

COLOMBIA – THE DRUG WARS

Geography/ERS 306



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Columbia – The Drug Wars! This website has been constructed as a part of a class project for Geography and Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo. Our intentions are to present the various aspects and impacts of the Colombian drug industry. In order to give an informative view on the Colombian drug industry we have chosen to look at five aspects surrounding this topic, which include: Cultivation, eradication side effects, militias, urban streets and gender issues. Through examining economic, environmental, gender and various other issues that pertain to each of these subtopics, we hope to give you a broader perspective and a better understanding of the Colombian drug industry and its impacts on the country itself. Feel free to browse the site and gather information. Enjoy!

CULTIVATION

Economic Figures Regarding the Colombian Drug Trade

Colombia is one of the major players on the international illegal drug market. The nation's drug industry is one of the most comprehensive and diversified drug industries in the world. Colombia single-handedly produces 75% of the global supply of cocaine, almost 40% of marijuana imports to the United States and 2% of the global heroin supply (U.S. Department of State 2001). Consequently, the illegal drug trade has had a major impact on the Colombian economy.

Although the exact figures of the illegal drug trade are hard to trace, it is estimated that the Colombian economy receives between \$7.5 and \$17.6 billion annually from the illegal drug trade. This approximation was founded on assumption that less than 10% of earnings from the illegal drug trade are reported to the Colombian government each year (Steiner 1998). In reality, it is speculated that this industry could gross amounts up to \$50 billion per annum (Kawell 2002). Based on this estimate, the illegal drug industry in Colombia could account for up to 20% of the nations total GDP for the year 2002. However, for the purposes of this paper, the previous estimate range of \$7.5 and \$17.6 billion will be used.

The Colombian economy relies heavily on its principal exports of Oil and Coffee. In 1999 the country exported \$3.5 billion in oil, making it the nation's top legitimate export. Coffee exports in 1999 accounted for approximately \$1.4 billion, making coffee the second highest exported product in Colombia (Bagley 2001). Given these figures, the scale of the drug industry becomes evident. The drug industry exceeds the top legitimate export in Colombia, and is more than six times the size of coffee exports.

When examining Colombian drug exports more closely, it becomes apparent that the Colombian drug industry relies heavily on cocaine. Between the years of 1992 and 1994, exports of marijuana, heroin and cocaine were shown to be: \$125 million, \$290 million and \$2.9 billion respectively (Steiner 1998). Since this time frame, the cultivation of cocaine regions of Colombia has been steadily increasing. In 1992, 45 hectares of cocaine were present, this figure rose to 132 hectares in 2000, excluding crops that were eradicated (Vedpuriswar 2003). Additionally, the cocaine that is cultivated in Colombia has a significant impact on the US and European markets. 80% of the cocaine consumed in the US and Europe has been cultivated in Colombia (Vedpuriswar 2003). Hundreds of tones of cocaine are shipped to these destinations, providing a stable economy for the drug market to thrive on. Such effects have caused cocaine to become the predominant drug of the Colombian drug industry.

Prior to 1995, Colombia principally imported coca paste, which is a semi-processed element needed to produce cocaine. These imports came primarily from Bolivia and Peru and ranged from 84 to 724 tones (Steiner, 1998). However, in the mid 90's, US led drug eradication programs decreased the import volume of coca paste from Bolivia and Peru to Colombia. The effects of these efforts caused Colombia to become the largest coca-producing nation in the world (Kawell, 2002). Consequently, Colombia has now become a completely self-sufficient and self-reliant cocaine-producing nation.

Such effects have had an impact on Colombia's labour force. Estimates state that the drug industry accounts for 3% (approximately 300,000 people) of Colombia's labour force. This translates roughly to 7% of Colombia's agricultural labour force, where coffee farming sits around 12% (Steiner 1998). Additionally, in some rural areas of Colombia, drug cultivation accounts for up to half of all employment.

The History of Drug Cultivation in Colombia

The history of drug cultivation in Colombia is attributed to a variety of developments, with a particular focus on political involvement. Through an analysis of these developments along with a look at the progression of the largest drug cultivated in Colombia, a clear understanding of the history of drug cultivation can be obtained.

Historically, the coffee industry accounted for a significant part of the Colombian economy. In 1970 the coffee industry accounted for 50% of the total legal exports (Frank, J. 2003). However, the past few years have transformed economic dominance away from the coffee industry and towards the drug industry. Significant environmental

degradation resulted from this transformation. For example, ancient forests were cleared in hope to transform the bare land into fertile soils for the growing of cash crops that are supported by the drug industry. Today the coffee industry accounts for a mere 7% of legal exports, due to the thriving market of drug cultivation (Frank, J. 2003).

Gender division may help to explain the increased market for drug cultivation in Colombia. Men demarcate the territory in their mobilization for production, while women are more concerned with the socialization process of cultural practices and values (Grueso 2002). For this reason, women have little control over the transformation of crop productions. Consequently, drug cultivation has had a major impact on the Colombian export economy and on the Colombian landscape.

The historical developments of drug cultivation have been greatly influenced by the politically unstable structure found in Colombia. To begin with, political unrest has been predominant for several years in Colombia resulting in a constant replacement of political power. Former President Ernesto Samper took a \$6 million bribe to allow drug trafficking to continue as usual (Rise of Democracy in South America 2003). In addition, women are placed into gender identity roles that reinforce low leadership capacity and intellectual potentials (Grueso 2002). This allows men to be the dominant force in the political affairs that occur in Colombia. Various political imbalances in Colombia present a great deal of internal pressures on the decisions of various leaders.

International political events have also had an impact on drug cultivation in Colombia. The collapse of the Wall in Europe opened a variety of internal borders offering various prospects for powerful drug regimes. For example, alliances between the Italian, Colombian and Chinese mafias developed (The Drug Trade 2003). As the history of drug cultivation in Colombia is based on anti-government groups (i.e. FARC), a strengthening of these mafias strengthened the framework for the drug trade.

Cultivated Narcotics of Colombia

Colombia and the countries that surround it provide the location where a majority of the drugs and narcotics are grown and processed before being exported into the northern hemisphere and around the world. Colombia is responsible for the growing and production of a number of different types of narcotics, but is a major exporter of two major types of narcotics, cocaine and opium. Each of these types of narcotics is derived from organic sources that are cultivated in projects that are active across the tropical landscape. The cultivation projects are often small

scale, to keep the projects secret to ensure that the project is protected from the officials and anti-drug agents of Colombia. Each of the different exported narcotics require a different type of growing condition to ensure that the crop is successful, as a failed crop will bring no profit to the grower.

The first type of narcotic that is cultivated in Colombia is cocaine, which is a product of the coca plant. There are over 200 forms of *Erythroxylum* that grow in the western hemisphere (Schaffer 1993). Only 17 out of the 200 have the ability to be utilized for the production of cocaine. In South America, there is active cultivation of only 2 species out of the 17, as the plants that are cultivated are higher in the active chemical than the other species (Schaffer 1993). The two species of coca plant that are cultivated in Colombia are *novogranatense* var. *truxillense* and *novogranatense* var. *novogranatense*. Each of these coca plants requires different types of growing conditions. The species *novogranatense* var. *novogranatense* is grown in dryer regions of Colombia, and at lower elevations (Schaffer 1993). The second species of coca plant that is found in Colombia is *novogranatense* var. *truxillense* is grown at a higher elevation than the other species, reaching elevations of up to 4,950ft.

The cultivation of coca plants usually begins by the grower clearing the land through the traditional method of slash and burn. Once the land has been cleared, the grower places the seedlings in rows for access to the plants during harvest. The plants are kept at a height of 3 to six feet. The proper time for harvesting of the coca leaf occurs when the leaves take on a tint of yellow and crack when bent (Schaffer 1993). There are three main steps for the production of cocaine, the production of coca paste in a *pozo*, or cocaine pit where the leaves are “stomped” resulting in a thick paste. The second stage involves concentrating the active cocaine part of the paste, by the use of chemicals. The final stage involves converting the concentrated material into a street ready product that can be packaged and transported.

The second plant type grown in Colombia is the poppy, which can be converted into narcotics such as opium and heroin. There are many different domestic types of poppy plants, but only the opium poppy plant is capable of producing opium. When close to maturity, the poppy plant produces a red to orange flower that surrounds a fleshy capsule or pod. When the poppy plant has reached maturity the flower will shed its petals leaving the capsule. The grower knows that once the flower has lost its bright petals it is capable of producing opium gum. Harvest of opium from the plant is very labour intensive, and requires that the harvester manually treat each plant. The harvester cuts the surface of the capsule with a knife, which allows the gum that is contained inside poppy to seep out (CIA 2003). The next day the gum from the surface of the capsule is scraped off using a tool and then placed in banana leaves or into plastic where it is

stored until it is picked up. The opium gum is transported to a refinery where it is converted into morphine, an intermediate product. Morphine is pressed into bricks where it is then converted into heroin; refinement produces a product that is 90% pure. Through cost-saving diluting techniques, the purity of the morphine is reduced to the point where the typical product on the North American market is 40% pure (CIA 2003).

ERADICATION SIDE EFFECTS

Economic Impacts of Drug Crop Eradication

Based on demographic statistics, Colombia's social and economic structure can clearly be classified as fragile, bordering on Third-World status. With an estimated population of over 41 million in 2003, a growth rate of 1.56%, and a slightly negative migration trend, Colombia appears to be growing slowly at best (Central Intelligence Agency 2003). Coupled with the demographic data is a bleak economic framework that does not appear to support drug crop eradication measures. Stagnant economic growth, high unemployment, and a strained health care system all appear to contribute to the high popularity of illegal drug cultivation as a source of income, and the lack of substantial success of varying eradication programs. Before discussing the economic effects of eradication programs, it is important to note that economic estimates regarding the contribution of drug crop cultivation to the national GDP are highly variable, and without concrete statistical information, conclusions regarding the impact of eradication programs are uncertain at best. There are, however, a number of important statistics on which researchers appear to agree.

Ignoring the extreme estimates, most researchers assume that illegal drug production and cultivation accounts for between 3% and 7% of Colombia's total GDP (Moreno-Sanchez et al. 2003; Steiner 1998). Given Colombia's total GDP of \$251.6 billion, the numbers result in a dollar amount between \$7.5 and \$17.6 billion annually from illegal drug production. The financial revenue, however, is unequally distributed in Colombian society, with much if not all going to a few individuals and their families. The most renowned example is Pablo Escobar, a cartel leader, whose fortunes in 1989 were ranked seventh in the world by Forbes magazine (Morris 2003). In addition to this problem, the appeal of illegal drug cultivation to many Colombian farmers is due to the same market forces that govern any legal crop.

As with any product, principles of supply and demand dictate production; where there is high demand, supply will either increase, or the price will rise. Over the past few decades, demand centred in the United States has ensured that production levels in and around Colombia remained the same despite eradication efforts (Steiner 1998). Most researchers agree that production varies between Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, as each country strengthens or diminishes its eradication programs (Moreno-Sanchez et al. 2003). A high, constant demand for illegal drugs such as cocaine has allowed owners of cultivation areas to raise or lower their standard wages according to market forces, which in turn appeals to the impoverished and

unemployed Colombian labour force. Based on these accepted facts, eradication programs have employed a number of strategies, the most recent attempt being “Plan Colombia” in 1999.

In 1999, the United States in cooperation with the Colombian government launched an initiative called “Plan Colombia”, which involved a U.S. donation of approximately \$1 billion dollars in anti-narcotics aid, and an additional sum of \$300 million to offset the negative economic impacts (Morris 2003). This ineffective attempt at eradication is typical of most recent measures to curb the supply of drugs from Colombia. Simply put, as the supply of coca and cocaine diminishes, the demand remains the same, resulting in an increase in street prices, which makes production more appealing to farmers, despite the increased risks it carries. In economic terms, if supply equals demand, a fixed price is set; if supply is half of demand, the price then doubles. This has the opposite effect in that it encourages additional production elsewhere in Colombia, or in the nearby countries of Peru and Bolivia. Moreover, the financial commitment from both the United States and Colombia results in a loss of financial assets that are necessary given both countries’ social situation.

In North America, a constant demand for illegal drugs will result in an increase in crime and negative health issues, assuming that eradication measures are successful. The corresponding problems, including an increase in infectious diseases, crime, poverty, and homelessness, will strain the existing judicial and health care systems (Anderson 2001). With the capital loss of over \$1 billion to Colombia, the United States will need to search elsewhere for the assets needed to improve both systems in preparation for the sudden drop in supply. As an alternative, North America should consider higher penalties for drug users in an effort to curb demand. If the costs of using drugs are high enough, demand in the United States, which currently accounts for roughly 80% of global demand for cocaine, will decline, making production in Colombia less lucrative and appealing (Steiner 1998). Only then can alternatives such as replacement crops be effectively considered.

As stated earlier, Colombia’s population suffers from high poverty and high unemployment, often attributed to a decline in demand for oil and coffee, two central products in the nation’s economy (Central Intelligence Agency 2003). As eradication measures intensify in both cost and effort, unemployment will increase, resulting in a potential migration of labour. Faced with an uncertain future, it is conceivable that men, traditionally the source of income for the family, will begin to migrate toward the larger metropolitan areas in search of jobs. This will result in a shift within the family system, as women are abandoned either temporarily or permanently and must provide for their family themselves. Furthermore, the high financial cost of eradication measures will result in less investment into social services such as health care and

unemployment insurance, further increasing the potential burden on women in Colombian society.

Social Impacts of Drug Crop Eradication

Colombia is the world's largest supplier of cocaine with an estimated 80,000 people involved in the drug's cultivation (McLean, 2003). The country is also home to much drug crop related violence. "The prevalence of illegal drugs, high crime rates, and the violent behaviour of its guerrillas have been a common denominator of Colombia's landscape since the 1950s" (Villamizar, 2003). One social consequence of this violence is the amount of kidnappings. Allegedly over 50% of the world's kidnappings have taken place in Colombia (Villamizar, 2003). Also, over 6,000 people were killed as a result of "socio-political-economic" violence (Villamizar, 2003). Latin Americans are aware that for their countries the overall costs of the drug trade—in violence, corruption and rising drug consumption—outweigh any economic benefits and therefore are less hostile towards the U.S.'s drug war (The Economist, 2001, Issue 359). Part of the reason for all the violence is the lack of a solid governmental institution. However, Alvaro Uribe, Colombia's president, has made containing the country's illegal armies a top priority (The Economist, 2002). Colombia and the United States, the latter of which has a vested interest in illegal drug supply, agree that fighting drugs is an integral part of abolishing the groups. Mr. Uribe has said "if we don't destroy drugs, they will destroy our democracy..." (The Economist, 2002). Abolishing the drug trade would allow the Colombian society to participate in the Global Economy in a more ethical manner. Yet the "Latin America's are aware that for their countries the overall costs of the drug trade – in violence, corruption and rising drug consumption outweigh any economic benefit" (The Economist, 2001, Issue 359).

Though riding Colombia of its drug crops would be beneficial to society, forcing the crops out can be very detrimental. There are three parts to forced eradication: eradicate the crop, shut down the processing stations, and encourage alternate development (The Economist, 2001, Issue 359). Problems arise with each of these parts. The rush to eradicate creates conditions for conflict (The Economist, 1998) and spraying causes many social consequences apart from destroying the environment and human health. Spraying crops with pesticides is done without first negotiating with Colombian citizens (The Economist, 2001, Issue 360) leaving them to feel powerless of their own property. However, U.S. officials insist that spraying is the only way because of the scale of Colombia's crops (The Economist, 2001, Issue 360). Since guerrillas and paramilitary groups benefit from cocaine production, the government is prejudiced in abortive peace talks with these groups, namely the FARC (The Economist, 2002) when it allows for aerial

spraying to take place. This leads to more violence by the groups (The Economist, 2001, Issue 360) as they act out against government, mostly U.S. influenced, decisions. Another problem with forced eradication is that it is very difficult to tell if it is working. It remains very difficult to “watch” where the cocaine crops are being grown despite new satellite monitoring technologies (The Economist 1998). Within Colombia, farmers and their families will migrate either to the poor, but more developed, urban areas in search of wealth (The Economist, 1998) or they will migrate deep within the forests (The Economist, 2001, Issue 360) in order to hide their illegal crops. Even if the Colombian supply of cocaine is completely eradicated, other countries will meet the demand moving the U.S.’s war on drugs to other parts of South America. Finally, forced eradication will cause more poverty. As shown in Bolivia, farmers became unemployed as a result of forced eradication and swelled protests against their government (The Economist, 2001, Issue 359). Also, the Latin Americas are wary of participating in programs like Plan Colombia in which \$1.3 billion in American aid would be used to end drug cultivation (Thomas, 1996). This could mean large amounts of foreign debt in the future. In terms of society, this translates to an even longer lag time before development can begin. Therefore, forced eradication will not benefit the Colombian society nor will it make a great difference in terms of the supply of cocaine.

Apart from cutting the demand, encouraging voluntary eradication is the only way to remedy the issue of drug crops in Colombia. Cocaine will continue to be cultivated as long as it is the most lucrative crop. For example, when the price of coffee decreased, cocaine cultivation increased as farmers switched to the crop that would create the most revenue. This proves that it is not for the sake of growing cocaine that farmers grow it, but for the sake of wealth.

Approximately “35, 000 peasant farmers...signed pacts agreeing to pull up their coca bushes within 12 months in return for government aid”(The Economist, 2002). Many farmers complied with the agreement, however, there were many who did not as a result of the delay in receiving the financial aid. In terms of voluntary eradication and the drug-associated violence, “...all the guerrilla groups...are the result of the lack of political participation, poor social conditions, and undemocratic procedures...” (Villamizar, 2003). A strong central government is needed in Colombia which can only establish itself on its own and without U.S. interjections. Voluntary eradication helps the social conditions by leading residents to believe in the state again (The Economist, 2002). Finally, Colombia is capable of making its social conditions better as “it has a more educated population in the workforce that most other Latin American countries, with more women working outside the home than elsewhere in the region” (Villamizar, 2003).

Indigenous Impacts of Drug Crop Eradication

The coca plant has long been an integral part of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous cultures and today it serves as a sign of Indigenous identity and also as a link between Indigenous peoples and their ancestors. Coca has played and continues to play an important social, sacred, and medicinal role. Coca eradication is a very serious threat to the integrity and survival of Indigenous peoples and their cultures in Colombia. Eradication programs do not respect the importance of the coca plant in Indigenous culture, and consequently have profound negative impacts on the very fabric of Indigenous culture, worldview, and way of life. Indigenous peoples in Colombia (particularly women and children) have also suffered from displacement, increased violence, and cultural degradation. Many Indigenous leaders believe that coca eradication is really about usurping Indigenous lands for development activities.

The coca plant has many social, spiritual, and medicinal aspects. In a social context, coca is exchanged as a sign of brotherhood when two Indigenous men meet (Zalabata 2001). Men are the only members of society who are allowed to carry it because the coca plant (often referred to as “Mama Coca”) is the only “feminine” plant in the Arhuaca worldview, and therefore men carry it to reinforce notions of gender complementarity (Zalabata 2001). Among men, use of the coca plant is regulated through the cycle of human development – men can only carry and consume it after a certain age (Zalabata 2001).

In terms of spiritual uses, the coca leaf is one of the principle ceremonial items used in ritual offerings to deities, and it is sacred in all stages of its existence (from seed to plant) (Gelles 1985; Zalabata 2001). It is also used for divination purposes and for protection against spirits (Gelles 1985). Coca was originally offered to traditional spirits, and after colonization was also offered to Catholic saints (Hansis 1997).

Medicinally, coca is used as painkiller and local anaesthetic, and is also used to alleviate altitude sickness (Hanna 1974; Montaña 2003). It can also be used as a mild stimulant to suppress hunger and fatigue (Hansis 1997). When used alone, the coca plant provides roughly 40 remedies to illnesses, and 30 more when used in combination with other plants (Healy 1985). Coca is also a source of vitamins A and C, and also protein (Montaña 2003).

Traditional livelihoods and uses of the coca plant have been negatively impacted by coca eradication programs, which have led to a large displacement of Indigenous peoples. This results in alienation from their traditional lands and cultures, a loss of identity, and social disruption. Indigenous peoples in Colombia, who number roughly 800,000 (Walcott 2003), have been

threatened by both mass coca cultivation and eradication since the coca 'boom' in the 1970s, when non-Indigenous Colombians began flocking to the Colombian frontier to cultivate coca, bringing increased colonization and violence to Indigenous territories (Edeli & Richardson, 2003). With aerial spraying, Indigenous territories are further infringed upon, since for every acre sprayed, coca growers cut down three more acres of rainforest, and this rainforest is largely Indigenous territory (Walcott 2003). Aerial spraying also threatens the Indigenous food base, as they have seen their crops devastated and their animals die, forcing them to migrate to the cities to survive (Kosec 2003). In the last 5 years, 150,000 people have been displaced across the Colombian Amazon years (Fletcher 2003) and 40,000 Indigenous people were displaced in the south of Colombia due to coca growing operations in 2001-2002 (Zalabata 2001). Colombia has the third-largest displaced population in the world, the majority of whom are Indigenous persons and Afro-Colombians (Kosec 2003).

With the rise in cash cropping of the coca plant and the subsequent aerial spraying came the influences of many armed groups with conflicting and competing interests and ideologies. Armed groups such as the army and the paramilitary now increasingly terrorize Indigenous lands, and 80% of all conflict in Colombia is fought in Indigenous territories (Edeli & Richardson 2003).

The FARC often coerces Indigenous communities into building access roads and clearing jungle for future coca plantations (Richardson 2003). In addition, it is very common for groups such as the FARC (and also the army) to recruit Indigenous youths, 6,000 of whom have joined FARC to date (Edeli & Richardson 2003). Paramilitaries offer 800,000 Colombian pesos (roughly \$400 USD) per month for Indigenous youths to join the FARC, and the offer is usually accepted due to poverty and social dislocation (Edeli & Richardson 2003).

Coca eradication programs disproportionately affect women. Indigenous women are largely responsible for the transmission of cultural values to future generations (Kosec 2003), thus a threat to women constitutes a very real threat to the survival of Indigenous culture. When Indigenous families are displaced, women cannot raise their children in the traditions of their culture. Also, because female social roles centre on the home, women are hardest hit by physical and cultural displacement since their social identity is destroyed (Kosec 2003). Women constitute 55% of all displaced people in Colombia, with 50% of these women being the heads of families and nearly 60% of displaced women having no job or source of income (Kosec 2003).

The tension between drug crop cultivation and eradication efforts also has many serious physical dangers for women. As a consequence of coca production, eradication, and the armed factions that go with these activities, women are increasingly being raped or kidnapped and taken to cities to be forced into prostitution (Kosec 2003). Also, Indigenous women who remain in their villages are often punished for actions taken by male relatives, such as sympathizing with opposing factions (Kosec 2003). Poverty drives many Indigenous women to be drug runners and they are often apprehended by authorities (Kosec 2003).

Although government officials cite social stability and peace as the motivations for Plan Colombia, Armando Valbuena, president of the National Colombian Indigenous Organization, thinks otherwise. He said: "The intention of Plan Colombia is not to eradicate coca, it is to eradicate the Indians for being inviable [sic], to eradicate the Indians for being against development, to eradicate the Indians because otherwise they would have to consult us" (Edeli & Richardson 2003). Indeed many Indigenous leaders believe that Plan Colombia is more about clearing the way for oil development than eradicating drug crops. The Putumayo region (which produces nearly half of all Colombian coca) has already been divided and leased to 28 oil companies (Edeli & Richardson 2003; Richardson 2003). Indigenous lands are seen as a barrier to the various competing interests in the drug war (i.e. the army and the FARC) because they are legal entities that are unavailable for sale or rent and that are governed by an Indigenous authority (Fletcher, 2003).

Environmental Impacts of Drug Crop Eradication

Drug eradication in Colombia takes place largely in the form of the aerial spraying of glyphosate, which is a non-discriminate pesticide and herbicide. Glyphosate kills not only coca but also anything it lands on. Obvious consequences are the loss of legal crops and natural vegetation. Reports of similar eradication efforts in Guatemala and Southeast Asia found serious damage to bean, tomato, corn, and coffee crops, as well as livestock wastage, as a result of the chemical (Nivea 1993). Furthermore, there is a loss of insects that occur naturally in the ecosystem, which are essential for pollination, decomposition, and regeneration. According to a chemical fact sheet in the *Journal of Pesticide Reform*, this form of treatment has, "reduced populations of beneficial insects, birds, and small mammals by destroying vegetation on which they depend for food and shelter" (Cox 2003). Plants and insects exist in symbiosis: when plants are killed, insects are reduced, and when insects are reduced, more plants are lost. Adding to this is the finding that glyphosate results in reduced growth of nitrogen fixing bacteria, increasing the susceptibility of plants to disease (Cox 2003).

This loss of harvest, coupled with the propensity for glyphosate to remain in the soil for a year or more after just one spraying (Information Ventures 2004) has meant that local farmers have had to abandon their fields and turn to the forests in search of new farmland. The Mennonite Church of Canada's peace program in Colombia writes that, "Farmers have tried unsuccessfully to replant on fumigated land. A local contact reported that corn started to grow, then shriveled and died" (MCCanada 2004). This results in increased deforestation, soil contamination and erosion, and an increased area that is vulnerable to further glyphosate spraying. Increased sedimentation due to soil erosion reduces water quality and increases turbidity, which may negatively alter fish habitat. Moreover, deforestation results in a loss of habitat for wildlife already directly affected by the chemical.

According to a fact sheet prepared for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, glyphosate can enter aquatic ecosystems through spray drift and surface run-off (Information Ventures 2004). Once there, it is not believed to bioaccumulate but has not yet been tested for chronic effects on aquatic animals. Glyphosate may be moderately toxic to freshwater fish and aquatic invertebrate animals and it may be hazardous to endangered species if sprayed in their habitat (Information Ventures 2004). The Mennonite peace program also observes that "water is contaminated, fish are dead in aquaculture ponds, and livestock and small animals died" (MCCanada 2004).

Glyphosate has been used for decades in the United States and is among the most commonly used pesticides by volume (EPA 2004). The U.S. Congress, however, has set maximum contamination levels and water is tested for glyphosate and managed every three months. Emergency and contingency plans are in place in case of contamination (EPA 2003). Such scientific testing and high monitoring standards are not present in Colombia, given that the resources are simply not available in many cases. Corpo Amazonia, an environmental organization funded by the Colombian government, has identified the need for microbiological soil and water testing but the current social context makes technical documentation dangerous (MCCanada 2004). Without documentation there are no legal grounds for health complaints or accountability.

Drug eradication has resulted in the depletion of natural resources and a loss of biodiversity, putting a strain on natural ecosystems and limiting their ability to recover from further stresses such as effects of the armed conflict taking place in Colombia for decades. As Jeffrey McNeely argues, "Biodiversity-related problems such as desertification, soil erosion, deforestation, and water scarcity reduce the potential to grow food, worsen health effects, and

diminish life support capacity, contributing to civil conflict and increasing the likelihood of war” (McNeely 2003).

Since virtually all production of cocaine and heroine in Colombia is destined for foreign markets (Nivea 1993), aerial spraying unjustly burdens the Colombian environment and people with its consequences. Further, reports show that production and exportation of plant drugs have actually increased since eradication programs began (Nivea 1993). In effect, increased spraying has worked to increase the reliance of local farmers on drug crops for their survival. Increased production increases the need for eradication in some form and the Colombian environment is therefore increasingly put at risk. In short, current forms of drug eradication in Colombia are negatively impacting the environment, while ineffectively working to reduce drug production.

Health Impacts of Drug Crop Eradication

The aerial spraying of glyphosate has caused much controversy among the Colombian people exposed to the chemical. The people exposed to the herbicide have complained of skin problems, including ulcers and sores; abdominal pain; diarrhea; gastrointestinal infections; acute respiratory infection; and conjunctivitis (Walcott 2003). However, in a report for the U.S. State Department, the Agricultural Secretary “reported that health risks associated with the herbicide were minimal” (Walcott 2003), while in that same report the Environmental Protection Agency found a “potential risk of acute eye toxicity from the particular formula used in Colombia” (Walcott 2003). It is interesting to note that the herbicide used in Colombia, Roundup SL, has not been approved for agricultural use in the U.S. (Walcott 2003). Furthermore, because of national security issues, the exact formula of surfactant and glyphosate used in Colombia has not been disclosed and it has not been possible to test the potential side effects of the formula (Walcott 2003). However, the herbicide in combination with the surfactant has been classified as a chemical that causes irreversible eye damage (Walcott 2003).

In the long term, exposure to glyphosate may result in an increased risk for non-Hodgkins lymphoma (Barrow 2000). However, because relatively few studies have found any link between cancer and glyphosate, the entire area needs further and more in-depth research is needed before anything decisive can be said (Barrow 2000). Research done by the Environmental Protection Agency on rats fed diets containing glyphosate for two years showed an increase in tumours, although the tumours did not become cancerous. As a result, the Environmental Protection Agency has stated that glyphosate “is not believed to cause cancer because it does not cause cancer in laboratory animals” (National Pesticide Telecommunications Network 2000).

There is some evidence to suggest that exposure to very high levels of glyphosate in pregnant women may cause birth defects in their children. In studies done by the Environmental Protection Agency, pregnant rats that were exposed to the highest dose through a feeding tube, and these rats showed decreased body weight gains and more deaths, while their children had lower body weights and an increased number of malformations (National Pesticide Telecommunications Network 2000).

Because of aerial spraying, the herbicide often finds its way onto legitimate crops and into bodies of water. Commercial Roundup warns that people should wait twenty-one days before eating any fruit around which Roundup has been sprayed (Walcott 2003). Furthermore, because of drifting herbicide, many coca crops are being missed while legitimate ones are being killed (Walcott 2003). This inaccurate form of herbicide deployment is putting the health of many people and their livelihoods at risk.

The gender issues associated with the health risks of the coca eradication program in Colombia arise from the destruction of legitimate crops, birth defects, and the short-term health effects. Children with birth defects or lower body weights are often more susceptible to illness. When children are at home, as opposed to school or work, because they are ill from the side effects of being exposed to glyphosate while in their mother's womb or from exposure in their environment, then they are a time burden upon their mothers, who are consequently not able to work because they must look after their sick children.

MILITIAS

Origins of Colombian Militia

An Era of Violence

The Era of Violence was from the time period of 1948 to 1958. This era began as a result of the assassination of President Gaitan on April 9th, 1948 in Bogotá (Bergquist 1992). The assassination marked the start of a civil war called "La Violencia", which took the lives of an estimated 180,000 Colombians before it subsided in 1958 (Bergquist 1992). The war was between moderate liberal supporters and conservatives. After the murder of Gaitán, crowds of his supporters took control of downtown Bogotá. This act resulted in the burning of churches and other symbols of Conservative power (Bergquist 1992). Government forces quickly re-established control of urban areas in Bogotá. As a result the Liberal opposition soon organized guerrilla bands in the countryside. Come the end of the civil war, leaders of the Liberal and

Conservative parties then arrived at an agreement to share all government offices equally and alternate the presidency between them for a period of 12 years (Bergquist 1992). This pact was known as the National Front. It was approved on December 1, 1957, and early in 1958 it was extended to 16 years. (Bergquist 1992). The National Front temporarily brought an end to the large-scale violence in Colombia.

The New Era of Violence

In 1974 there was a re-emergence of competitive elections as the National Front ended (Wilson 2001). Traditional parties of Colombian politics continued to dominate. Both Liberal and Conservative parties had to struggle with the growing power of guerrilla forces.

Leftist Guerrillas

The goal of the leftist guerrillas was to overthrow the government and create a socialist regime (Bergquist 1992). With communism being such a strong political belief that the time, leftist parties had strong support from socialist countries such as the former Soviet Union (Bergquist 1992). In 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union, where large amounts of funding came from, the leftist guerrilla had to find new means to support their revolution. Goals of these groups soon became unclear and criminal acts soon took a forefront for the leftist guerrillas (Webber 2004). Such acts to fund their cause included kidnapping, extortion, and protecting producers, processors, and traffickers of illegal drugs (Thourmi 1995). The most predominate leftist guerrilla groups was the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) (Webber 2004). FARC was created in 1964 and was originally a political movement group (Webber 2004). At the beginning of this group's formation, drugs were not a part of this group's mandate. The other large leftist group, which comprised of 5000 members, was the Ejército De Liberación Nacional (ELN, Army of National Liberation) (Webber 2004). This violent group was in support of nationalising the Colombian oil industry. In fact they really wanted a safe haven for their own petroleum complex (Barrancabermeja) and in trying to do so they would continually blow up the countries most important oil pipelines (Webber 2004). There has been negotiating between these leftist groups and the government but all peaceful acts have broken down and little has been accomplished to restore peace.

Right-Winged Guerrillas

As the Leftist guerrilla's grew the government was unable to defeat them. This gave rise to a new guerrilla force called the Paramilitary Right (Bergquist 1992). The government initially encouraged right-wing groups as a way to protect rural communities from the leftist guerrilla's. Larger landowners, who were newly rich from the drug trade, hired these paramilitary groups to protect their land and drug crops from the leftist guerrilla's (Zamorano 2004). The main right-wing group was the Autodefensas Unidas De Colombia (AUC, The United Self Defence Groups of Colombia) (Zamorano 2004). The AUC army's chiefly operated out of key Cocaine and Heroine regions in Colombia (Zamorano 2004). These right-wing paramilitary groups rarely confront the guerrillas directly. Instead, they seek through terror to deny the guerrillas the support of the civilian population (Zamorano 2004).

Women and Guerrillas

Women have a significant role in the formation of the guerrilla forces. Their primary role has been to train children for combat (FARC 2001). In the traditional socialist society, women are in the forefront of all fields of human labour, even fighting to defend the homeland at the highest military levels (FARC 2001). When the FARC took up arms against the government in the mid 1960's, two of the original group of 48 were female (Penhaul 2001). One of the more historic women's actions was when The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia People's Army met the resistance of the women guerrillas, Miriam Narváez and Judith Grisales (FARC 2001).

More currently, thousands of women warriors are serving in the FARC (Penhaul 2001). Thirty to forty percent of the 17 000 fighters now are made up of women, where the sharpest rise came in 1997 (Penhaul 2001). A reason for such high female participation in the FARC is the extensive unemployment rate among women (Penhaul 2001). Women possibly turn to employment in the FARC as a means of survival. Although relationships between men and women in the FARC are permitted, permission from their superiors is required. Upon approval of a relationship, contraception is provided (Penhaul 2001).

Recent Trends

In recent years there has been no decline in war and violence in Colombia, even though there have been many attempts by governments to achieve peace. It was believed in 2003 that Colombia was on the verge of a full-scale civil war (Zeese 2003). Colombian government

realised that the problem was out of their capabilities and requested aid from the US military forces. The actions taken by the US Forces to abate guerrilla activity escalated the level of violence taken on by the FARC (Zeese 2003).

Beginning in November 1992, a wave of violence hit Colombia, including a guerrilla attack on an oil field that left 26 policemen dead and bomb blasts in numerous cities (Baena 2003). Gaviria, the President, thereupon declared a 90-day state of emergency (Baena 2003). It was thought that some of the city bombings might be acts of retaliation ordered by Pablo Escobar, a number of whose lawyers and relatives had recently been detained by the police (Baena 2003). Continuing acts of violence, some by guerrillas and some by drug traffickers, caused dozens of additional deaths in December 1992 (Baena 2003).

In July the peace commissioner resigned in frustration, and the government announced that new and especially ruthless incidents of guerrilla violence rendered further dialogue useless. By September a stepped-up military offensive was launched against the guerrillas (Baena 2003).

Taking advantage of the government's distractions, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the National Liberation Army increased kidnappings and bombings and even staged bold attacks against military barracks (Baena 2003). Despite periodic calls for peace negotiations, hostilities worsened during 1996.

URBAN STREETS

Urban streets are filled with many opportunities for the impressionable youth and for the experienced adult to obtain drugs, produce, traffic or sell. Researching the motives for using and selling drugs are important to understanding the health effects of short and long term use, supply and demand, eradication and education programs. Drugs alter the state of both the body and the mind. Motives are the reasons for substance use and abuse (Comeau 2001). When a motive is satisfied it becomes a desired condition. Most motives seek to appease peer pressure, relief of stress or to relax, entertainment or recreation, relieve of pain, suppress an emotion, to escape reality or other psychological problems and addiction.

Most substance abuse begins in high school, 6% in a United States survey where students use it daily. The general consensus in academia is to categorize motives into three groups: Conformity, Coping or Enhancement. Motivation factors include the following: conforming could be social motives (the less serious and abusive motive), coping with anxiety or stress, enhancement could be body image or popularity. Other important elements include: personality factors (i.e. risk takers), sensation seeking (celebration, entertainment or fun) (Comeau 2001). The above motives apply to both adolescent users as well as adult (Comeau 2001). However, studies show that Coping was more evident among adults in solitary spaces whereas young adults, who usually occurred within a social context, exhibited Enhancement and Conformity or sensation seeking.

Addictive behaviours had a strong correlation with risky personality factors (contingent on strength of both external and internal environments). Like a high-pressure peer group and internal conflict or need to belong. Also, it was states that those with a highly sensitive personality should avoid drugs because of higher chances for dependence or higher levels of elation when using the drug.

Enhancement factor is controversial as demonstrated with a Canadian example: Gold Snow Boarder Champion-Ross Rebagliatti had evidence of marijuana use in his blood stream and risked losing his Gold medal. Although the Winter Olympics do not approve of substance abuse, they let him keep the medal after much controversy and a final conclusion that marijuana does not enhance performance in reality slows it down. Some drugs can also be used for medicinal purposes for pain relievers in cancer patients. Other variables for substance use can be: outcome measures, and religiosity, educational achievement, educational aspiration, family caring, others caring, self-esteem, optimism, coping, depression, loneliness, and self-efficacy (Grubbaum 2000).

Sometimes ethnicities in urban areas are susceptible to using marijuana. The following Chart (Grubbaum 2000) shows many motives for using drugs across a variety of participants.

Table 2. Univariate odds ratios (95% confidence intervals) of substance use behaviors with demographic and psychosocial constructs, Alternative High School Study, 1997

	Substance use behavior		
	Cigarettes/alcohol (<i>n</i> = 119)	Marijuana (<i>n</i> = 116)	Cocaine (<i>n</i> = 110)
Demographic			
Male gender	1.67 (1.00, 2.93)	1.79 (1.02, 3.15)	2.89 (1.61, 5.18)
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	.40 (.20, .81)	.39 (.19, .78)	.95 (.45, 2.01)
Black	.22 (.06, .78)	.51 (.17, 1.52)	.18 (.03, .95)
Age	1.12 (.94, 1.35)	1.04 (.87, 1.25)	.83 (.69, 1.00)
Social			
Family caring	.97 (.91, 1.03)	.89 (.84, .95)	.92 (.86, .98)
Others caring	1.06 (.96, 1.18)	.93 (.84, 1.04)	1.00 (.90, 1.11)
Intrapersonal			
Self-esteem	1.01 (.97, 1.06)	1.01 (.96, 1.06)	.98 (.94, 1.03)
Optimism	.98 (.92, 1.04)	.93 (.88, .99)	.95 (.89, 1.00)
Coping	.98 (.93, 1.04)	.93 (.87, .98)	.91 (.86, .96)
Depression	1.01 (.97, 1.06)	1.04 (.99, 1.09)	1.04 (.99, 1.09)
Loneliness	.98 (.94, 1.04)	.95 (.91, 1.01)	.98 (.93, 1.04)
Self-efficacy	.99 (.95, 1.04)	1.00 (.95, 1.04)	.94 (.90, .99)
Cultural			
Religion	.59 (.34, 1.04)	.50 (.28, .88)	.40 (.22, .72)
Educational achievement	.63 (.27, 1.46)	1.10 (.51, 2.38)	2.55 (1.24, 5.20)
Educational aspiration	.76 (.38, 1.55)	.99 (.50, 1.96)	2.33 (1.22, 4.45)

Note. The comparison group includes 87 students who reported no substance use in the past month. Categories of substance use are mutually exclusive with students assigned to the most severe category of substance reported. Odds ratios for religious, family caring, and lonely reflect a one unit change in the independent variable.

The Homeless that use drugs try to escape reality and fall under the Coping category of substance use more so than adolescents in school using approximately the same amounts. Most research was found for pregnant substance use and abusers and homeless women, not women with general motives. Reasons for prenatal use are not well documented, as well as non-smokers exposed to second hand smoking. Physical and emotional abuse (includes homeless) are the largest factors that contribute to drug abuse among homeless women. Prevalent causes are due to depression, loss of familial support, gender discrimination, limited education, lack of opportunities for employment and health and mental problems. Whatever social support groups usually promote drug use to help curb problems. (Galaif 1999)

The production and sale of drugs have different motives. Incentives to drug sale include power, prestige, and possibility of attaining a large sum of money with minimal work and excitement of participation in an illegal activity. Production motives also include income. Motives differ with internal and external environments. Use and abuse have similar motives as sale and production does.

Laws and Enforcement

From the beginning, governments in Colombia have been weak. All blame is often pointed at the leaders. However, it is the world, “specifically the U.S. and Europe, [which bear] special responsibility because their citizens appetite for the narcotics Colombia produces is a major factor undermining Colombia’s law and order, economy and democratic institutions” (McLean 2002: 124). Without the desire to earn money and the desperate markets, Colombians may not pursue in such illegal means of making money.

One of Colombia’s major issues to policing the drug trade is that “Colombians usually do not know who is carrying out the crimes that afflict them, heightening anxiety and discouraging community solidarity even further” (McLean 2002: 130).

Due to the political instability of Colombia, drug control is very ineffective. Colombia’s drug ‘cartells’, because they are so powerful financially and organized effectively, they have built up their own “security network”, “this network influences the state’s decisions and threatens officials” (Ambos 1997: 128).

Many policies and laws exist, however, there are many substitutions’ which inhibit their effectiveness. Laws treat coca and any illegal narcotic equally. They restrict the cultivation of coca with state controlled purposes such as medicinal and for research. The laws state that “its aim is to destroy all coca plantations in relevant cases, traditional cultivation should be substituted and the consumption by natives should be tolerated in accordance with traditional customs, the grower should be sentenced to a 4-12 years prison sentence” (Ambos 1997: 130).

In conclusion, the influence of police on drug control and cultivation is minimal. Due to Colombia’s increasing poppy and heroin production, they make the ideal resource to maintain the constant flow of drugs the U.S. and Europe.

Prostitution in Colombia

It is estimated that there are 35,000 children working as prostitutes in Colombia and over 25,000 are subjected to sexual abuse every year (Colombia Journal Online, 2004). This doesn’t come as a surprise in a nation where over 6 million children live in poverty (Liberta Latinia.org 2004) in a country with nearly 40 million inhabitants. In Colombia, the phenomenon of drug trafficking is closely related to the increase in female prostitution. Though not a shock, this cause a great amount of concern considering that many of these children are paid for their services in cocaine or marijuana. This in turn creates high numbers of drug addiction among an astonishingly young population.

The average age that women enter in to prostitution in Colombia is 12 (Colombia - Facts on Prostitution 2004). This means that by the time that many North American children are entering middle school, Colombia children are being forced to turn to the streets and begin making a living on their own.

In Colombia there are two types of prostitution trade networks: Ones which only work with women or children from within the country or the regional area, sending women to Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama; the others deal on an exclusively international scale, providing Colombian women for the markets in Spain, Britain, Germany, Belgium and the United States (Colombia - Facts on Prostitution 2004).

In response to the growth of prostitution in Colombia, many outreach programs are being created in hopes of giving women and children the opportunity to remove themselves from the streets and create a living with a safer, more secure occupation. A great example of this kind of outreach is the Renacer Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides housing and education to former child prostitutes (Colombia Journal Online 2004). By earning the trust of child prostitutes, these workers assist the children and convince them to turn away from the streets. This organization was created 13 years ago and allows 60 children to participate in the 2-year program. The organization receives funding from a Colombian government agency, Bienestar Familiar, as well as from the British, Canadian and Spanish embassies (Colombian government agency, Bienestar Familiar, as well as from the British, Canadian and Spanish embassies (Colombia Journal Online 2004).

While these programs are obviously an essential part of combating prostitution in Colombia, it seems that the country is going to have to struggle in order to keep them operating. The state family welfare institute said Tuesday it was eliminating about \$60,000 a year in funds used by the Renacer foundation to locate, assess and refer exploited children.

The outreach funds being cut represent more than 20 percent of the budget of Renacer, the primary group working with underage victims of sexual exploitation in Colombia. The state institute will continue to fund other Renacer programs, but without outreach to identify the most vulnerable children, the rest of the foundation's work is at risk (Colombia Cuts Child Prostitute Programs 2004). It is obvious then that in the upcoming years, the government of Colombia is going to have to step up and enforce laws against prostitution and drug trafficking.

It also seems that illegal prostitution and drug trafficking in Canada is also a major concern. A report by the Solicitor General of Canada (October 1997) concludes that migrant trafficking accounts for 8,000 - 16,000 illegal immigrants in Canada every year, many of them female youths and children who are forced to work in Canada's booming sex trade industry. The

same report estimates that those profiting from the illegal trafficking of children and women in Canada earn as much as \$400 million annually (Child and Youth Trafficking and Prostitution in Canada 2004). It seems, then, that while this issue is a concern locally in Colombia, the export of Colombian women into an illegal sex-trade among nations is spreading the problem further.

In conclusion, while prostitution of women and children in Colombia does seem to be a prevalent issue, steps are being taken within the country to combat against prostitution. We must also look, however, on a larger National scale and enforce policies against sex-trades throughout the world before it can be said that this problem is declining worldwide.

Statistics

The Republic of Columbia is a country with many social, economic and environmental problems. Columbia is portrayed by the media as being a drug-ridden, violent country, but this is not all that the country is (Colombia: South American Tourism 2004). Columbia has a population of 40, 351, 349 people, and a land area of 1, 038, 700 square km. Its official language is Spanish, and its most predominant religion is Catholic with an allocation of 90% (Colombia: South American Tourism 2004). In comparison, Canada has a population of about three quarters of Columbia's at 30, 770, 000 people, and a land area of about ten times that of Columbia at 9, 984, 670 square km. Canada's official languages are English and French and the most prominent religions are Catholic and Protestant. One of the main connections between Columbia and Canada are the problems of drug trafficking and drug abuse. Drugs such as cocaine and marijuana are cultivated in Columbia and Illegally imported into Canada, causing many problems for both societies (Statistics Canada 2004).

Effects on Youth

In Canada there is a significant trend towards drug use and abuse by youth and young adults. In a survey given to high school students, it was found that around 12% of eighth graders, 22% of 10th graders, and 25% of 12th graders had used illicit drugs in the previous 30 days (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services 1999). While there were some differences between gender and race, this information is demonstrative of the movement of youth towards alarming levels of drug use.

Crime

The drug problems in both Columbia and Canada have a great influence on the levels of crime in these societies. In Canada, the overall rate of drug related incidents has risen since 1993

(Statistics Canada 2004). While much of the drug related crime is found in trafficking, possession and importation/production, the effects also reach to more serious crimes. From 1992 until 2000, one in every ten homicides was related to drug related activities, and cocaine was related to 60% of these (Statistics Canada 2004). Again in the area of crime, we can see an influence on the youth. Young adults had the highest drug related offence rate in 2002 (860 for every 100,000 people) (Statistics Canada 2004).

What's Being Done?

The Colombian government is taking positive steps toward solving their drug cultivation and exportation problems. In the year 2000, they spent approximately 2,166.4 million dollars on reducing youth related drug use. Similarly they spent 7,574.5 million dollars on reducing drug related crime and 2,082.5 million on reducing the sources of supply, these are just among some of the expenditures being taken (National Drug 2000). The two main drugs that are exported from Columbia and imported to Canada are cocaine and cannabis. While some of the drug trafficking has been eradicated, many of the crops still make it through. Far less of the drugs that are being cultivated are being eradicated. In Columbia in 1997, there were 13, 572 hectares of opium poppy cultivated, and only 6, 972 hectares eradicated. This leaves 6, 600 hectares worth of drugs to be processed and used. Similarly, in Columbia in 1996, there were approximately 5000 hectares of Cannabis cultivated and only 20 eradicated (National Drug 2000). The Canadian government is also fighting the battle against drug abuse. By creating stricter laws, funding enforcement of these laws, they are trying to lower the drug related crime rates. One of the ways in which the Canadian government is doing this is through acts like the Controlled substances act of 2002. The government is also making great expenditures. In 2001 and 2002, they spent 11 billion dollars on policing, courts, legal aid, criminal prosecutions and adult and youth corrections (Statistics Canada 2004).

GENDER ISSUES

On a visit to Colombia, the Special Rapporteur of the Economic and Social Council for the United Nations conducted a report about violence against women in Colombia. In her report she investigates, assesses and reports on the impact of the conflict on the human rights of women.

Colombian Constitution and national law contain provisions on equity of the sexes, including political rights. However, in actuality, women's representation is underdeveloped. The Special Rapporteur comments on the political status of women. "Despite women's gains in the 1998 parliamentary elections (an increase from 16 to 19 seats in the 167-seat House of

Representatives and an increase from 7 to 14 seats in the 102 seat senate), women's participation in politics remains low" (Coomaraswamy 2001).

Domestic violence is considered to be a private matter in Colombia. Therefore, incidents of hostility towards women are underreported and the full extent of the problem cannot be assessed. The Special Rapporteur states that only 9 percent of battered women lodge a complaint with the authorities and impunity for the perpetrators is practically 100 percent. The Special Rapporteur also points out that domestic violence is very common. She also identifies that the level of violence escalates with the anxiety created by the ongoing internal conflict in Colombia (Coomaraswamy 2001).

Abortion is illegal in Colombia. The act of abortion can be punishable by up to three years in prison for the woman seeking the abortion, or the practitioner who performs it (Coomaraswamy 2001). As well, the law provides no exceptions. Women who seek an abortion due to illness, health risks relating to the delivery of the baby, or who are rape victims are not exempt (Coomaraswamy 2001).

In the year 2000, Colombia received \$700 million in foreign aid from the U.S. to help combat the drug trade. Instead of using the aid towards increasing social programs, the majority of it went toward further militarization. This in turn has contributed to civilian massacre, women being raped, forced displacement of thousands of people and the worsening of the internal war (LOLApress 2002).

The guerrilla groups in Colombia have a strong impact on women. Women and children are raped and murdered on a daily basis. The following testimony was taken from a United Nations representative:

"A group of armed men broke down the door of our home while we were sleeping; they knocked over the furniture and broke everything. They tied my father to a chair. They opened my legs and tied one leg to the wardrobe and the other to the bed. They insulted and threatened us. They raped my sister and me. Later we realized the same had happened to our neighbours and a young girl from the village was taken to hospital for her injuries" (Coomaraswamy 2001).

All these issues have had a direct correlation to the proliferation of social problems, including the increasing drug abuse among women. A 1997 study found that 6.5% of the people in Colombia have consumed one or more of these controlled substances – marijuana, cocaine, crack-cocaine, and opiates (Guizado & Restrepo 2000). Of those who were surveyed and had said that they had consumed drugs, 25% were women (Guizado & Restrepo 2000). A 1992 survey revealed that only 5.9% of the people in Colombia used illicit drugs. The rise/ difference

in the consumption is largely explained by increased use among the female population between the ages of 12 and 17, and working-age women (Guizado & Restrepo 2000).

In 1996 the Commission on Human Rights requested to establish an office in Colombia. An agreement was signed by the government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The terms of the agreement stipulated that the office monitor the human rights situation and observe international humanitarian law in order to advise the Colombian authorities on the formulation and implementation of policies and programs (Coomaraswamy 2001). However, the office and its representatives have received many threats since it's opening in 1996. This may cause a lack of participation due to people fearing to get involved as a result of the violence.

The Special Rapporteur suggests that there should be increased funding for the Human Rights Office as well as state legislation for the equal treatment of women. She also suggests that there should be a statistics record that properly assesses the domestic violence situation. The Special Rapporteur calls for increased programs, counselling, education, medical care and training for women. She also asks the international organizations associated with Colombia to support humanitarian assistance for women.

In previous meetings and dialogues to help control the drug problem in Colombia, neither the government, nor the international community have involved women in decision-making. Even in peace movements, they are under-represented. Peace without women and without a gender perspective is fragile and will not produce the changes the country needs. The present crisis is also linked to the absence of other understandings and emotions to address the process. A scenario of monolithically masculine negotiation is depriving peace of so far unexplored possibilities (LOLApress 2002).

From the standpoint of feminism, pacifism and non violence, today Colombian women are staking their hopes on the political negotiation of the conflict, convinced that the path of respect and acceptance of differences will make it possible to have a decent life and peaceful and harmonious relations in Colombia.

Children and women remain to be the ones who are most vulnerable to the widespread effects of the conflict. Chronic poverty and abuse are just two of the effects as a result of the conflict. In post conflict societies it is usually women who play an important role in the strengthening of the family and social net, the restoration of essential economic activity, and the assurance of health and education for future generations (Peace Boat 2003). All of these components are a condition for the successful achievement of the transition from a society at war to a society at peace.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for visiting our website dealing with the issues revolved the drug trade and associated gender issues within Colombia. The importance of the drug culture to the economy of Colombia was shown in the first section of the website, as the illegal drug operations have overcome coffee production. The high unemployment and the degradation of the infrastructure of the country have led to the support of the local population to the domestic drug industry. Methods utilized by outside parties, such as the United States of America to destroy the cultivation of drugs have lead to situations where innocent farmers have had their crops destroyed. The broad range of the tactics has created more hardships to the farmers who are involved in legitimate as well as illegal farming production. The landscape of Colombia has been changed since the inception of the militia groups, who are involved in violence against the people of Colombia. Between those who are fighting the government and those hired by the drug producers for protection; the people of Colombia pay the price. The gender issues in the drug industry as mentioned revolve around the militias who offer the women of Colombia the ability for involvement into the struggle with the same benefits as the men in the group. Women across the country have been the victims of the constant battles between the drug producers and the government forces. The killings of civilians in the conflict have not exempted the women of Columbia, as they are targeted to perpetrate fear. The cultivation of the drug industry of Colombia will continue to be a hindrance and a blessing to the country of Colombia. Though it provides capital flow into the developing region it also leads to the corruption of power and hardships. We hope that we have provided you with some useful insight to this important issue that greatly affects the people of Colombia.

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