and should not ignore these wider problems. Teachers and trainers are urgently needed who can do a better job of teaching basic skills, as well as skills that can directly improve their students’ work prospects. Poor people also want schools to offer a refuge for children fleeing violence in their homes and on the streets, and to actively encourage children and youths to envision a more peaceful and secure future for themselves and their communities.

Table 3. Attacking the Causes of High Dropout Rates

Reason for dropping out	Who can help provide a solution?	By doing what?
Need to work	Parents	Hire a worker instead of putting the child to work so that he or she can stay in school.
	Government (through its Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial, or Tutorial Learning System) Community	Keep down the cost of the program for rural areas. Create a fund to support youngsters who want to stay in school.
Pregnancy	Family and friends	Provide encouragement and support for the care of the child so the mother can continue her education.
	School and parents	Provide education on sexual and reproductive health.
Abuse by teachers	Parents	Investigate cases of abuse in school and support agreements between teachers and students.

Source: Discussion group of students and parents in Girón.

Clearly, poor people’s systemic analysis of educational obstacles and opportunities poses complex challenges for the state and other actors working in the field of education. In addition to the responsibilities of public authorities, parents and community institutions have important roles to play in improving schools. From the perspective of the poor, not much progress will be made in education if issues of work and violence are not addressed at the same time. The final chapter offers reflections on how external partners in the state, the private sector, and civil society might better empower local people to undertake the measures they identify as most urgent and promising.

Notes

1. Since 1991, the National Evaluation System for the Quality of Education (SABER) has administered achievement tests in mathematics, language, and science for students in grades 3, 5, 7, and 9. These tests have repeatedly shown that a

majority of students in grades 3 and 5 are performing below grade level. The performance of Colombian students on the recent UNESCO/OREALC assessment was broadly on par with that of students in Brazil and Mexico, and in a median position compared with other countries in the region. The Colombian scores reveal striking disparities between the achievement of urban students and their rural counterparts, who consistently scored lower. However, the same study also showed that Colombia is surpassing most other Latin American countries in educating rural students, especially in mathematics. Only Cuba does better. These results are due in part to the success of several effective pedagogical models, in particular Escuela Nueva.



Chapter 5

Institutional and Policy Challenges

The state is to blame for the sociopolitical situation of the Colombian people . . . All that is wrong is due to its lack of responsiveness. The state has no authority.

—A Cauca youth

This final chapter explores the very difficult institutional context in which poor people struggle as the essential context for a summary review of the proposals they developed to improve their lives. The chapter closes with a consideration of the implications of these proposals for policy formation at the macro level.

Poor people's policy recommendations in the three thematic areas of the study overlap considerably. Their comprehensive approaches reflect their view that there are tight links between the factors that restrict work opportunities, fuel violence, and deny their children adequate schooling. Their proposals focus on gaining conditions that better-off Colombians already enjoy: reliable work, good schools for their children, safe streets. Some of the inputs that poor people believe would foster such outcomes, notably family counseling services and direct support to community institutions, demand a significant reorientation of current approaches to reducing poverty and promoting public safety.

Weak Institutions: Keeping the Poor Poor

There is not sufficient information about municipal, NGO, or government programs, what they do, where they do it, or how they can help us. —A Cali youth

Nowadays there is solidarity only in tragedies.
—A Cali community leader

People in the study communities express deep frustration over the lack of services that would help to reduce threats to their well-being. They decry the lack of public safety and access to justice: police are absent from most of the 10 study communities, leaving them open to intrusions by guerrillas and paramilitary armed factions. This in turn leads to disinvestment, stigmatization, and the unraveling of community leadership and collective action. Missing, too, are supports to improve work prospects, adequate educational opportunities, and nutrition programs to ease hunger. These disturbing trends have worsened since 1995, as the economy has struggled with crisis and slow recovery and conflict has intensified.¹

Calls for better schools and the rule of law are not surprising findings in a study that looked specifically at education and violence. Of equal concern, the study revealed that although communities are coming together in many cases to improve livelihoods and to protect themselves, they generally lack the capacities, networks, and resources to make a measurable and lasting difference. Poor people feel profoundly unsupported in their efforts to better their lives.

Unaccountable Politicians, Exclusionary Policies

*When [politicians] come here they promise heaven and earth.
But then they never come back . . . They make promises and
leave. —A young man from Pasto*

Politicians, especially at the municipal level, but also higher up, receive very negative reviews across the communities studied. The dominant perception is that they are manipulative, self-interested, and corrupt. Many in the study say that this results in economic and social policies that are largely disconnected from poor people's needs and realities, and in some cases are outright harmful.

Reports abound of politicians making false promises at election time, only to disregard their promises and abuse their positions of power once elected. A woman from Barrancabermeja observes, "When money from the government arrives at the mayor's office, that's the last we see of it. They steal it, and distribute it among themselves. The mayor takes office as a poor man and when he leaves he has a farm and a car." Study participants make similar observations about national officials. A recent World Bank survey on corruption and governance in Colombia finds that civil servants and business leaders also perceive corruption to be closely linked to the political establishment. The study depicts the Congress as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country, clientelism as a pervasive system that undergirds political and bureaucratic structures, and the judicial system as lacking independence from political interference (World Bank 2002c).

The lack of political inclusion and accountability leads to policies that disadvantage the poor. In at least two communities, study participants raised concerns about macroeconomic policies that are seen to negatively impact ordinary workers' lives. A discussion group of men in Cartagena link rising unemployment to a series of harmful policies:

Since the *apertura* [open-market policy] hit us here, it's been a debacle. Propil and Desto have been privatized, and now they generate virtually no work. They hire through employment agencies, and salaries are very low. They are like monopolies that finish off microenterprises . . . As the IMF says, layoffs must continue or we will not approve further loans to you. . . . Look at the hotels; they are now supplied by industrial fishing companies . . . There is no opportunity for [those with] small boats.

Similarly, in rural Usme, farmers associate macroeconomic policies with unfavorable market trends. They point particularly to the effect of trade liberalization on the prices of their crops. According to a discussion group of farmers, "Before they opened doors to foreign imports in the 1990s, investment in the

agro [sector] was larger. Now even potatoes that come from abroad are cheaper and we have to pay.”

Study participants also report a lack of even general information about local policymaking processes. Colombian municipal legislation, for instance, provides a mechanism for people to participate in local-level forums that identify investment priorities to be considered in the municipal budget. In none of the 10 communities visited, however, did people seem to be aware of this opportunity for participatory municipal planning. Study participants repeatedly acknowledge the importance of participating in municipal decisions. However, they are generally not aware that participation is more than a helpful process: it is their legal right.

Services Denied

The government comes up with the SISBEN, but what good is that if they just receive you, give you a piece of paper? What can I do with a piece of paper? —A woman from Cartagena

For the Youths in Action program they only took 14 [trainees], but there are more than 300 youths here.

—A poor person from Cartagena

Study participants repeatedly discuss the “the absence of the state” in their communities, and consider this a form of violence. Where state institutions are present (the school, clinics, and in some cases, local government offices), people report that authorities treat them badly and in some cases deny them services to which they are entitled. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups report that discrimination and disrespectful treatment from public authorities are common. “Because you are an Indian, you are served last at public institutions . . . They help those who wear a tie first,” says a young Guambian.

Poor people perceive most social programs specifically designed to help them to be of limited value and riddled with corruption. A particularly troubling example is the trading of *cupos* (which entitle users to particular services or goods) by local politicians. In Cazucá, for instance, study participants report that access to secondary school, which has limited enrollment, requires a recommendation from the local politico in the municipality. These practices allow local powerbrokers to consolidate their bases, rewarding supporters by facilitating access to a service (even when they might not qualify for it), and punishing the disloyal by refusing them access. There is general agreement that one needs to have *tener palanca* (insider connections) to get ahead, given the pervasive culture of clientelism. “It’s important to have someone with influence in the mayor’s office,” insists a young man from Girón. It is widely assumed that local politicians and service providers are corrupt.

Study participants from six communities also raise concerns about the manipulation by local politicians of SISBEN, the beneficiary selection system that determines eligibility for health and social support services nationwide, and for education and housing benefits in selected departments and districts.² Aside from the widespread dissatisfaction that SISBEN's coverage is insufficient, the most common concern is that the program's socioeconomic stratification system does not reflect the true picture of poverty in a given locality. Study participants report that families living in extreme poverty are occasionally classified as more fortunate, while others who are doing relatively well are categorized as ultra-poor. The result is that the most needy are sometimes denied access to basic social services, while others who are better off enjoy privileged access.

The World Bank's *Colombia Social Safety Net Assessment* finds that the SISBEN system generally serves "the poor, but not the poorest" (World Bank 2002b). The report recommends updating SISBEN to address its present design and implementation problems, in particular to ensure that it is capable of serving as Colombia's principal targeting mechanism for reaching the chronically poor with social programs. Many of the reforms in this area are in fact being undertaken by the new administration.

Unlike SISBEN, the Colombia Family Welfare Institute's daycare and nutrition programs for young children receive widely favorable reviews, although the need to expand coverage is a theme that emerges repeatedly across the study communities. Almost every study assessing the country's public institutions has found that local people view the ICBF as extremely valuable. The *hogares comunitarios* and *madres comunitarias* receive particular praise. People explain that ICBF is one of the few government institutions present almost everywhere in Colombia, providing important services in the communities where poor people live.

State employment and employment training initiatives such as Youths in Action, Employment in Action (part of Plan Colombia), and UMATA (Unidades Municipales de Asistencia Técnica), are mentioned in only three communities, and in each case their impact is deemed negligible. The national apprenticeship institute, SENA, receives high marks from participants in four of the 10 communities. However, some study participants suggest that people need connections to be admitted. Where SENA is available, people agree that the institute should open its doors to more people. In Pasto, where residents express concern that SENA may be closing, a young man says, "We can't allow that to happen . . . They can't close it. If they do, where will the poor study?"

In Medellín, a discussion group argues that short-term state employment programs are not worth much. "You work a lot but you do not have a good income, and then it ends too soon." In Cartagena, a public housing program that employs local builders is better received but also considered

limited: “Subsidized housing programs are pretty good because they generate a lot of work during the construction period.”³

Who Takes the Credit?

An alternative would be to have a bank offering credit services without so many requirements. —A Cartagena woman

For example, you could sell the harvest to [creditors] in advance and they could pay you a market price.

—A woman from Usme

Local people repeatedly argue that they need financial services to add value to their products and services, but that costly informal credit is practically the only option open to them. Formal credit institutions, which are mostly absent from the communities visited, are mentioned rarely, and then only in very negative terms. Banks in particular are criticized for being beyond the reach of the poor. A sharecropper from Girón explains, “The banks require guarantees, for example, a property title for the farm and two guarantors with real estate. With these requirements, we *parceleros* will never be able to access credit for the crops.” In Usme, as well as in Cauca, the Banco Agrario is said to be accessible only to the relatively well off.⁴

Institutions that offer microfinance services do not fare much better in the eyes of study participants. There is a widespread perception that microfinance institutions, like banks, are “in it for themselves.” In the Cartagena barrio studied, a man remarked, “They say that they will give the credit in four installments, but they take away the first installment as part of the payments.”

Informal credit—by moneylenders, between neighbors and friends, or within the extended family—is very common. The interest rates charged for informal credit are usually higher than those charged by formal credit institutions, up to 20 percent per month. The difference is that money is made available immediately and without the need for guarantees. In the case of credit between family members or friends, interest sometimes is not charged, or the transaction is based not on cash but on the exchange of services or goods.

Mixed Reviews for NGOs

We wish that the Red [de Solidaridad] would give us directly what is allocated to us.

—An internally displaced man from Cazucá

Given poor people’s perception that the state either operates through clientelistic practices or is absent from their communities, it would seem that

NGOs have a potentially large role to play in filling gaps in the provision of needed services. But NGOs get a mixed review from the poor. These organizations too, they say, need to be more transparent and accountable. Indeed, as discussed below, many recommendations from poor people are not designed to strengthen NGOs, but instead focus on approaches that would put their own community organizations in direct touch with state services and give local people and their organizations more control over decisions and resources affecting community services.

Throughout the study communities, there is evident distrust of many NGOs. In Cazucá, where NGOs have responded in great numbers to aid internally displaced people, the prevailing view is that NGOs pocket a considerable percentage of the money that the government has set aside for the displaced population. In a discussion group, people assert that “the government should pay closer attention to where the money goes and how it is distributed.” In Cartagena, barrio residents report that the presence of an influential NGO has actually resulted in fewer opportunities for them. “Before the NGO arrived, there was more support from ECOPETROL,” says an unemployed youth, referring to the national oil company. “We had more access to companies. We delivered some letters [containing proposals] and they contributed to us. Now the NGO controls everything.”

At the same time, most communities recognize the important contribution of NGOs, particularly in terms of training. Training in human rights, productive activities, employment generation, and organizational strengthening of community-based institutions is considered especially valuable. NGOs are seen as useful in helping poor people’s organizations become more autonomous and better able to interact with state authorities and other actors.⁵

Stigmatized and Divided Communities, Fragile NGOs

Divisions within the community are the most serious problem.

—Discussion group participant in rural Bogotá

We don’t know who finances whom, or how, or what.

—A youth from Cali

Across the communities studied, poor people feel a pervasive sense of exclusion from the larger society. The simple fact of being poor, or of having dark skin, or of coming from a “dangerous” neighborhood or village is enough to cause rejection. People also feel deeply estranged from their own communities because of the violence surrounding them. In nine of the 10 communities studied, and particularly in the urban areas, people say that a chronic lack of social cohesion in the very heart of their communities undermines their ability to address urgent local needs. In Girón, a 43-year-old

farmer exclaims, “The most serious problem is our lack of unity. If we were united we could make demands together and they would listen more.”

Participants from Cali say that the stigma they endure, exacerbated by negative reporting in the media, deepens their poverty. A group of women explain, “It’s disgusting how the media treat us. They are like wolves, taking up a community and tearing it apart. No matter how much you study or prepare yourself you are rejected just the same. Even the employment offices have lists of people to reject you . . . the same with schools. They say we are black and thieves.”

Shunned by the outside world, poor people say their villages and neighborhoods are splintering under the strains of violence and the hazards of drug gangs, social cleansing groups, and armed bands competing for control and recruits.⁶ In all six urban neighborhoods, people report daily occurrence of physical and verbal aggression among neighbors, and against community authorities. Women community leaders in Pasto, for example, are regularly insulted or abused physically. Violent clashes between gangs of youths whose parents live next to each other are also causing violent quarrels among neighbors. A 2001 cross-country study provides empirical evidence showing a strong negative relationship between violent crime and social capital (Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza 2002). Other social capital data from Colombia are consistent with this finding, showing higher levels of participation in community action groups in less violent areas and lower levels in more violent areas (Cuéllar de Martínez 1997).

In the Cartagena barrio, social events that traditionally brought the community together have now practically disappeared. A *madre comunitaria* paints the picture: “During Easter week, we used to prepare rice with coconut, fish, *bangú* dessert, *plátano* dessert, pineapple, and beans, and we shared them with neighbors. But we have not seen that exchange in the last two years.” Fiestas have historically had their share of fights, but now the violence is much more serious. According to a discussion group of women, “The beer [festival] and anniversary celebration of the barrio were suspended . . . because men went wild shooting. In the past, [fights] were with sticks or broken bottles, but now they’re with guns.”

Study participants express contradictory perceptions about their own community-based organizations (CBO). These include the formally constituted community action boards known as Junta de Acción Comunal (JAC), as well as other, more homegrown institutions such as community support centers. On the one hand, people consistently say they value these groups above most other institutions, placing enormous faith in their potential to unite residents and develop collective solutions to help lift them out of poverty. On the other hand, they do not hesitate to say that CBOs are often unrepresentative, dominated by a few leaders, with low attendance at meetings; internally divided by rival factions linked to different political parties

or local powerbrokers; or incompetent, with poor managerial, organizing, and implementation practices.

Fear, in particular, keeps people from organizing. In Sanquianga on the Pacific coast, local community leaders regularly report that residents very seldom attend meetings and show little interest in community issues.⁷ “People are wrapped up in their own affairs and don’t care about anything else,” says a woman in Cartagena. An NGO worker indicates that few people will even come to educational courses for fear of being considered “too active.”

Most of the study communities also struggle with leadership. Local leaders are said to be caught in the web of clientelism that local politicians spin to keep themselves in power. “In fact, they don’t work for the community, but for their own interests,” says a Cali youth about local leaders. A man from Medellín explains, “People around here are used to everything being politics. Say we establish a cooperative. Soon its leaders begin to do things out of personal interest, supporting a politician.” During campaigns, competing politicians further divide communities, as a man from Barrancabermeja describes: “When there are no political campaigns under way, we work well in groups. But the campaigns begin and some leaders hire themselves out to a politician. The other leaders get offended and then comes discord.”

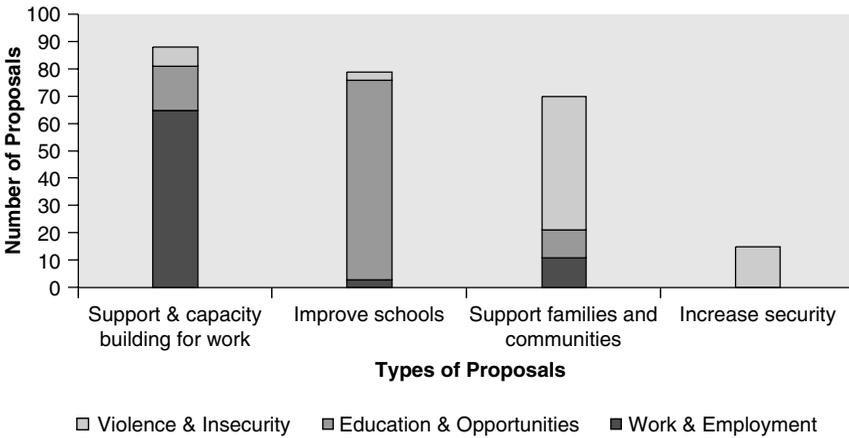
Poor People’s Proposals

Study participants put forward 252 proposals of varying length and detail to expand work opportunities, reduce violence, and improve education. Two broad patterns emerge. First, poor people view problems of work, violence, and education as tightly interconnected, and many proposals call for comprehensive initiatives to address these issues. Second, poor people see families and local institutions as the critical arenas for action. This reflects poor people’s sharply critical assessments of public authorities and the many poverty-targeted public and NGO programs that fail to reach them.

To capture the linkages between the study themes and avoid duplication, the proposals are summarized in figure 10 and categorized in the following sections based on their content. A number of the 88 work-related proposals emerged from discussions about actions to reduce violence and improve schools. Similarly, some of the proposals about violence reduction were made in the context of discussions focused on school or work, and some of the proposals on education emerged from discussions of work or violence. These overlaps suggest areas of potential policy synergies. Indeed, study participants widely see advances in the three areas as tightly interwoven.

The findings reveal strong consensus among poor people that their lives could be improved through measures that enhance work opportunities

Figure 10. Number and Type of Proposals



(48 proposals), increase poor people’s work-related capacities and skills (40 proposals), and improve school quality, access, and infrastructure (79 proposals). Given that work and education are core areas of the study, the concentration of proposals in these areas is expected. An additional 70 proposals call for crosscutting actions that would directly strengthen families and communities. Just 15 proposals recommend efforts to increase security directly with respect to the peace dialogue, the drug trade, and police and military reforms. Furthermore, these proposals emerged only in the context of discussions about reducing violence. Proposals to increase security focus more heavily on actions that would directly help families and community institutions reduce conflict and safeguard children and youths.

In discussing local problems and presenting their proposals, study participants repeatedly say that they simply want the state to do what it is supposed to do. Lacking even basic information about opportunities that might be open to them, participants express strong interest in learning more about the credentials and functions of state and NGO actors who come into contact with their communities (box 14). The poor also feel that resources are wasted because the various state and NGO providers approach them separately, often with similar programs. Not enough is done to coordinate and pool resources.

It is against the backdrop of poorly performing and exclusionary institutions that poor people call for direct support to families and communities

Box 14. Proposals to Overcome Lack of Information

In Cazucá, a group of men suggest that “There should be training about the functions of each institution so we don’t get the runaround when asking for resources. Institutions wouldn’t be able to say that such-and-such is not their function.” In Girón, Medellín, Cali, and Cazucá, residents propose the creation of information offices where people could learn about the precise competencies and functions of different agencies, government programs, and NGOs, about the services offered, and about citizens’ rights to these services. In Cazucá, the provision of information is seen as important but insufficient. Residents there must learn how to speak to institutions effectively so that they will get a response. And in Girón, residents propose that the radio be used to promote understanding of and debate about what different institutions do.

to overcome problems relating to work, education, and security. Their focus on very local structures reflects their fervent desire for self-reliance and control over their lives, important forces on which poverty reduction strategies can build. Further highlights of study participants’ proposals are highlighted below.

Provide Support and Capacity Building for Work

Table 4 summarizes proposals for measures that poor people believe would support their efforts to work and improve their livelihood opportunities. These include investments in community enterprises, increased access to child care, improved access to productive inputs, and market support.

In eight of the 10 communities, study participants proposed actions to create or improve work opportunities through entrepreneurial activities managed by local people and groups. Figure 11 presents a proposal by a discussion group of Medellín women to create an association for single mothers who work as domestic servants. The women believe such an association would raise their self-esteem and improve prospects for their families.

Rather than work as domestics or informal vendors, however, many women in the study express a strong interest in building their own community businesses, which would also enable them to manage child care and other household responsibilities more effectively. Several proposals stress

Table 4. Proposals to Support Employment

Summary of proposals	Communities
Support community enterprises	Cali, Cartagena, Cauca, Cazucá, Medellín, Sanquianga, Usme, Pasto
Create new enterprises, including those in ecotourism	Barrancabermeja, Cartagena, Cazucá, Sanquianga, Medellín
Expand coverage of ICBF homes and daycare centers, with guaranteed employment for female heads of household	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Medellín, Girón, Sanquianga
Establish community warehousing centers to ensure marketing, easy credit and low interest rates for peasants, and stable prices for farm products	Cauca, Girón, Usme
Expand access to land: implement agrarian reform, put into production farms formerly belonging to drug traffickers	Barrancabermeja, Cartagena, Sanquianga
Number of proposals: 48	

Source: Community discussion groups.

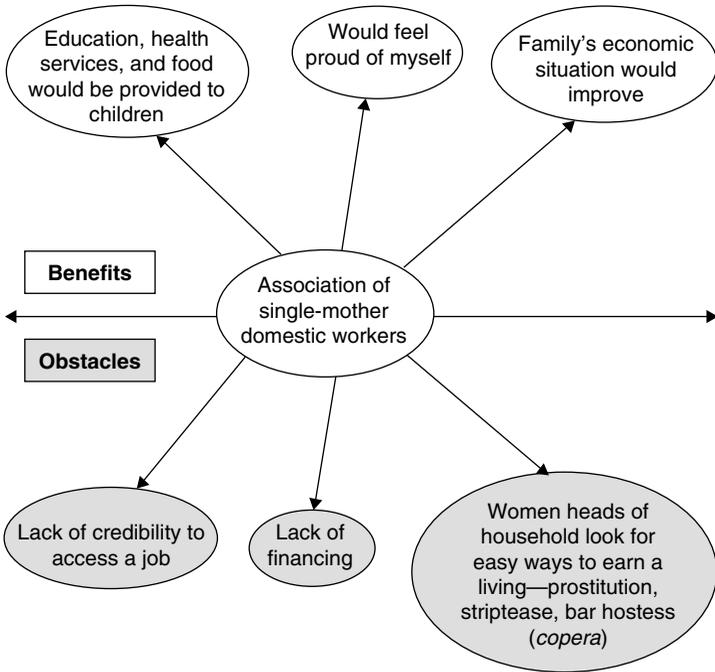
that work-related inputs and services should be tied directly to opportunities available locally, particularly for women.

In addition to community enterprises, women's discussion groups assign priority to investments in child care and jobs for poor female-headed households. As discussed in chapter 2, women in many areas are overtaking men as the principal breadwinners, and discussion groups of women mention ICBF and other daycare services and schools as vital for working women with small children. Numerous discussion groups called for urgent attention to the plight of single mothers and widows who have no choice but to leave their children alone while they go out to work.

The *Colombia Social Safety Net Assessment* (World Bank 2002b) recommends improvements in the quality and coverage of daycare and nutrition programs for the poor through effective low-cost service alternatives. This, the reports maintains, will not only benefit children at risk but will give many poor families the opportunity to have additional household members enter the labor force and add to family income.

Other work-related proposals include the creation of new enterprises (such as in ecotourism), community employment schemes, and direct support to individual entrepreneurs. Some measures would increase investment in inputs and services that enable people who work in specific livelihoods

Figure 11. Opportunities and Obstacles: A Proposal for an Association of Single-Mother Domestic Workers



Source: Discussion group of women, Medellín.

to enhance their productivity, such as market support and productive assets for farmers or street vendors.

In addition, nine of the 10 communities put forward proposals on ways to build people’s skills and capacities for work, as shown in table 5. These proposals emerge not only across the study communities but also across separate discussions on measures to improve work, reduce violence, and strengthen schools. Training specifically for youth is proposed more frequently in the urban sites than in the rural, while training to form cooperatives is a more rural concern.

Improve Schools

Proposals on education, summarized in table 6, span diverse approaches that would expand access to schools and improve the quality of education, especially its relevance to work and family life. Study participants make recommendations for an education that is comprehensive, affordable, and practical.

Table 5. Proposals to Build Capacity for Work

Summary of proposals	Communities
Provide technical and vocational training to young people	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Cazucá, Girón, Medellín, Pasto, Sanquianga, Usme
Provide training and advice on forming cooperatives	Barrancabermeja, Cartagena, Cauca, Girón
Provide training in organic farming and sustainable environmental management	Cauca, Girón, Sanquianga
Make formal education more relevant to employment	Cali, Cazucá, Pasto
Expand access to SENA and public universities	Cartagena
Provide more educational opportunities to build work-related skills	Cali, Cartagena, Cauca, Medellín, Pasto
Number of proposals: 40	

Source: Community discussion groups.

Table 6. Proposals to Improve Education

Summary of proposals	Communities
Offer <i>educación integral</i> (covering all ages, teaching values and skills that apply to life outside and inside the classroom)	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Cauca, Cazucá, Girón, Medellín, Pasto, Sanquianga
Improve the quality of education, especially teacher performance	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cazucá, Girón, Pasto, Sanquianga
Ensure that schooling recognizes regional and ethnic differences	Cauca, Sanquianga
Reduce educational costs substantially through subsidies and grants for food, enrollment fees, and monthly tuition	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Cazucá, Girón, Medellín, Pasto
Expand educational coverage for all ages and at all levels, and the coverage of ICBF daycare centers	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Cauca, Girón, Medellín, Pasto, Sanquianga, Usme
Expand and improve school facilities and equipment, as well as recreational space accessible to schools	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cazucá, Girón, Sanquianga, Usme
Guarantee an education to children of single parents	Cali, Cazucá
Number of proposals: 76	

Source: Community discussion groups.

Proposals for *educación integral* emerge from nine of the 10 communities. While the precise meanings and objectives of *educación integral* differ from one locality to another, there are common elements. Whether discussed in Cartagena or Medellín, among Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, or mestizos, it is seen as education that is comprehensive, encompassing values as well as knowledge and skills (especially skills relevant to the workplace). It includes students of all ages, from kindergarten to university. And it contributes to stronger families and communities, while respecting and strengthening cultural identity.

In seven communities visited, there is keen interest in expanding access to schools for children of all ages. However, expanded access must be accompanied by measures to reduce the out-of-pocket costs (for uniforms, textbooks, school supplies, transportation, and tuition) that make education unaffordable for poor families and force students to drop out in times of crisis. Such measures could include providing free textbooks or expanding subsidies for school meals, enrollment costs, and tuition fees, or even by making school totally free through scholarships. People also propose spreading the costs across the school year.

Along with universal access for school-age children, study participants call for continuing educational opportunities that address pressing economic and social needs. They would like schools to build people's capacity to obtain work and advance in their jobs, enterprises, cooperatives, or farming activities. In addition, they want education to focus on the family and its problems, through drug rehabilitation, family planning, and help for troubled children. Teachers should also teach respect for local cultures and for children who are different, such as the children of displaced families. Ever present is the idea that education should help to unify and integrate fragmented communities.

Strengthen Family and Community Institutions

We want the project resources to come directly to the communities without going through the mayor's office.

—A farmer from Girón

Courses help bring families together, they generate support networks . . . and help us to heal, to unite. We can't continue to be locked up in our homes . . . depressed.

—A young mother from Cali

Poor people across all 10 communities put forth proposals that would strengthen their families and local groups and provide resources directly to them. To tackle pervasive problems of violence in all its forms (domestic,

Table 7. Proposals to Support Families and Communities

Summary of proposals	Communities
Provide counseling to parents and families, including psychological-emotional and social rehabilitation programs; encourage family dialogue; provide support to reduce drug addiction and alcohol consumption; promote family planning	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Cazucá, Girón, Medellín, Pasto, Sanquianga, Usme
Strengthen family and community support networks	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cauca, Girón, Sanquianga, Usme
Encourage unity in the community and within families	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Girón, Medellín, Pasto, Sanquianga, Usme
Install community warning systems to alert residents to criminal activity	Cartagena, Usme
Create sports centers and athletic and recreational programs for young people	Cali, Cartagena, Medellín, Pasto
Promote inclusion of young people, with decent conditions and acceptance of their proposals	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Pasto
Offer workshops for young people at risk to prevent them from causing more violence	Cali, Cartagena, Pasto
Provide resources for projects of direct benefit to the community	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Cauca
Strengthen the management capacity of community associations	Barrancabermeja, Medellín, Sanquianga

Number of proposals: 70

Source: Community discussion groups.

economic, political), the largest share of proposals (45) concentrate on approaches that would directly support families and community institutions with efforts to reduce conflict and safeguard family and community members. As table 7 illustrates, most of the proposals in this area combine actions at the family and community levels.

Nine of the 10 communities called for providing counseling and psychological support to parents and to the family as a whole, for promoting family dialogue, and for establishing family and community support networks. The proposals are made, to a great extent, by groups of women. Although economic and political violence may respond to forces that are extra-familial and extra-communal, it is the impact of such violence on the family and community that seems to matter most to people. Targeted measures to reduce youths' vulnerability and dangerous behavior are also mentioned frequently, as described in box 15.

Box 15. Proposals to Reduce the Vulnerability of Youth

Study participants repeatedly single out poor youths as a target of their proposals in all three thematic areas. The proposals for *educación integral* reveal that poor parents and youths long for schools to give students a vision of a better life for themselves and for their communities and the tools to create it. Faced with the failure of schools to do this and the soaring dropout rate, participants also developed projects for improving youth access to advisory services, psychological counseling, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, training and work programs, and recreation centers.

Poor people's proposals to build more and better playgrounds in the "hot" periurban neighborhoods of the larger cities may seem like a misguided strategy for combating violence. In fact, evidence is growing that sports help the young spend energy and time positively, while building teamwork and companionship with those who might otherwise be regarded as "enemies" on the street. Parks and recreational and sports facilities built in Bogotá during the last 10 years have expanded leisure and cultural opportunities for children, youths, and adults, while helping to reduce violence.

Discussion groups of youths in Cartagena, Cali, and Pasto seek capacity-building programs for youths at risk because they cause the most violence. Youth and adult groups in Cali, Barrancabermeja, and Pasto requested "inclusion of youths in conditions of dignity, and acceptance of their proposals." Youths, too, want to be a force for ushering in and managing positive changes.

In all 10 communities, poor people perceive their local organizations as necessary instruments to enhance their well-being. They want help strengthening the capacity of these organizations to become more representative, better able to manage collective activities, and better prepared to interact effectively with governmental, market, and civic institutions. They also seek more responsive public institutions and better access to information about how the government works and the various social programs and services available. In addition, they want to relate directly to these institutions without intermediaries. With enhanced local organizational capacities and a closer relationship between poor citizens and the state, poor people express confidence that public institutions will become more responsive to their needs, and policies and programs will become more effective.

Box 16. Nonviolent Community Responses to Violence

Nonviolent responses to insecurity are practiced in three of the communities studied. These communities are not targets of continuous violence, but are endangered periodically by gangs of youths from the localities and from outside.

In 1998, indigenous authorities from the Cauca region worked together to form a “territory of peace,” an initiative that offers a degree of protection for youths under pressure to join competing armed groups. The initiative has since received legal recognition from the Colombian government.

In a rural part of Bogotá that is regularly patrolled by the FARC, a number of rudimentary warning systems, such as whistling or firing a single shot, are used to call residents when a crime is being committed.

In the Cartagena barrio studied, where “social cleansing” resulted in the murder of a youth, the few residents who have telephones established a network to inform community leaders of suspicious behavior and form groups to respond, if necessary. “When we see something unusual, we call around, and ask, ‘What are we going to do?’” explains a resident.

Increase Public Safety

To bring more security into their everyday lives, poor people place much more emphasis on proposals to support cohesive families and communities than they do on conventional law-and-order measures. With police and other justice institutions absent, poor people in many cases have had no option but to organize their own defenses against armed groups and criminals. Box 16 highlights nonviolent initiatives in three communities to improve public safety locally.

Despite study participants’ emphasis on self-reliance for security, a number of proposals call for increased presence of state security forces, more effective control of the drug trade, and police reforms (see table 8). Poor people in three communities call for direct intervention by the state to promote the peace dialogue and to stop the murders and gang violence. Others propose that the police and the military should act in collaboration with common citizens and communities. Finally, participants want the state to improve provision of basic social services as an aspect of security. In some

Table 8. Proposals to Improve Public Safety

Summary of proposals	Communities
Resume peace talks, stop the killing, and dismantle armed groups	Barrancabermeja, Cauca, Sanquianga
Heighten security and put an end to the sale of illegal drugs	Cazucá, Medellín, Sanquianga, Usme
Provide public services: daycare for the children of teenage mothers, public schools and universities, housing relocation plans	Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Sanquianga
Strengthen police protection	Cartagena, Cazucá, Usme
Ensure that police and the army perform their roles in cooperation with the citizenry	Barrancabermeja, Usme

Number of proposals: 15

Source: Community discussion groups.

cases local government offices are closed, their staff having been forced to flee because of threats from one or another armed group.

Implications for Policy Formulation: From Micro to Macro

Individually we have achieved nothing . . . but if we organize ourselves we can do it. —A community leader from Girón

Study participants believe poverty in Colombia has multiple dimensions. These include, among others, unemployment or precarious informal work, insufficient or insecure assets, bad social relations and exclusion, deep inequalities related to gender and ethnicity, uneven access to state services and to information on rights and entitlements, disempowering and exclusionary institutions, and inadequate skills. Most Colombian political and economic structures are captured by narrow elites, who largely disregard poor people’s needs and abuse their authority with impunity. Nor do poor people enjoy the basic civil and political rights that might empower them to forge influential partnerships and hold authorities accountable for their misdeeds and failings.

These disadvantages manifest themselves differently in each of the communities visited. At a general level, however, they are quite similar to the perceptions and experiences described by poor people in other countries where participatory poverty studies have been conducted. Like poor Colombians, poor people elsewhere see the diverse disadvantages that they face as tightly interconnected, greatly impeding their climb up and out of poverty (Narayan with others 2000).

At the same time, the experience of poverty in Colombia has at least one element that sets it apart: pervasive violence. The state cannot guarantee the rule of law, mediate political conflicts, or protect citizens in large areas of the country—a situation with severe repercussions for every aspect of public and private life.

In such a context, effective family and community institutions would seem to be an unattainable vision. As researchers engaged in the study, we were struck by the frequency and intensity with which poor people expressed their desire for better family relations and stronger community institutions. These are the supports that poor people perceive to be most important for crafting better and more secure lives. This message—that despite everything they face, poor people in Colombia still believe in local institutions—has significant policy implications. In general, development professionals do not focus on families or community institutions when developing poverty reduction strategies, designing and delivering policies and programs, or measuring the impacts of their efforts. To do so would require a major reorientation on many fronts. Five relevant recommendations are discussed below.

Support Small Producers

Poor people urgently seek help with securing adequate livelihoods. Current strategies to help connect poor people to economic opportunities try to improve their access to credit, land, and other productive inputs; build occupational skills; and strengthen the organizational capacities of producer groups. Poor governance and limited program coverage exclude most poor people from these opportunities, however.

Colombia's National Development Plan for 2002–06, *Hacia un Estado Comunitario*, calls for providing access to productive inputs for small producers. In effect, the plan states that the government will facilitate producers' access to mechanisms such as the Incentivo de Capitalización Rural⁸ in geographic areas undertaking regional development plans, as well as to adequate financial programs. In the area of financial services, the plan specifically seeks to expand access to long-term financing schemes so that borrowers can finance the later stages of the investment and repay during the stages when production is more profitable so that projects can become sustainable. Similar instruments are proposed for urban producers and entrepreneurs (Government of Colombia 2003).

The World Bank's policy note on Agricultural and Rural Development (Brizzi, Gómez, and McMahon 2003) recommends facilitating local development by integrating policies to support land purchases through productive investments and financial services. This will reduce impediments to more equitable and rapid development processes among smallholders. The approach emphasizes helping smallholders gain wider access to existing mechanisms

for agricultural sector support, improving their livelihoods and helping them avoid takeover by the largest producers (Brizzi, Gómez, and McMahon 2003). However, previous financial instruments ostensibly targeted to small producers have not worked for the poor. Unless new institutional arrangements are established to address barriers to access (excessive paperwork, inappropriate guarantees and repayment rates), poor people will continue to be excluded.

The combination of investments in local organizational and productive capacities would have a positive impact on poverty reduction in the short to medium term and would complement the more traditional and longer-term poverty reduction strategy of investing in education and health. The approach could also be part of a policy of inclusive growth, which makes an effort to incorporate all people with a productive capacity into the reactivation of the economy.

Invest in Community-Driven Development

Poor people's proposals repeatedly call for the opportunity to relate directly to government institutions, without intermediaries and across the spectrum of government services. Many laws, policies, and institutions already exist in Colombia specifically to deepen poor people's participation in the country's political, social, and economic life, but these do not appear to be functioning well. The 1991 Constitution and ensuing legislation in particular created an array of mechanisms for participation at all levels. But poor people rarely mention these channels.

A great deal of innovation and learning is occurring around the pivotal role of community institutions both in ensuring more rapid and equitable growth and in supporting effective decentralization of public services. Within the World Bank, much of this has coalesced around strategies to support poor people's empowerment and community-driven development.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, the central government has a critical role to play in advancing a policy environment that enables empowerment and community development strategies to take hold. Government can take actions that:

- ▶ ensure widespread public access to *information* on policies and programs, rights and entitlements, budgets, development performance, and so forth
- ▶ institutionalize citizen *participation*, preferably by building on existing community institutions, so that people's engagement can be sustained beyond a specific political administration, program, project cycle, budget, or other intervention⁹
- ▶ establish effective *accountability* mechanisms at various levels of government and across the public, private, and civic sectors

- ▶ invest in *organizational capacity* to enable local people to mobilize around shared goals and attract the partnerships and resources they need to realize their goals, and to strengthen policymakers' and providers' capacities to support empowerment processes at all levels of government.¹⁰

At the local level, there are further actions that frontline service providers can take to support community awareness, inclusion, control, and capacities. They can openly inform local people about development options, including the costs and technological requirements of different alternatives, and offer information about providers with the necessary credentials. Other measures such as professional facilitators and funding incentives can directly support communities' efforts to reach out and engage poor, disadvantaged, and excluded groups in the process of making and implementing development decisions intended to benefit them.

During implementation of community programs and projects, participation and accountability can be improved by giving local groups the authority and skills to manage services and funds. Within a framework of clear rules and responsibilities, measures that put inclusive local institutions into the position of hiring and funding contractors—and that strengthen their capacity to play this role effectively—have greatly improved the performance of providers.¹¹

This approach also requires a more proactive effort by local governments to establish appropriate mechanisms that will enable these types of relationships to develop. The Obras con Saldo Pedagógico program of Bogotá, which contracts barrio improvement works directly with the JAC, offers a potential model. This approach not only builds the capacity of organizations to manage their own affairs, but also gives them greater control over government resources and programs and establishes more effective accountability mechanisms. In the end, this will help to create trust between citizens and state institutions.

The Magdalena Medio Regional Development Project provides additional lessons on establishing a successful community-based participatory development process in conflict-affected regions. Box 17 discusses the project's efforts to increase social capital, improve living standards, and create new institutional arrangements for peaceful coexistence in which ordinary citizens hold a significant stake.

Target the Family as a Unit

Personal security, including the security of household assets and family members, is fundamental to well-being. Poor people across the communities say that domestic violence is one of the most harmful consequences of

Box 17. Magdalena Medio Project: Fostering Peace and Development amid Conflict

The methodology of the Magdalena Medio Regional Development Project rests on two basic pillars: recognizing the existing capacities of citizens and local organizations, and helping them set their own targets in planning and implementing projects. The project activities focus on production and income generation, health, education, institution building, and peace/conflict resolution. It seeks to strengthen the weak presence of the central government, increase the attention paid to isolated municipalities by government departments, and strengthen the capacities of community organizations and local governments so they become more responsive and increase their collaboration.

One Magdalena Medio activity that expands opportunities for children and youths is the program of Escuelas Básicas Integradas de Desarrollo Sostenible (EBIDS), or comprehensive basic schools, in several municipalities of the region. EBIDS integrates preschool, primary, and secondary levels of schooling to guarantee a complete basic education for all children. The program uses proven approaches such as Escuela Nueva, SAT (Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial), and Accelerated Learning. EBIDS has increased coverage of basic education, improved the quality of instruction, involved parents in school oversight, and linked the curriculum to local history, culture, and economic activities. Students also receive incentives, funded by the municipal government, to stay in school. These include hot lunches at school for all children, transportation for those in the more remote villages, and free notepads and pencils for very poor students.

During the four-year period of implementation, enrollment increased 5 percent in basic primary education (grades 1 to 5) and tripled in basic secondary school (grades 6 to 9). Parents, leaders, teachers, local authorities, and above all children and youths feel a sense of pride in their locality and are gaining confidence that rural areas can offer a good livelihood. By providing new opportunities to young people, the schools are also reducing the supply of recruits for armed conflict.

Given the multidimensional nature of the wider Magdalena Medio project, including the objective of promoting participatory approaches in a conflict-ridden environment, management of the

project requires flexibility, continuous learning, and close monitoring and analysis of the sociopolitical situation. Varying conditions in different parts of the region (with respect to capacity, logistics, dynamics of armed conflict) result in different rates of implementation. Increasing the capacity of individuals and communities to take charge of their own development takes longer than the usual three- to five-year project cycle, particularly for productive investment projects that link small producers to the market. Small producers need to learn technical information about their crops or productive activity; analyze the relevant market conditions; learn about economic circuits at the local, regional, and national levels; and find sources of financing and technical assistance. This learning process and its application takes time, and more time still is required to turn fledgling ventures into viable enterprises.

An important lesson from the first four years of implementation is that in order for small projects in poor communities to generate significant development impacts, they must be linked strategically to policies, programs, and budgets at the municipal, subregional, and regional levels. Furthermore, the Magdalena project's vision involves an interactive process across two dimensions. First, while building from the bottom up to function at all levels—household, community, municipality, subregion, and region—the project also links its activities with national policies and institutions. Second, the project helps to put national policies into practice in the municipalities and regions and helps define national policies through local and regional actions.

the economic and security crises. For children, intense experiences of fear and violence can have long-term, harmful effects on their development.

Accordingly, policymakers need to focus more systematically and urgently on actions to address unequal gender relations within households, and in particular to curb domestic violence. Efforts to reduce domestic abuse must become an integral part of public policies that seek to enhance women's capacity to protect and nurture their children effectively, as well as to realize their own potential as breadwinners and civic actors. In addition, poor people suggest that *all* family members—men, women, and children—need support to learn how to transform tense and insecure family relations into more peaceful and supportive interactions. This approach might also

help to address concerns that benefits focused only on particular household members can sometimes undermine family bonds.

Evidence suggests that relatively small investments in domestic violence awareness campaigns, improving women's access to justice, and expanding family counseling services for individuals and groups can bring rapid and positive changes in communities where these supports are made available. Brook and colleagues (1998, 1999) show that measures to enhance the quality of family interaction are a particularly efficient way to reduce the probability of drug use and criminal involvement, and ease the trauma of Colombian youths living in high-risk neighborhoods. They conclude that consideration should be given to "developing prevention programs aimed at family bonding, not only for its intrinsic value, but also for its long-range implications for decreased drug addiction, delinquency, and ultimately violence" (Brook and others 1999).

In addition to efforts to foster family harmony, measures that improve access to and affordability of services—particularly child care and education—should also receive greater priority in public policy. Again, study participants propose specific measures to expand: (1) ICBF child care services, to facilitate the participation of women in the labor force; (2) scholarships or other incentives to encourage children and youths to enroll and stay in school; and (3) the youth training services offered by Youths in Action, SENA, and other private or public agencies to reduce the vulnerability of youths from very poor households and keep them out of dangerous or illegal activities.

Establish Inclusive Accountability Mechanisms Across Government

To improve development outcomes, state institutions at the local, regional, and national levels must become more responsive and accountable. Evidence is growing that well-functioning accountability mechanisms can be effective in combating corruption and other abuses of authority, and can support a shift from a culture of clientelism to one of service and performance. Many of these mechanisms are internal governmental bodies—ombudsmen, auditors, inspectors, and so forth. Increasingly, however, channels are being created for meaningful civic engagement in joint civil society–government watchdog activities that help to increase public access to information about public policies, programs, and budgets at the various levels of government and also help establish oversight bodies that meet routinely and benefit from the participation of civic and private sector representatives. Public authorities may also work systematically with community groups and other civic organizations to support and monitor reforms in such areas as policing or education.

The example of Bogotá Como Vamos? is a good illustration of civil society–government collaboration toward transparency and accountability. This mechanism to monitor the development plan of the District of Bogotá was established through a partnership between the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, the editorial offices of *El Tiempo* (an independent newspaper), and the Corona Foundation. Acting independently of the administration, the partners use information provided by the administration to assess implementation of the development plan according to the targets established in it. Periodic implementation reports are discussed with the staff of various government agencies and are widely disseminated in Bogotá through *El Tiempo*, a booklet sent to the JAC, and special public forums.

Develop Tailored and Integrated Strategies

Each community in this study presents somewhat different priorities, obstacles, and opportunities for addressing its problems. For example, discussion groups from the different communities express diverse preferences regarding the content and form of education and training programs that would best enhance local work opportunities. They also hold different views about the need to integrate values, better family and community relations, recreation, and cultural concerns into education programs. Particular livelihoods in rural, urban, coastal, mountain, or indigenous areas may require different supports. Furthermore, poor people see their problems as tightly interconnected and requiring more comprehensive and coordinated policy responses. As a result, policy designers and implementers need to have both the multidisciplinary and the management capacities to address the challenges of local diversity and crosscutting policy synergies.¹²

* * *

While there is now growing recognition of the importance of open, inclusive, and accountable institutions to development outcomes, a great deal of learning and innovation is still needed to determine the best means to support such change. This will likely require stronger efforts to carve a central place for actors who can assess the risks and opportunities associated with cultural practices, social relations, political and administrative structures, and elite interests. Some of the most accurate and timely information on these factors will likely be quite local in origin. More inclusive data-gathering approaches, such as the techniques used in this study, can help to reduce the many risks of interventions that hinge on significant changes in the flow of information, authority, and resources.

Proposals to strengthen families and community institutions and to craft integrated and tailored solutions for problems of work, violence, and

education *do* pose significant challenges for policymakers and providers. Empowerment and community development approaches support this redirection. Poor people worldwide repeatedly demonstrate that they are willing to invest their scarce time in community organizing and in guiding and overseeing development processes if they feel these actions can bring about positive change. The challenge then becomes one of unleashing such energies systematically. While people's aspirations may be most operative at the micro level, they nevertheless require supportive policy frameworks and institutional structures at the macro level. It is in precisely within these critical national policy arenas, however, that poor people's voices are the least heard. This must change.

Notes

1. These trends are also documented in the *Colombia Poverty Report* (World Bank 2002a) and the *Colombia Social Safety Net Assessment* (World Bank 2002b).

2. SISBEN determines eligibility for services from the Red de Apoyo Social (Social Support Network), which includes the following programs: Families in Action, a cash transfer program similar to Bolsa Escola in Brazil or Oportunidades in Mexico; Employment in Action, similar to Trabajar in Argentina; and Youths in Action, an employment training program.

3. For further policy discussion on social insurance, see the *Colombia Social Safety Net Assessment* (World Bank 2002b).

4. The World Bank policy note on Agriculture and Rural Development makes recommendations consistent with those of the poor in this study. Survey data for 1997 and 1999 show that only 15 percent of rural households received credit. Of these, one-third relied upon informal intermediaries, and only 2 percent had access to instruments such as the Incentivo de Capitalización Rural (Brizzi, Gómez, and McMahon 2003). In its chapter on markets, *World Development Report 2000/2001* recommends making microcredit accessible to the poor by removing barriers such as excessive or inappropriate guarantees (World Bank 2000).

5. The experience of the Earthquake Recovery project demonstrates that an appropriate design to establish a partnership between the state, specialized NGOs, and local communities in reconstruction or development interventions can result in stronger relations between citizens and the state. In such cases, the NGO operates as a temporary intermediary whose job is in part to ensure the strengthening of such direct relationships. See Arboleda (2000: 29–39).

6. This lack of social capital, described as “falta de unión” and “desconfianza en las instituciones sociales,” was also identified by Moser and McIlwaine (2000).

7. For further discussion of the effects of violence on social capital, see Garfield and Arboleda (2003).

8. El Incentivo de Capitalización Rural is a subsidy to eligible rural producers for specific agricultural activities, provided by the government through financial institutions.

9. For instance, the stipulation that JAC roundtables must be reconstituted every two years means that initiatives are often cut short, according to men and women in Medellín, Pasto, and the Cauca indigenous community.

10. See “Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: The World Bank’s Agenda” (World Bank 2001a).

11. Many of the lessons presented here are elements of successful social funds; for further information, see Narayan and Ebbe (1997). Also see studies on the EDUCO school reforms piloted and then mainstreamed in El Salvador during the 1990s. The program catalyzed a rapid rebuilding and reopening of schools after the civil war in very poor rural areas of the country. The EDUCO model called for parents to form voluntary associations that then received legal authority, funds, and training to manage school budgets and to hire and fire teachers. Between 1991 and 1999, enrollment in EDUCO schools jumped from 8,400 to 237,000 children. See de Umanzor and others (1997).

12. In its rural development policy, the National Development Plan for 2002–06 recognizes the regional, cultural, and ethnic heterogeneity of the country, as well as the lack of gender equity. It proposes specific actions to take such diversity into consideration when implementing policies and programs, particularly regarding access to productive and financial factors, food security, and social services.



References

- Arboleda, Jairo. 2000. "Reconstruction and Social Development in Colombia: The Central Role of Civil Society Organizations." In *Thinking Out Loud II: Innovative Case Studies on Participatory Instruments*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Arboleda, Jairo, and Elena Correa. 2003. "Forced Internal Displacement." In M. Giugale, O. Lafourcade, and C. Luff, eds., *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Brizzi, Adolfo, Natalia Gómez, and Matthew McMahan. 2003. "Agriculture and Rural Development in Colombia." In M. Giugale, O. Lafourcade, and C. Luff, eds., *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Brook, J. S., D. W. Brook, M. De La Rosa, L. F. Duque, E. Rodriguez, I. D. Montoya, and M. Whiteman. 1998. "Pathways to Marijuana Use among Adolescents: Cultural/Ecological, Family, Peer and Personality Influences." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 37 (7): 759–66.
- Brook, J. S., D. W. Brook, M. De La Rosa, M. Whiteman, and I. D. Montoya. 1999. "The Role of Parents in Protecting Colombian Adolescents from Delinquency and Marijuana Use." *Archive of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 153: 457–68.
- Cuéllar de Martínez, M. 1997. "Valores y Capital Social en Colombia." Corporación Porvenir and Universidad Externado de Colombia, Bogotá.
- Departamento Nacional de Planeación. 2004. CONPES Document 3278. "Authorization to contract an external credit operation in order to finance the program 'Peace and Development.'"
- de Umanzor, Sandra, Isis Soriano, Marta Rosa Vega, Emmanuel Jimenez, Laura Rawlings, and Diana Steele. 1997. "El Salvador's EDUCO Program: A First Report on Parents' Participation in School-Based Management." Working Paper Series on Impact Evaluation of Education Reforms 4. World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Fajnzylber, P., D. Lederman, and N. Loayza. 2002. "Inequality and Violent Crime." *Journal of Law and Economics* 45: 1–40.
- Garfield, L. C., and Jairo Arboleda. 2003. "Violence, Sustainable Peace, and Development." In M. Giugale, O. Lafourcade, and C. Luff, eds., *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Giugale, Marcelo. 2003. "Synthesis in Colombia." In M. Giugale, O. Lafourcade, and C. Luff, eds., *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Giugale, Marcelo, Olivier Lafourcade, and Connie Luff, eds. 2003. *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

- González, Mary Lisbeth. 2001. *Colombia: Dimensiones Sociales de la Crisis*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Government of Colombia. 2003. *El Plan Nacional de Desarrollo: Hacia un Estado Comunitario*. Bogotá.
- Moser, Caroline, and Kathy McIlwaine. 2000. *La Violencia y la Exclusión en Colombia Según la Percepción de Comunidades Urbanas Pobres*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores.
- Narayan, Deepa, and Katrinka Ebbe. 1997. "Design of Social Funds: Participation, Demand Orientation, and Local Organizational Capacity." World Bank Discussion Paper 375. Washington, D.C.
- Narayan, D., with R. Patel, K. Schafft, A. Rademacher, and S. Koch-Schulte. 2000. *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank.
- Narayan, D., R. Chambers, M. Shah, and P. Petesch. 2000. *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change*. New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank.
- Narayan, D., and P. Petesch. 2002. *Voices of the Poor: From Many Lands*. New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank.
- Shanks, Edwin, and Carrie Turk. 2003. "Refining Policy with the Poor: Local Consultations on the Draft Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy in Vietnam." Policy Research Working Paper 2968. World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Solimano, Andrés, Felipe Saez, Caroline Moser, and Cecilia López. 1999. *Ensayos sobre Paz y Desarrollo: El Caso de Colombia y la Experiencia Internacional*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores.
- Vélez, Eduardo. 2003. "Education." In M. Giugale, O. Lafourcade, and C. Luff, eds., *Colombia: The Economic Foundation of Peace*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- World Bank. 2000. *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2001a. "Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: The World Bank's Agenda." Washington, D.C.
- . 2001b. "Strategic Directions for FY02–FY04: Implementing the World Bank's Strategic Framework." Washington, D.C.
- . 2002a. *Colombia Poverty Report*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- . 2002b. *Colombia Social Safety Net Assessment*. World Bank Report N 22255-CO. Washington, D.C.
- . 2002c. *Corrupción, Desempeño Institucional y Gobernabilidad*. Bogotá: World Bank.



Annex 1

Methodological Instrument for the Fieldwork

Research Agenda

The global Voices of the Poor study showed a high level of agreement among poor people around the world about the multidimensionality of poverty and ill being, and the powerlessness that encompasses living in poverty and contending with so many, often intersecting, disadvantages.¹ To build on the results of the global work, which used a more open research agenda, and make the study more salient to Colombians, the new study explored three key concerns for poverty and development in the country: work and employment, education and capacities, and violence and insecurity.

This three-pronged agenda was especially guided by recent quantitative and qualitative research carried out by the World Bank, notably the *Colombia Poverty Report* (World Bank 2002a) and the *Colombia Social Safety Net Assessment* (World Bank 2002b), as well as other recent research on violence and peace (Solimano and others 1999; Moser and McIlwaine 2000; González 2001). The *Colombia Poverty Report* concludes that security, growth and employment, and children and education are three of the top policy challenges facing Colombian institutions. Similarly, a poll by Latinobarómetro found that four of every five Colombians believe that public policy should focus primarily on violence, unemployment, or education.² The research agenda also draws from *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* (World Bank 2000) and from the World Bank's strategic framework paper, which identifies "building a climate for investment, jobs and sustainable growth" as well as "empowering poor people to participate in development" as the priority areas for Bank support to client governments (World Bank 2001b).

The Colombia study asked 942 poor men, women, youths, and children to develop proposals for policies and programs that would address their priority concerns in the three topic areas. It seeks to support the design of appropriate and effective policies and programs to reduce poverty. The approach, also applied in other regions,³ intended to move the field of participatory research from an emphasis on diagnostics toward a more prescriptive mode.

The Study Process

The study design emerged from an inclusive process that drew on guidance from Colombian scholars and policy experts, civil society leaders from diverse parts of the country, government officials, donors, and international participation specialists. Their input provided the key building blocks to ensure quality in the design and execution of the research, including rigorous application of methods for supporting meaningful participation of poor people. An initial workshop to explore the purpose and scope of the

study was held December 5–6, 2001, and included 35 representatives from the civic, public, and private sectors and from different regions, ethnic groups, and political and professional backgrounds.⁴

Based on the results of the workshop, a study proposal was developed and a core team identified to complete the design of the research agenda and data collection instruments, prepare and manage the fieldwork, and draft the report. For each of the three main themes of the study, the team developed an issue checklist of subthemes, key questions, types of informants, and qualitative and participatory techniques for collecting data on those topics. The instruments were reviewed at a meeting with leading development experts in the country from government, academic institutions, and nongovernmental organizations, and by World Bank staff during the concept paper review process.

Five research teams were contracted and trained by the World Bank to conduct the fieldwork, with each team responsible for carrying out the study in two sites. The instruments and techniques were tested and validated in two communities outside Bogotá, and the methodology was refined based on the pilots. The fieldwork took place in the 10 sites in two rounds between the last week of June and mid-July 2002 (see annex 2 for more information on the study sites). After the first round of fieldwork, the teams met for a midterm workshop to review initial findings, present draft reports, and further refine the methodology.

In each of the communities, the study topics were explored in small and large discussion groups involving poor men, women, youths, and children. Frequently, the groups included both genders, but the research instrument also called for selected topics to be addressed in gender- or age-specific groupings. In addition, researchers conducted open-ended individual interviews with poor people of all ages and with key informants such as local leaders and schoolteachers. The fieldwork made use of a variety of qualitative and participatory techniques. Very frequently researchers guided discussion group participants to work jointly to develop visuals, such as Venn diagrams, seasonal calendars, ranking matrices, and impact diagrams. Creating visuals can give discussion groups a useful tool for reflecting on complex topics, sorting out areas of agreement and differences among themselves, and to work collaboratively to reach consensus and present their views on a topic.

The fieldwork provided many opportunities for crosschecking findings. In most discussions, the participants actively corroborated, refined, or even challenged one another's points. Also, the topics were addressed by multiple groups in each community, and discussions on one issue, on livelihoods for instance, frequently yielded findings on the other study topics about violence and education. This all provides researchers with many

opportunities to uncover patterns, including patterns on how the issues intersect. Most groups ended their sessions by sharing and discussing their findings with other groups participating in the study. In addition, the fieldwork concluded in each site with an open meeting where the work of the discussion groups, often through visuals, was presented for discussion and validation of findings.

A final synthesis workshop was held in August 2002, bringing together most members of the field teams, the core team, and special guests from partner organizations. The first level of synthesis for the national report engaged the research teams in working collaboratively to identify common findings and important differences across the community reports. These patterns form the overall structure of this book. The second level of synthesis engaged the fieldworkers in identifying specific data from their community reports and field notes to support the patterns identified. With the main categories of analysis and supporting evidence, the core team then took over the data analysis, drafting, and peer review processes.

The matrices that follow contain the checklist of issues, community-level sampling framework, and methods used to guide the researchers during fieldwork. The matrices specify the research topics under each of the main themes, the key questions used to launch the discussions with individuals and groups, the characteristics of the informants for that study topic, and the tools and techniques used to explore those issues. A “mixed group” refers to a discussion group made up of both men and women.

Theme: Work and life on the job
Stage 1: Diagnostics and analysis
Megaquestion: How do you earn a living?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Identification of ways to earn a living	How do people earn a living in this community/neighborhood? (what activities)	Men, women, and youths	Cards Ranges
Working conditions	How do people get by day to day? (formal or informal, employment or underemployment) How do your employers treat you at work? What do you know about labor laws? Are they enforced? What kind of relations do you have with coworkers?		
Job trends since 1990 (urban and rural)	How have ways to earn a living changed since 1990? (formal or informal, employment or underemployment)	1 mixed group Individuals who managed to improve their working conditions or job opportunities or to take advantage of other opportunities	Trends Interviews
Variation in income	Why have these changes occurred? What has happened since 1995?		
Local manifestations of national policies and international macro-economic changes	How did you manage to escape poverty? (for the interviews) How do you see the future? What are the opportunities? Why these and not others? What job or work changes have affected you most?		
The family economy in a typical year	How did your income and expenses vary during the year? Which months are critical and why?	1 mixed group Intermediaries Staff of warehousing centers for local goods/wholesalers Mothers who head households	Seasonal calendar Interviews Flow chart
Survival strategies for critical months	How do you support your family during the critical months?		
Access to markets	Who loans money when needed and on what terms? What are the problems in marketing your goods? When do your goods bring the best price? Why? What support do you receive from the government to improve the quality of your goods and access to markets? What are your strategies for		

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
	<p>adjusting the family budget during times of crisis?</p> <p>What are the periods of unemployment/employment?</p> <p>What warehousing and distribution networks exist?</p>		
Migration	<p>During what months do you migrate?</p> <p>Where do you go?</p> <p>What jobs do you perform when you migrate?</p> <p>What do you take and bring back?</p> <p>What do you learn when migrating?</p> <p>Do many people migrate permanently?</p> <p>Why? How does migration affect you emotionally?</p>	<p>1 group of people who migrate temporarily and/or have returned after having migrated</p>	<p>Seasonal calendar</p> <p>Migration flow chart</p>
Unemployment	<p>How do those of you who are not working spend your time?</p> <p>What opportunities exist for the unemployed?</p> <p>How does unemployment/underemployment affect your plans in life?</p>	<p>1 group of "unemployed" individuals (mainly youths)</p>	<p>Focus group</p>
Institutions that support income generation	<p>What institutions (public and private) provide support for income generation/economic promotion in your community/neighborhood?</p> <p>What support is provided (marketing help, loans, technical assistance)?</p> <p>What are the obstacles?</p> <p>Why don't people apply to special job programs?</p> <p>What works well and why?</p> <p>What does not work well and why?</p> <p>How could they improve what they do?</p>	<p>1 mixed group</p> <p>Major employers, representatives of training institutions, NGOs, etc. (for the interviews)</p>	<p>Venn diagram</p> <p>Interviews</p>

Theme: Work and life on the job
Stage 2: Validation and prioritization
Megaquestion: What can we do to improve our future?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Identification of proposals for local economic promotion and income generation	<p>What can we do to improve our future in terms of jobs?</p> <p>What programs/projects/activities can we propose to cooperation agencies to improve our job opportunities?</p> <p>What would the city and the government have to do to improve our job situation?</p> <p>How can we improve access to the job market?</p> <p>How can we generate more income in the family?</p>	Men, women, and youths who took part in the process	Group work Presentation and validation of the work at an assembly
Presentation of the “voices of experts” (menu of proposals developed by experts)	N/A	Assembly (all who took part in the process)	Presentation Cards
Prioritization of proposals	<p>Which proposals are the most important and why?</p> <p>What problems are they intended to solve?</p> <p>If you were mayor, how much of your budget would you earmark for each proposal?</p>	Assembly (all who took part in the process)	Simple prioritization Prioritization by pairs Voting

Theme: Work and life on the job

Stage 3: Analysis of proposals

Megaquestion: How can we change the situation?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Feasibility of proposals (analysis by levels)	<p>What are the potential positive effects of the proposal?</p> <p>What are the obstacles to making the proposal feasible?</p> <p>How can public programs be improved to increase job opportunities for the poor?</p>	<p>1 group of unemployed people</p> <p>1 group of local authorities</p> <p>1 group of employed people</p> <p>Institutions working on job promotion</p>	<p>Impact and obstacle diagram, by levels</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>
Shared responsibility (analysis by levels)	<p>What should each of us do to make the proposal feasible?</p> <p>What could the community, families, and support networks do to improve the way policies are implemented?</p> <p>How can the city's role in applying policies to promote employment be improved?</p> <p>How can relations with authorities be improved so they will take us into account when designing local policy on employment?</p>	<p>Mixed groups</p> <p>Local authorities</p> <p>Institutions working on job promotion</p>	<p>Level diagram</p> <p>Shared-responsibility matrix</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>

Theme: Violence in the region (sociopolitical conflict)

Stage 1: Diagnostics and analysis

Megaquestion: Is our town safe?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Security	Is our town safe? Yes or no. Why?	Poor and disadvantaged people	Mixed/large focus group
Idea of violence	What is violence? What types of political violence exist?	Victimized families Law enforcement Youths	Symbol Brainstorming Individual interviews Institutional interviews
Historical trend in the occurrence of violence	How has the rate of violence changed over the last 10 years? How has the nature of the victims and victimizers changed? (gender, social group, age, etc.) How has acceptance of violence changed over the last 10 years?	Assaulted families Authorities Youths Law enforcement	Trends Individual interviews Institutional interviews
Causes and impact of violence	What provokes violence? Who are the perpetrators and victims of violence? What role do youths play in violence (victims, victimizers)? How does violence affect family life? How does violence affect community life? How does violence affect municipal management?	Victimized youths Violent youths Paramilitaries/ guerrillas Assaulted families Institutions working on violence prevention and peacemaking (churches, NGOs, etc.)	Impact and effect diagram (by levels) Individual interviews Institutional interviews
Violence throughout the year	During which times of the year is violence at a peak? Connection with the school calendar: Is there more violence during vacation periods? Connection with the work calendar: Is there more violence when there is no stable work? Which types of jobs are more exposed to economic violence? Connection with migration: How does migration affect violence? Gender approach (victim, victimizer): Who suffers more from violence, men or women?	Displaced men and women Teenage students Violent youths Migrants/ displaced people Institutions working on violence prevention and peacemaking (churches, NGOs, etc.) Law enforcement	Seasonal calendar Individual interviews Institutional interviews

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
	Generational approach (victim, victimizer): Who suffers more from violence, youths or older people?	Paramilitaries/ guerrillas	
Social fabric of violence	Whom do you turn to in the event of violence?	Local authorities	Flow chart
Support networks	What agents control violence socially?	Displaced families in support networks	Ranking matrix
Social control	What measures are taken to combat domestic violence?	Institutions working on violence prevention and peacemaking (churches, NGOs, etc.)	Venn diagram
Information systems	What types of support networks are you familiar with?		Individual interviews
	What role do these networks play?		Institutional interviews
	What results have they achieved?		
	How do they help you (type of support received)?		
	What institutions do you know of that could help in the event of violence?		
	How are you treated by public and private institutions (quality of care and relevance of the support they provide)?		
	What measures do authorities take to assist people who have been displaced or otherwise affected by the armed conflict?		
	What measures do authorities take to avoid armed conflicts?		
	How are the support networks in town organized?		
	Are there reports or claims of violence?		
	What systems exist to provide information on cases of violence?		
	How are people informed about violence?		
	What policies to combat violence are you familiar with?		

Theme: Violence in the region (sociopolitical conflict)

Stage 2: Validation and prioritization

Megaquestion: What are the most important factors to deal with?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Prioritization of the most important factors to deal with (identification and analysis of prioritization criteria)	<p>What are the most important factors influencing violence?</p> <p>How do the different factors influence the continuation of violence?</p> <p>What are the most important criteria to consider when attempting to overcome violence?</p> <p>What proposals can be the most feasible for ending the violence?</p>	<p>Large mixed groups</p> <p>Displaced men and women</p> <p>Teenage students</p> <p>Victimized youths</p> <p>Migrants/displaced</p> <p>Institutions working on violence prevention and peacemaking (churches, NGOs, etc.)</p> <p>Law enforcement</p> <p>Paramilitaries/ guerrillas</p>	<p>Prioritization matrix, by pairs</p> <p>Influence matrix (computing chart)</p> <p>Impact structure</p> <p>Individual voting</p> <p>Ranking matrix</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>
Presentation of the “voices of experts” (menu of proposals developed by experts)	N/A	Large mixed group	Assembly/ plenary session
Prioritization of proposals	<p>Which proposals are most important and why?</p> <p>What problems are they intended to solve?</p> <p>If you were mayor, how much of your budget would you earmark for each proposal?</p>		<p>Prioritization of proposals</p> <p>Simple prioritization</p> <p>Prioritization by pairs</p> <p>Voting</p>

Theme: Violence in the region (sociopolitical conflict)

Stage 3: Analysis of proposals

Megaquestion: How can we change the situation?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Feasibility of proposals	<p>What are the potential positive effects of the proposal?</p> <p>What are the obstacles to making the proposal feasible?</p> <p>How can public programs be improved to bring about a reduction in domestic violence?</p> <p>How can public programs be improved to reinforce existing support networks?</p>	<p>Large mixed group</p> <p>Displaced men and women</p> <p>Teenage students</p> <p>Violent youths</p> <p>Migrants/displaced people</p> <p>Institutions working on violence prevention and peacemaking (churches, NGOs, etc.)</p> <p>Law enforcement</p> <p>Paramilitaries/ guerrillas</p>	<p>Impact and obstacle diagram, by levels</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p> <p>Level diagram</p> <p>Shared-responsibility matrix</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>
Shared responsibility (analysis by levels)	<p>What should each of us do to make the proposal feasible?</p> <p>What could the community, families, and support networks do to improve the way policies are implemented?</p> <p>How can the city's role in applying policies to prevent violence be improved?</p> <p>How can relations with the authorities be improved so they will take us into account when designing local policies?</p>	<p>Law enforcement</p> <p>Paramilitaries/ guerrillas</p>	<p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>

Theme: Violence in the neighborhood/village
Stage 1: Diagnostics and analysis
Megaquestion: Is our community safe?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Security	Is our community safe? Yes or no. Why?	Poor and disadvantaged people	Large/mixed focus group
Idea of violence	What is violence? What types of economic violence exist?	Assaulted families Law enforcement Victimized youths Juvenile delinquents	Symbol Brainstorming Individual interviews Institutional interviews
Historical trend in the occurrence of violence	How has the rate of violence changed over the last 10 years? How has the nature of the victims and victimizers changed (gender, social group, age, etc.)? How has acceptance of violence changed over the last 10 years?	Assaulted families Authorities Youths Law enforcement	Trends Individual interviews Institutional interviews
Causes and impact of violence	What provokes violence? Who are the perpetrators and victims of violence? What role do youths play in violence (victims, victimizers)? How does violence affect family life? How does violence affect community life?	Victimized youths Juvenile delinquents Paramilitaries/ guerrillas Assaulted families Institutions working in support networks	Impact and effect diagram (by levels) Individual interviews Institutional interviews
Violence throughout the year	During which times of the year is violence at a peak? Connection with the school calendar: Is there more violence during vacation periods? Connection with the work calendar: Is there more violence when there is no stable work? Which types of jobs are more exposed to economic violence? Connection with migration: How does migration affect violence? Gender approach (victim, victimizer): Who suffers more from violence, men or women?	Teenage students Juvenile delinquents Shopkeepers Institutions working in support networks Law enforcement	Seasonal calendar Individual interviews Institutional interviews

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
	Generational approach (victim, victimizer): Who suffers more from violence, youths or older people?		
Social fabric of violence	Whom do you turn to in the event of violence?	Local authorities	Flow chart
Support networks	What agents control violence socially?	Assaulted families	Ranking matrix
Social control	What measures are taken to combat economic violence?	Institutions working in support networks	Venn diagram
Information systems	What types of support networks are you familiar with?	Law enforcement	Individual interviews
	What role do these networks play?	Paramilitaries/ guerrillas	Institutional interviews
	What results have they achieved?		
	How do they help you (type of support received)?		
	What institutions do you know of that could help in the event of violence?		
	How are you treated by public and private institutions (quality of care and relevance of the support they provide)?		
	How are the support networks in the community organized?		
	Are there reports or claims of economic violence?		
	What systems exist to provide information on cases of violence?		
	How are people informed about economic violence?		
	What policies to combat domestic violence are you familiar with?		

Theme: Violence in the neighborhood/village

Stage 2: Validation/prioritization

Megaquestion: What are the most important factors to deal with?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Prioritization of the most important factors to deal with (identification and analysis of prioritization criteria)	<p>What are the most important factors influencing violence?</p> <p>How do the different factors influence the continuation of violence?</p> <p>What are the important criteria to consider in overcoming violence?</p> <p>What proposals appear to be the most feasible for ending the violence?</p>	<p>Mixed/large groups</p> <p>Teenage students</p> <p>Juvenile delinquents</p> <p>Shopkeepers</p> <p>Institutions working in support networks</p> <p>Law enforcement</p> <p>Paramilitaries/guerrillas</p>	<p>Prioritization matrix, by pairs</p> <p>Influence matrix (computing chart)</p> <p>Impact structure</p> <p>Individual vote</p> <p>Ranking matrix</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>
Presentation of the “voices of experts” (menu of proposals developed by experts)			<p>Presentation Cards</p>
Prioritization of proposals	<p>Which are the most important proposals and why?</p> <p>What problems are they intended to solve?</p> <p>If you were the mayor, how much of your budget would you earmark for each proposal?</p>		<p>Prioritization of proposals</p> <p>Simple prioritization</p> <p>Prioritization by pairs</p> <p>Voting</p>

Theme: Violence in the neighborhood/village

Stage 3: Analysis of proposals

Megaquestion: How can we change the situation?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Feasibility of proposals	<p>What are the potential positive effects of the proposal?</p> <p>What are the obstacles to making the proposal feasible?</p> <p>How can public programs be improved to bring about a reduction in economic violence?</p> <p>How can public programs be improved to reinforce existing support networks?</p>	<p>Mixed/large groups</p> <p>Displaced men and women</p> <p>Teenage students</p> <p>Violent youths</p> <p>Migrants/displaced</p> <p>Institutions working on violence prevention and peacemaking (churches, NGOs, etc.)</p> <p>Law enforcement</p> <p>Paramilitaries/guerrillas</p>	<p>Impact and obstacle diagram, by levels</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>
Shared responsibility (analysis by levels)	<p>What should each of us do to make the proposal feasible?</p> <p>What could the community, families, and support networks do to improve the way policies are implemented?</p> <p>How can the city's role in applying policies to prevent violence be improved?</p> <p>How can relations with the authorities be improved so they will take us into account when designing local policy?</p>		<p>Level diagram</p> <p>Shared-responsibility matrix</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>

Theme: Education

Stage 1: Diagnostics and analysis

Megaquestion: What is a good education for success?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Characterization of an ideal education and how to achieve it	<p>What constitutes a good education for getting ahead in life?</p> <p>What are the opportunities to receive a good education?</p> <p>How does education contribute to the common good (peace, education, and coexistence)?</p> <p>Does education help to reduce poverty? How?</p>	1 large group of women, men, and youths (mixed)	<p>Open discussion at the plenary session</p> <p>Symbols</p> <p>Brainstorming</p> <p>Cards</p>
Educational agents Support networks Impact on poverty	<p>Who are the educational agents in your environment/town (formal, informal, others)?</p> <p>Where do you learn and who teaches you?</p> <p>What does each agent/institution teach you?</p> <p>Who provides support to continue your education? How?</p> <p>Which of the educational systems and/or agents in your community do the most to prepare you for life? (identification of criteria)</p> <p>Why do you want to study? How does an education help you?</p> <p>What criteria do parents apply when sending their children to school? Why do they send them?</p>	<p>2 mixed youth groups</p> <p>1 group of parents who have teenagers</p> <p>Teachers and educational agents</p>	<p>Venn diagram</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Evaluation matrix</p>
Formal system of education Usefulness Dropping out Discrimination	<p>Is what you learn in school useful? Why do youngsters drop out of school?</p> <p>At what age do they tend to leave school? Why?</p> <p>How do the lives of young people who attend school differ from the lives of those who do not?</p> <p>Who are the poorest? Why?</p> <p>How are children from poor families treated at school? (discrimination, etc.)</p> <p>What are the differences between private and public schools?</p> <p>What can we do to encourage young people to complete their secondary education?</p>	<p>1 group of teenage boys and girls with an uninterrupted education or recently graduated from high school</p> <p>1 group of teenage boys who dropped out or never attended high school</p> <p>1 group of teenage girls</p> <p>Teachers and other educational agents (for interviews)</p>	<p>Focus groups; river of life</p> <p>Trends (dropout rate)</p> <p>Comparative mapping</p> <p>Mapping the school and its environment</p> <p>Individual interviews</p>

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Children under age 7	<p>How are children under age 7 cared for?</p> <p>Who cares for children? Are there people to help care for your children?</p> <p>Are there institutions to help care for your children?</p> <p>Are you familiar with the ICBF program (good and bad aspects)?</p> <p>How do people who do not benefit from ICBF manage?</p> <p>What can be done to improve care for children ages 0–6?</p>	<p>2 groups of parents (organized by the local parent association)</p> <p><i>Madres comunitarias</i> and ICBF officials in the area (for the interviews—to develop specific questions based on the information produced in the groups)</p>	<p>Focus groups</p> <p>Interviews</p>
Education for youths and adults	<p>Are there adult education programs in your community? Who attends? Is there a fee?</p> <p>How useful are these programs?</p>	<p>1 mixed group of women and men</p>	<p>Focus groups</p>

Theme: Education

Stage 2: Validation and prioritization

Megaquestion: What can we do to create educational opportunities?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Identification of proposals to expand educational opportunities for the poor	What can we do to create more educational opportunities in our community/neighborhood? (we as individuals, our local organizations, the city, others)	2 large mixed groups Large mixed group	Working groups Presentation of the work at an assembly and validation; debate forum
Presentation of the “voices of experts” (menu of proposals developed by experts)	N/A	Large mixed group	Assembly/plenary session
Prioritization of proposals	Which are the best proposals and why? What problems are they intended to solve? If you were mayor, what portion of your budget would you earmark for each proposal?	Large mixed group	Simple prioritization Prioritization by pairs Voting

Theme: Education

Stage 3: Analysis of proposals

Megaquestion: How realistic are these proposals?

Subthemes	Key questions	Informants	Techniques
Feasibility of proposals	<p>What are the potential positive effects of the proposal?</p> <p>What are the obstacles to making the proposal feasible?</p> <p>How can public programs be improved to ensure more educational opportunities?</p> <p>How can public programs be improved to increase educational opportunities?</p>	<p>2 mixed groups</p> <p>Local authorities at different levels</p>	<p>Impact and obstacle diagram</p> <p>Evaluation matrix (impact on poverty must be a criterion for analysis)</p> <p>Individual and institutional interviews</p>
Shared responsibility (analysis by levels)	<p>What should each of us do to make the proposal feasible?</p> <p>What could the community, families, and support networks do to improve the way policies are implemented?</p> <p>How can the city's role in applying policies to expand educational opportunities be improved?</p> <p>How can relations with authorities be improved so they will take us into account when designing local policy?</p>	<p>1 youth group</p> <p>1 group of men</p> <p>1 group of women</p> <p>1 group of local authorities and representatives of different institutions</p>	<p>Level diagram</p> <p>Shared-responsibility matrix</p> <p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Institutional interviews</p>

Notes

1. The Voices of the Poor study was published in three volumes: *Can Anyone Hear Us?* (Narayan with others 2000); *Crying Out for Change* (Narayan and others 2000); and *From Many Lands* (Narayan and Petesch 2002). These publications and the “Methodology Guide: Consultations with the Poor” are available at www.worldbank.org/poverty/voices.

2. Latinobarómetro is a survey of public opinion carried out in 17 countries by Latinobarómetro Corporation, to document the views, attitudes, and behaviors of millions of people in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Survey results are published periodically. For additional information see www.latinobarometro.org.

3. For an example of its application in Vietnam, see Shanks and Turk (2003).

4. We are grateful to Deepa Narayan and the World Bank Poverty Reduction Group for the financial and technical support provided for this workshop.



Annex 2

Selection and Characteristics of Sites

The 10 communities in the study were chosen to ensure representation of (1) all main geographic regions of Colombia; that is, Atlantic coast, Pacific coast, southern, central, and eastern regions; (2) rural and urban areas; (3) diverse ethnic backgrounds; and (4) zones with high and low intensity of conflict and violence.

The urban sites included neighborhoods in the cities of Barrancabermeja, Cali, Cartagena, Medellín, and Pasto that are typical of very poor *comunas* in Colombian urban areas. The five cities were selected to represent each of the country's five major regions and diverse urban population sizes, including large, medium, and small cities. Within the cities, selected sites had a high level of poverty. Neighborhood selection was based on a panel discussion between the study team and representatives of an NGO both familiar with the city and involved in social development activities with poor populations in that city. The specific names of the neighborhoods where the fieldwork took place have been omitted to avoid potentially harmful repercussions for their residents. An additional urban site was Altos de Cazucá, a periurban neighborhood in Soacha municipality on the outskirts of Bogotá that hosts a dense population of internally displaced families.

These urban sites are not representative of urban poverty in a statistical sense. From a sociological point of view, these are neighborhoods with chronically poor families; old and recent migrants, including those internally displaced by the armed conflict; and people newly poor due to the economic crisis. From an economic point of view, they have high concentrations of families who derive their livelihood from informal activities, including illegal activities. Altos de Cazucá was selected in order to include a site with a high concentration of families who have been displaced by the armed conflict, and who came from various departments in the country.

The four rural sites were Sanquianga, an Afro-Colombian fishing community on the Pacific coast in Nariño Department; villages in Girón (Santander Department) and Usme (Bogotá Department); and an Indian reserve in northern Cauca Department. The rural sites were selected based on three main criteria: a high level of poverty, geographic and ethnic diversity, and consideration for the security of the field teams. Areas considered to be a high security risk were not included in the study. The four rural communities are populated by peasant families, a considerable percentage of whom are sharecroppers or farmers cultivating very small plots (*minifundio*), fishers (in the case of Sanquianga), or rural wage laborers (*peones*). The Indian reserve was also selected as an indigenous community typical of the northern Cauca. This village enjoys a high level of internal organization.

The following matrix presents data on each site.

Field Sites Matrix

Site	Region	Characteristics	Organizations contacted or consulted	Number of participants	Number of groups	Level of armed conflict	Level of internal organization	Level of organizational presence
Pasto	South	Located in an urban area. Relocated population and informal economy based on recycling, washing clothes, fruit, construction, loading and unloading goods in the marketplace, child care; also robbery. 500 inhabitants.	Junta de Acción Comunal Fundación Social Pasto mayor's office (Municipal Planning Office, Community Development, Department of Social Welfare) Colegio Marco Fidel Suarez Fonema Asociación de Desarrollo Comunitario (ASODEC) Consejo Municipal de la Juventud (CMJ) Pentagrama Musical, Asociación Niño Jesús De Praga	80 total: 26 children 24 youths 20 women 10 men	21 total: 1 child 6 youth 4 women 10 mixed	Low	Low	Medium
Barranca-bermeja	Middle Magdalena	Urban area with some displaced people. Informal economy based on fishing, sand digging, selling contraband gasoline. 3,361 inhabitants.	Comité de participación comunitaria (COPACO) Community Oversight Project funded by Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio (PDPMM)	95 total: 30 children 29 youths 19 women 17 men	8 total: 1 youth 7 mixed	High	Medium	High
Cauca Department	Southwest	Rural area. Indian and peasant population. Subsistence economy based on	Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) Secretaría de Salud Corpotunia	80 total	15 total: 2 youth 1 woman 1 man	High	High	Low

Site	Region	Characteristics	Organizations contacted or consulted	Number of participants	Number of groups	Level of armed conflict	Level of internal organization	Level of organizational presence
Cali	Southwest	cooperatives, <i>mingas</i> , and single crops grown on small plots. 3,100 inhabitants.	Cabildo del Resguardo	80 total	11 mixed	High	Medium	High
			Colegio Agroindustrial La María Community stores Escuela Ciudadana					
Girón	East	Rural area with peasant population. Economy based on extensive farming. 400 inhabitants.	La Asociación Libertad	95 total	5 total: 1 youth 1 child 3 mixed	Low	Low	Low
			Junta de Acción Comunal					
			Mafum (Mujeres Activas por un Futuro Mejor)					
			Centro de Desarrollo Comunitario					
			Organización de Viviendas de Quintas del Sol					
			Federación Nacional de Vivenda Popular (Fenavip)					
			Doctors Without Borders					
			Casa de Justicia de Aguablanca					
			Procali					
			La Secretaría de Gobierno					
			Junta de Acción Comunal					
			Junta de Acción Comunal					

Site	Region	Characteristics	Organizations contacted or consulted	Number of participants	Number of groups	Level of armed conflict	Level of internal organization	Level of organizational presence
Usme	Capital district	Rural area, peasant population farming very small plots. 700 inhabitants.	Junta de Acción Comunal	97 total: 30 children 17 youths 35 women 15 men	13 total: 1 child 1 youth 4 women 2 men 5 mixed	Low	Low	Low
Medellín	West	Urban area. Population made up of formerly displaced people. Informal economy based on activities such as sidewalk vending, recycling, prostitution, and striptease. 4,000 inhabitants.	Corporación Picacho con Futuro Fundación Social Federación Antioqueña de ONG Fundación Concreto Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar Plan Local Mesa Barrial Junta de Acción Comunal Colegio Jesus María Vallejo Family Affairs Commissioner Universidad de Antioquia Juntas de Acción Comunal in nearby neighborhoods <i>Madres comunitarias</i> as a source of information on education and employment	86 total: 25 children 24 youths 37 adults	20 total: 2 youth 1 child 1 woman 1 man 15 mixed	High presence of paramilitary forces/no clashes	Low	Medium

Site	Region	Characteristics	Organizations contacted or consulted	Number of participants	Number of groups	Level of armed conflict	Level of internal organization	Level of organizational presence
Cartagena	Caribbean coast	Urban area. Informal economy. 3,400 inhabitants.	Corporación Convergencia Corporación Sinergia Cartagena mayor's office	134 total: 45 children 24 youths 50 women 15 men	17 total: 2 children 3 youth 6 women 3 men 3 mixed	Medium	Medium	Low
Altos de Cazucá	Central	Urban area. Population made up of displaced people. Informal economy, small merchants. 45,000 inhabitants.	Corporación para la Educación el Desarrollo y la Paz (CEDEPAZ) Fundación para la Educación y el Desarrollo (FEDES) Visión Mundial Colegio María Auxiliadora de Soacha SOS Aldea de Niños Doctors Without Borders Proyecto Granmeen Colombia	64 total: 13 children 13 youths 38 adults	9 total: 1 child 1 youth 2 women 1 man 4 mixed	Medium	Low	High
Sanquianga	Pacific coast	Rural area. Afro-Colombian population. Economy based on extraction of natural resources: fishing, collecting shellfish from mangrove swamps, local trading, farming. 200,000 inhabitants.	Organización CHONAPI; Organización Ecológica y Ambiental Chontaduro Naidí y Piangua Charco mayor's office World Wildlife Fund Asesoría para el Desarrollo (ASDES) Sanquianga National Park Ministry of the Environment Universidad Javeriana	131 total: 7 children 33 youths 91 adults	25 total: 2 youths 4 women 3 men 16 mixed	Medium	Medium	Low



THE WORLD BANK

1818 H Street, NW

Washington, D.C. 20433 USA

Telephone: 202 473 1000

Facsimile: 202 477 6391

Internet: www.worldbank.org

E-mail: feedback@worldbank.org

“By giving voice to 941 poor and marginalized people, and by convening them to discuss work and employment, violence and insecurity, and education and opportunities, the authors make a significant contribution toward understanding issues of central importance to the poor. How fruitful to exchange roles! This work enables poverty experts to learn from non-experts, who convey their experiences in a way that enriches all of us. How important it is also to talk — not about poverty in general — but about different types of poverty in precise and clear contexts. This is a timely contribution.”

Jorge Hernan Cárdenas
Executive Director, Corona Foundation

“Through studies of this type, we move from a cold analysis of statistics on poverty to an understanding of the problem from the perspective of those who have to face it daily. What do poor people truly need, aspire to, and feel? What are their relationships with the state, and how do they hope the government will help them? For policymakers who design policies to fight poverty, the answers to these and other questions can be found in this impressive analysis.”

Jairo Nuñez
Vice Minister, Ministry of Social Protection, Colombia

“This useful and insightful study will help the World Bank in Colombia to better understand the anguish and uncertainties of those it serves. *Voices of the Poor in Colombia: Strengthening Livelihoods, Families, and Communities* offers heartfelt testimony to the less visible yet very real needs that dramatically affect the daily lives of the poor. This study will help to guide the financing of Colombia’s social policies and to bridge the gap between state policies and the priorities of the most vulnerable and dispossessed members of society.”

Alberto Chueca-Mora
The World Bank, Colombia Country Manager



ISBN 0-8213-5802-2