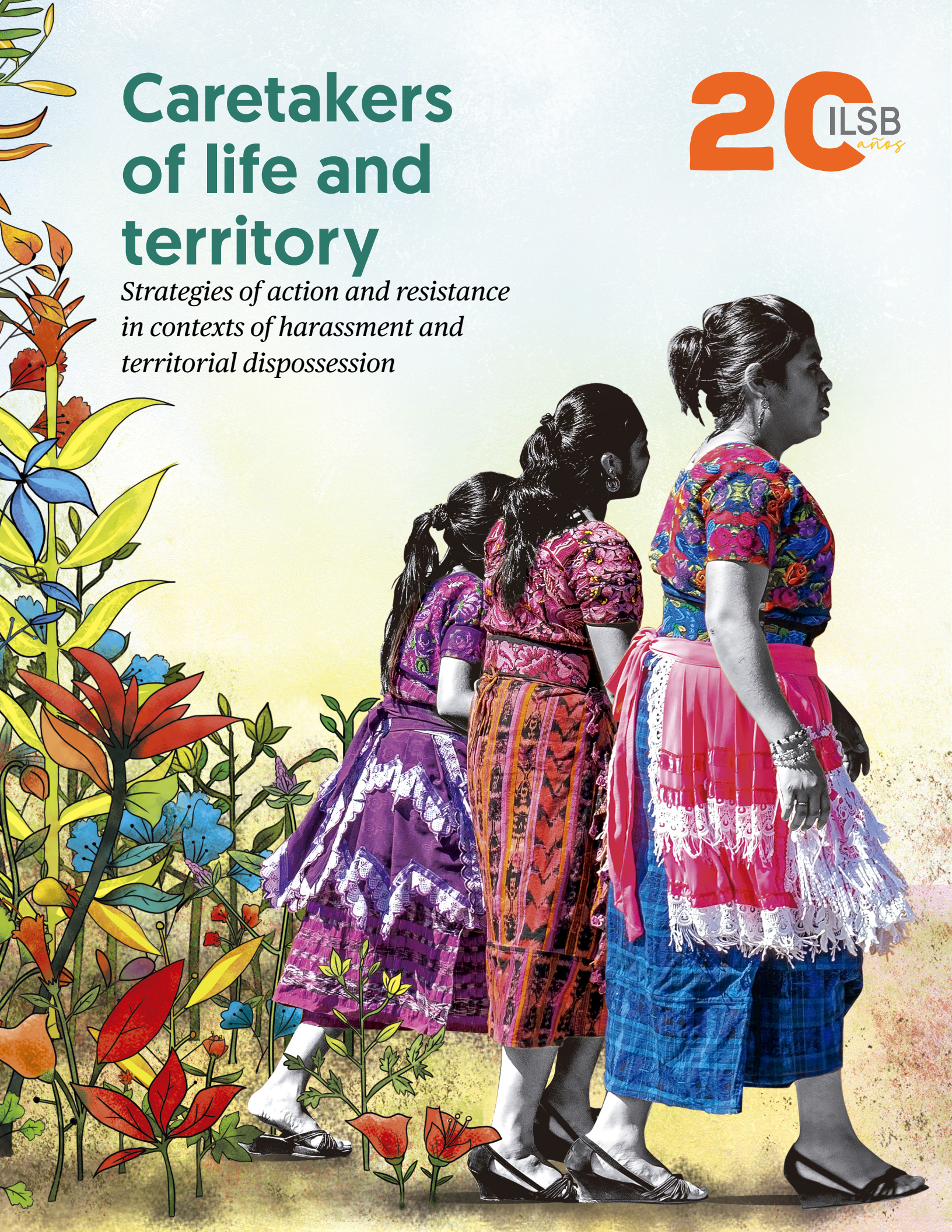


# Caretakers of life and territory

*Strategies of action and resistance  
in contexts of harassment and  
territorial dispossession*

20 ILSB  
años



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*Strategies of action and resistance  
in contexts of harassment and  
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## **PRODUCED BY**

Paola Patiño and Pilar Arrese

## **DIRECTION**

Director: Friné Salguero

Subdirector: Valentina Zendejas

## **GENDER AND ESCR PROGRAM**

Coordinator: Indra Rubio

Program Officers: Pilar Arrese y Paola Patiño

## **COMUNICATION**

Coordinator: Arabella Jiménez

Communication Officers: Rubén Piña y Vania Mejía

## **ilsb.org.mx**

March, 2021

contacto@ilsb.org.mx

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<b>Presentation</b>	<b>04</b>
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## **Chapter 1**

Main effects on women in rural contexts of territorial defense

<b>1.1.</b> Harassment and dispossession of rural territories in Mexico	<b>09</b>
<b>1.2.</b> Obstacles for rural women in contexts of land dispossession	<b>10</b>
<b>1.3.</b> Effects on rural women	<b>11</b>

---

<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>20</b>
--------------------	-----------

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>06</b>
---------------------	-----------

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## **Chapter 2**

Strategies for action and resistance: good practices and proposals

<b>2.1.</b> Strategies for information and analysis	<b>14</b>
<b>2.2.</b> Training and qualification strategies	<b>15</b>
<b>2.3.</b> Communication strategies	<b>16</b>
<b>2.4.</b> Linkage and articulation strategies	<b>17</b>
<b>2.5.</b> Integral care strategies	<b>18</b>
<b>2.6.</b> Strategies for sustainability	<b>19</b>
<b>2.7.</b> Strategies for advocacy	<b>19</b>
<b>2.8.</b> Agrarian strategies	<b>19</b>

---

<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>22</b>
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Four years ago, the Simone de Beauvoir Leadership Institute (ILSB), through its Gender and ESCER (economic, social, cultural and environmental rights) program, saw the need to report on the current situation of rural women and the diverse strategies of action and resistance they carry out to confront the increasingly critical context in rural territories (peasant and indigenous), characterized by threats and displacements due to extractive projects and megaprojects, which greatly add to the feminization of rural life.

This material, the second in the series, arises from the need to recognize, make visible and account for the fundamental role of women - in terms of their diversity - in processes of defense, of care, and of community sustainability, from a gender, human rights, and intercultural perspective.

We hope you find it useful!

Rural women in Mexico, in their wide diversity (girls, teenagers and elderly women; peasants, day laborers, domestic workers, migrants in urban territories; indigenous, mestizo and Afro-Mexican women), represent more than 13 million women in the country. They make up half of the rural population, so it is important to highlight their contribution to the production, reproduction, and sustainability of community life.

These women play a key and irreplaceable role due to the care, protection and preservation of the environment and natural resources that they carry out in their communities and territories. Furthermore, they are responsible for domestic work and for the care of their families and their communities, through activities that are indispensable and essential for the stability, well-being, and sustainability of life. Many of them, as part of their daily work, cultivate the land, and they also grow vegetables and orchards in their backyards, which also contributes substantially to food self-sufficiency, even though less than 30% of them own the land they work on.

Rural women are defenders of their territories and natural assets. They are the ones who, many times, have confronted large corporations to keep out the machinery of companies that intend to implement an extractivist project or megaproject<sup>1</sup> in their localities and territories. They are in the front line, risking body and soul in order to defend and protect their territories, to take care of life in a broad sense, as well as the future of the next generations that are threatened by these projects.

In addition to clashes over the protection of their territories and natural assets, many of them work against the tide of social traditions and cultural practices that correspond to a patriarchal and colonialist system. This system hinders the recognition and appreciation of all the contribution and work that women make for their families and communities. It also hinders their access to rights and services that are on equal terms with men. For example, in matters related to land tenure, to occupy community and representative positions, to be heard and to have their opinion considered in decision-making, among many other community situations that involve discrimination, inequality and injustice for them.

Despite the multiple historical, systematic, and structural obstacles in the cultural, political, social, and economic spheres that affect their lives, women in rural contexts continue to carry out diverse collective strategies to

organize, care for and defend their lives, as well as those of their families, their communities, their territory, and nature itself. They continue to fight not only against the attempts of plunder and territorial control of the capitalist-neoliberal-extractive system, but also against the patriarchal system that seeks to do the same by controlling their lives, violating their bodies, and stripping them of their autonomy and health, amongst many other things.

This document is a compilation of some of the collective and communitarian strategies that women in Mexico and Central America carry out to confront varied patriarchal and capitalist practices and structures that threaten and infringe upon several of their essential rights: rights to territory, rights to health, rights to political participation, etcetera. Likewise, this work is a recognition of the value and strength of each of the women who are part of these experiences and who contribute to the socialization of good practices in contexts of harassment and territorial displacement.

Thank you for showing us that other ways of living are possible and that we are not alone! We hope this material inspires you, as well as us, to continue building new horizons.

<sup>1</sup> An extractivist project is one that promotes the extraction of natural resources at a high volume or with high intensity. Furthermore, at least 50% of these resources are exported as raw material without processing or with minimal processing (Gudynas, 2009 and 2015). By megaprojects we refer to those development initiatives -generally carried out by transnational private capital and promoted by governments- that do not precisely involve the extraction of natural resources for their commoditization but do provide the conditions for the advancement of the capitalist economic model. On the other hand, it is important to mention that megaprojects are closely related to recent extractive activities, since their implementation requires the use of exploration and exploitation techniques that are aggressive for the environment and the populations living in the surrounding areas.

## Main effects on women in rural contexts of territorial defense



### 1.1. Harassment and dispossession of rural territories in Mexico

In Mexico, particularly during the last two decades, rural territories, as well as the population that inhabits them, have been the object of innumerable situations of harassment and dispossession following the promotion of public policies that have allowed private capital -especially international capital- to extract the natural resources found in them, to later commercialize them.<sup>2</sup> A simple glance at the effective results of the application of economic policies in Mexico in the past few years in the areas of energy production and efficiency, exploration, exploitation and use of mineral resources, telecommunications infrastructure, real estate expansion, highway construction, and tourism services, among others, will confirm this.

The introduction of this type of projects -called extractivist or megaprojects- in rural territories has implied a series of effects that have not been positive for the populations that inhabit them. These include the following: devastation of forests and jungles; contamination of water (springs, rivers, lakes) and natural resources in general, which causes damage to health and multiple illnesses and deaths; fragmentation and dispossession of territories; persecution, murder, and harassment of those who seek to oppose these megaprojects or extractive projects; forced displacement of inhabitants or entire communities; the presence of organized crime in daily life, among many others. These new forms and mechanisms of territorial dispossession, carried out mainly by transnational corporations with the support and acquiescence of state and federal governments, violate traditional ways of life - such as those related to the care of land, of territory and of their natural assets - based on the use of increasingly aggressive technologies and exploitation techniques (Navarro and Composto, 2015), and due to the existence of a legal framework that protects and enhances such processes in a legal and illegal manner (Rodríguez Garavito, 2018).

These so-called extractivist projects and megaprojects contribute greatly to the perpetuation of what Gudynas (2015) has called “spillover effects”. In other words, mea-

asures, and actions that, on the one hand, favor different forms of development and economic growth, and, on the other hand, have devastating consequences on the territories where they are carried out. One of the main characteristics of spillover effects is that they occur from a myriad of illegalities, but also from the implementation of reforms with legal loopholes that enable the emergence of injustices for the inhabitants of these territories (Gudynas, 2016).

According to a study conducted by a research group of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, from 2012 to 2017, 560 conflicts linked to megaprojects<sup>3</sup> were registered, most of them in rural territories brought about by mining and oil exploration and exploitation, the construction of dams and highways, energy and mega-tourism projects, illegal logging, as well as the introduction of transgenic seeds such as corn and soybeans, to name but a few of the most recurrent activities. And although in Mexico there are hundreds of social conflicts associated with the dispossession of resources, the emergence of organizational processes throughout the country is an important reality. In fact, it can be assured that one of the variables that companies inevitably must consider when planning their projects (extractive, oil, mining, real estate, communications infrastructure, among others) is the level of social organization in the territories they are interested in. The indigenous and rural communities of the country are fighting against the projects of large corporations (which have already been mentioned) for the preservation of their life, land, territory, culture, environment, and future. They self-organize, resist, and fight to avoid being dispossessed; the consequences and social damage ranges from rumors that destabilize the communities and break relationships of trust, the co-opting or buying of silence, to criminalization, harassment, and murder of community members. It is worth mentioning that these effects are gender differentiated: women suffer from being delegitimized and dishonored, they suffer through threats and harassment, which most of the time are of a sexual nature.

In 2012, the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras, 2013) recorded a total of 414 attacks on women human rights activists

<sup>2</sup> The process of assigning a monetary value, a price, to a natural good, such as land, minerals, air, water, etc.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2019/02/26/opinion/016a2pol>

within Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala: according to the report, those who met the greatest risks were often the women working specifically in rural areas (33.2%), and in particular, those working in the defense of land, territory and natural resources (37.9%).

According to a report by the National Network of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mexico (2017), a reported total of 100 cases of aggressions have been registered between 2012 and 2014 against women who exercise the defense of land, territory, and natural resources; 83 against women who defend the right of women to participate in political and community matters; 29 against those who work for the rights of indigenous peoples; and six against women defenders of environmental rights. Moreover, regarding aggressions against women human rights defenders in Mexico, most cases are aggressions that occur continuously or permanently: “I feel that at any moment I could be killed, that scares me a lot. And so, every time I leave my house, I say goodbye to my children as if it were the last time; I don’t say anything to them because I don’t want to scare them” (testimony from the “National Women’s Meeting for the Defense of Territory against Extractivism, 2019”).

## 1.2. Obstacles for rural women in contexts of land dispossession

**W**omen are increasingly occupying spaces that were previously denied to them, and thus the defense of life and territory is acquiring a feminine face, since it is them who lead the movements and are at the forefront of the defense of life, in every sense of the word. In these contexts of threats to the territory, traditional gender roles have become more flexible due to the risks and threats to the communities. In their daily and community life, women work double or triple shifts - as mentioned above - involving several jobs, resulting in an excessive overload. In addition to the tasks traditionally assigned to them (housework, caregiving, and backyard care), there are activities in the cornfield, community activities -such as serving on committees for managing water, education, or the health center-, as well as informal jobs selling food or products from catalogs to support the family’s economy or to help their partner’s community, or as part of the territory’s defense network. The increase in the workload has not meant, in most cases, a more equitable workload dis-

tribution with the men within the household, but rather the opposite, which is why women continue to develop various support networks with other women: grandmothers, aunts, neighbors, who have historically carried out caregiving tasks. In addition to the aforementioned context, there is also the complex situation related to land care and production due to climate change and the environmental crisis. Droughts, or in some cases heavy rains or hurricanes, have caused, for example, the loss of entire food crops that are indispensable for the daily life of communities. These complications, in turn, have also made it necessary for women to become self-employed in order to obtain a salary that allows them, at the very least, to be able to buy the corn or beans they used to produce. In addition, there are also those activities that arise from the community’s fight against megaprojects and extractive projects. Often it is the women who carry out care work, such as cleaning the spaces where meetings or assemblies are held or preparing food for those who attend. In many cases, they are also the ones who carry out productive initiatives - selling food, manufacturing traditional handicrafts, selling cleaning products and traditional medicine - so that the movement can be financed. In other words, they are devoted to support both the family and the community in which they live.

Despite the growing presence and involvement of women in public spaces where historically only men were involved, in the community as in many other areas (urban, labor, political, economic) there are prejudices against women, as well as rejection and stigmatization for transgressing the social covenants of traditional and historical gender roles. This situation makes it difficult for them to have a legitimate voice within their communities and movements.

Such prejudices are manifested with expressions such as “They don’t know anything, they only know the house” or “Land is a man’s business” (“International meeting on gender, land and territories: sustainability of our community life, 2017”). There is also a lack of awareness and concern on the part of many men regarding the historical inequalities and discrimination that women have had to live with, as well as a certain fear of losing the power and control that the patriarchal system has granted them, which on numerous occasions has translated into violence against women. In the political sphere, little by little, and although the agrarian system in Mexico is designed for men, rural women have become landholders (ejidatarias, comuneras, posesionarias or avecindadas). However, due to their

## 1.3. Effects on rural women

**A**s a result of the arrival and presence of new actors (for example, those who belong to the companies operating the megaprojects and extractive projects) in the community and its rural areas, a number of studies revealed an increase in trafficking networks of women and young girls; sexually transmitted infections; sexual and reproductive health problems, and health problems in general, for example: gastrointestinal diseases and cancer due to the presence of agrottoxins; respiratory diseases, due to the presence of mining projects, and other diseases linked to water contamination (which, by the way, also becomes increasingly difficult to have access to). In some cases, people who are involved in the construction of megaprojects and extractive projects in rural territories become affectively linked to the women of the communities; some become pregnant and, out of shame, get married, which often causes a rupture in family dynamics and the involvement of the operators in the intimate life of the communities. Such contexts have also led to an increase in the presence of various types of violence against women, mainly due to an increased military and paramilitary presence in the territories, as has been pointed out by various civil society organizations in different parts of the world.<sup>4</sup>

*Women continue developing various networks supportive with other women: grannies, aunts, neighbors, who historically they have performed work of care.*



scarce participation in administrative positions, their voice, their needs, and demands are continually made invisible. In turn, because of a lack of access to land tenure, there is little participation within the communities’ assemblies and, therefore, less access to the information that is disseminated in these spaces regarding what is happening in their communities; for example, the presence of national and transnational companies that promote extractivist projects and megaprojects within their territories.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see: <https://diarioresponsable.com/noticias/28760-destruccion-del-medio-ambiente-y-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-dos-caras-de-una-misma-moneday-https://movimientom4.org/wp-content/docs/Extractivismo-en-Am%C3%A9rica-Latina.-Impacto-en-la-vida-de-las-mujeres-y-propuestas-de-defensa-del-territorio.pdf>.

# Strategies for action and resistance: good practices and proposals



This chapter presents a general overview of diverse strategies of action and resistance that both women's and mixed collectives (from grassroots organizations to broad social movements) have undertaken in Latin America to confront the new forms and mechanisms of dispossession within rural territories and indigenous, rural, and Afro-descendant communities. It is very relevant to show the strength with which women put their bodies, their energy, and their time to organize, defend and protect their territories and, above all, to maintain and sustain community life.

Throughout the course of history, different grassroots movements and organizations have made numerous efforts to build countless economic, political, legal, social, cultural, and environmental strategies in pursuit of territorial defense -mostly of indigenous and peasant peoples and communities-, but it is also true that few strategies have been built from a gender perspective. In other words, we analyze the roles that have been culturally assigned to men and women, and the relationships and dynamics that arise because of these roles, so that they do not perpetuate inequalities, for example, regarding their access of natural resources or in the execution of other human rights, such as women's political participation. It is also necessary to account for the diversity of

strategies that go beyond the political and juridical ones -which are the most visible and have been implemented for decades-, and are led and operated by women, the youth, and the elderly. These "invisible" strategies make possible the continuity of the fight over time. For all these reasons, we consider it of utmost relevance to rescue some of the strategies of action and resistance carried out by several women, and thus make visible and socialize the diverse contributions they make from their feminine point of view. Our purpose here is to describe various strategies, not exhaustively but practically, to exemplify the multiplicity of paths that are opened and traced by women, for women.



## 2.1. Strategies for information and analysis

### Tools for context and conflict analysis with a gender perspective: recording, documenting, and systematizing human rights violations and monitoring at risk situations.

Generally speaking, the multiple efforts aimed at documenting and systematizing different types of violence against communities where megaprojects and extractive projects are implemented often lack gender perspective. This has resulted in the standardization and invisibilization of violence in different contexts, regardless of whether it is against women, men, youth, etc.

In response to the above situation, some organizations, such as Alianza Mexicana contra el Fracking and Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (DAR), have taken on the task of documenting the differentiated effects that such projects entail, and which, of course, violate several human rights. Examples of this have been the recent studies *Impactos del fracking en las mujeres*<sup>5</sup> and *Género e industrias extractivas en América Latina. Medidas estatales frente a impactos diferenciados en las mujeres*.<sup>6</sup>

#### 2.1.1. Mapping of key actors with a gender perspective

In contexts of territorial dispossession or harassment, various factors - companies, local, national, and international authorities, armed individuals (from police and military to organized crime and paramilitary groups) - are involved to some extent in the promotion and execution of the megaprojects or extractive projects in rural territories. In this respect, it is necessary to identify each of the key factors and analyze their interests, the power or influence they possess, as well as the threats they can unleash in accordance with their profiles, as described in the document titled *Los territorios, la minería y no-*

*sotras: las mujeres nos preguntamos*, which was written based on Colombian experiences, specifically in La Guajira, Antioquia and Chocó.<sup>7</sup>

#### 2.1.2. Requesting access to information

The promotion of megaprojects and extractive projects within rural territories, and the absence of prior, free, and informed consultation - as determined by Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) for the communities where they are implemented -, have made requests for information to public institutions a recurring strategy in recent years. In the case of Mexico, it is the National Institute of transparency, access to information and personal data protection (Instituto Nacional de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información y Protección de Datos Personales INAI) which, through a digital platform, promotes the socialization of diverse information -for example, regarding the granting of concessions for megaprojects and extractivist projects- based on the so-called requests for access to information. Although this is a tool that can be accessed by anyone, it is restricted to those who have access to a computer and can read and are familiar with this type of digital platforms.

Given the above situation, efforts such as those of the organization Article 19 seek to accompany women throughout different processes by creating content such as *Felipe y la información. Derecho a la información y territorio*,<sup>8</sup> which explains, in a step-by-step guide, the processes that must be followed to access a variety of information through digital platforms. Another example, albeit related to sexual and reproductive health issues, is the project *Lo Público es Nuestro*,<sup>9</sup> driven by the Simone de Beauvoir Institute of Leadership (Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir ILSB) and with which young people from 15 Mexican states have conducted research and information requests to that institution, to account for the provision of sexual and reproductive health services in health clinics in their states.

5 <http://www.nofrackingmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/mujeresyfracking.pdf>

6 <https://redextractivas.org/catalogo/boletines/genero-e-industrias-extractivas-en-america-latina-medidas-estatales-frente-a-impactos-diferenciados-en-las-mujeres/>

7 <http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/temas-analisis/32-extractivismo/mineria/1689-los-territorios-la-mineria-y-nosotros-las-mujeres-nos-preguntamos>

8 <https://articulo19.org/felipe-y-la-informacion-derecho-a-la-informacion-y-el-territorio/>

9 <https://ilsb.org.mx/embarazoadolescentes/> y <https://ilsb.org.mx/archivo/multimedia-category/dsyf/>

#### 2.1.3. Collaborative communal research

Research and documentation of what is happening in the territories is fundamental for the defensive processes, even more so if this activity is carried out by those who live in the affected places, since it is precisely these people who have a detailed and profound knowledge of what is happening in their lands. Since 2018, ILSB has carried out training processes for community youth researchers for the defense of their territory, in which theoretical and practical tools are provided so that knowledge is generated, built, and managed from and for the communities. The relevance of this process derives from its methodology, which promotes gender and youth mainstreaming: “Strategies are changing as we become more gender conscious. There is a constant reflection, not just about the megaprojects, but also a reflection as women, their resistance, and their multiple realities.”<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2. Training and qualification strategies

### 2.2.1. On-site workshops

The training of members within different social movements (e.g., human rights and indigenous peoples' rights) has become a constant. Although the range of training and qualification processes is growing, it is also true that, although the calls are open to both men and women, most of them are attended by men, as they are the ones who have historically been designated as representatives of their communities. Furthermore, the possibilities for women to attend such education and training sessions are also reduced due to their responsibilities in the domestic and reproductive spheres. Given the situation described above, feminist organizations and movements, such as ILSB, have taken on the task of creating spaces especially for the education of women, based on their needs and

realities. An example of this is the Advanced Training Course for Women Leaders (Curso de Alta Formación para Mujeres Líderes Cafoli) and the Regional Women's Leadership School for Gender Justice (Escuela Regional de Liderazgos de Mujeres por la Justicia de Género).<sup>11</sup>

### 2.2.2. Virtual Workshops

As a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic, many virtual spaces and initiatives for remote education have been opened. Some of them are those provided by Agua y Vida: Mujeres, Derechos y Ambiente,<sup>12</sup> an ecofeminist organization that works on issues such as ecofeminism, care, popular feminist education, amongst others.

### 2.2.3. Training materials

In recent years, the number of ways to learn, inform and raise awareness about the role of women in territorial defense processes has diversified. An example of this are the various manuals and guides that can be found across a variety of workshops. For example, the organization Tequio Jurídico prepared the document *Guía para las mujeres en los cargos agrarios y el ejercicio de sus derechos* (Guide for women in agrarian positions and the exercise of their rights).<sup>13</sup> There is also the publication of the organization *Mujer y Medio Ambiente*, in coordination with the group *Territorio, Género y Extractivismo: Herramientas de género y extractivismo, modelo para armar*,<sup>14</sup> which provides tools for working with a gender perspective in communities. Additionally, we can mention the series of publications by the organization *Jass, Asociadas por lo Justo*<sup>15</sup>, focused on strengthening women's capacities in various areas, such as protection, advocacy and participation, and political action. Finally, there is the *Centro Prodh*<sup>16</sup> manual, which addresses the rights of indigenous and rural women.

10 Memoir of “Encuentro nacional de mujeres por la defensa del territorio frente al extractivismo, 2019”.

11 <http://florece.ilsb.org.mx/>

12 Learn more about their proposal: <https://aguayvida.org.mx/>.

13 [https://tequijuridico.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GUIA\\_MUJERES\\_CARGOSAGRARIOS.pdf](https://tequijuridico.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GUIA_MUJERES_CARGOSAGRARIOS.pdf)

14 <https://mx.boell.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/manualextractivismo2020.pdf>

15 <https://www.justassociates.org/es/publicaciones/herramientas-de-formacion-accion-politica>

16 Download is available here: <https://centroprodh.org.mx/2017/12/11/los-derechos-de-las-mujeres-indigenas-y-campesinas/>.

*Women participate and are involved in the processes of territorial defense, we mobilize, we organize, we generate proposals, we analyze the context, we are involved in direct actions, we train, we exchange experiences, we manage resources, we take care of the processes, we participate in legal, social, political, organizational and communication strategies. The Women play a fundamental role in the defense of land and territory. And our work at home and in the movements is a fundamental support for the struggles. We demand that this participation be visible, recognized and shared by our partners, husbands, sons, and daughters.*<sup>17</sup>

## 2.3. Communication strategies

### 2.3.1. Information at the community level

As we have mentioned, historically, it has been difficult for women to have access to community assembly spaces where information about their territories and communities is shared. Factors that cause this include the traditionally assigned roles of women and men, as well as the existence of monolingualism.

The creation of community radio stations has been one of the strategies used to face these challenges. In the current context of harassment and territorial dispossession, several collectives, especially mixed, have seen radio as a means for communal organization. Examples of this are the initiatives of the Youth Council of Cherán (Michoacán) and the Youth Front for the Defense of Tepoztlán (Morelos). The relevance of these experiences is that it is the young ones -women and men- who have taken the leadership of these spaces. It should be em-

phasized that more and more young women are joining these spaces to contribute to the territorial defense of their communities. In some cases, they have also been the ones who have led the discussion towards the problems which affect women in contexts of harassment or territorial dispossession, as in the case of Radio Tosepan Limaxtum, in Cuetzalan, Puebla.

### 2.3.2. Contribution of women in the defense of the territory through videos and podcasts.

Given that not all women in rural contexts who are affected by a megaproject are bilingual or literate in Spanish, some organizations have created audio and audiovisual materials to address this need. Some examples are the materials created by the group Territorio, Género y Extractivas,<sup>18</sup> where several women share their stories of struggle and talk about the obstacles they have faced in the process. There is also a video that gives an account of this.<sup>19</sup> Another approach has been through campaigns, such as those of the Latin American Network of Women Environmental and Social Rights Defenders (Red Latinoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Sociales y Ambientales),<sup>20</sup> that deal with the defense of the body-territory; that of Juntas Logramos Más,<sup>21</sup> an initiative of La Sandía Digital, which brings together various organizations in Mexico and aims to reach out to more women who defend their territory by providing them with information and materials to strengthen their work, and the campaign Defensoras ante la Crisis, of the Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative).<sup>22</sup>

There is also the Radio Savia program, “Relatos de cuidado y sanación del cuerpo-territorio”,<sup>23</sup> which focuses on care from perspectives and practices in various Latin American countries.

Another tool for sharing the experiences of women in the defense of their territories are the reports that give

<sup>17</sup> Public pronouncement of the “Encuentro nacional de mujeres por la defensa del territorio frente al extractivismo, 2019”.

<sup>18</sup> <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7505438>

<sup>19</sup> <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7485048/video/374119380>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.rexistir.com/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.juntaslogramosmas.org/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://im-defensoras.org/2020/04/ante-la-crisis/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.radiosavia.com/>

*The creation of community radios has been a strategy to face these challenges. In the current context of harassment and territorial dispossession, there are several groups, mostly mixed, who have seen on the radio a medium for community organization.*



an account of the collection and systematization of data. Some useful materials are the reports of IM-Defensoras<sup>24</sup> and Fondo Acción Urgente.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.4. Linkages, networking and articulation strategies.

### 2.4.1. Gatherings and assemblies

We frequently underestimate the scope of national and regional meetings where women human rights defenders come together. The fact is that it is in these spaces where women often find meaning in their struggle and where they exchange experiences, strengthen their spirits, make unexpected connections due to the different geographies and, most importantly, find that they are accompanied, sustained, and supported in these processes. The gatherings bring together a variety of people - indigenous, mestizo, human rights defenders, researchers, activists, etc. - enabling them to learn about and analyze the different issues surrounding the promotion and implementation of megaprojects and extractivist projects in a broader and more comprehensive manner. It also makes possible the exchange of knowledge and options for sustainability in the face of new forms of dispossession. In the current context of the pandemic, virtual conversations, also called webinars, have been very important, since they allow us to share various issues of concern to women in their territories. To mention just a few, there is the Mayan Women’s Encounter,<sup>26</sup> which is driven by Mayan women from various organizations in the Yucatan Peninsula region. There are also the seminars of the Grupo Regional de Género y Extractivas,<sup>27</sup> which address women’s participation in contexts of threats from the Covid-19 pandemic and extractive activities.

### 2.4.2. Articulation with other agents

Constant dialogue between different regional struggles creates a network of containment, support and solidarity. Expanding linkage with organizations working on various issues (environmental, feminist, human rights) at different levels (local, national, and regional) strengthens collective processes, thus providing an interdisciplinary perspective. A Good example is the Grupo Regional Género y Extractivas,<sup>28</sup> which brings together

<sup>24</sup> <https://im-defensoras.org/2018/05/informe-2015-2016-de-agresiones-a-defensoras-cuerpos-territorios-y-movimientos-en-resistencia-en-mesoamerica/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/es/recursos/>

<sup>26</sup> Watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxNtkstHxtY&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>27</sup> Watch it here: <https://www.facebook.com/GeneroyExtractivas>.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/GeneroyExtractivas/> y [http://www.dar.org.pe/archivos/docs/boletin\\_my\\_vf.pdf](http://www.dar.org.pe/archivos/docs/boletin_my_vf.pdf)

various organizations, grassroots movements, and academics from several countries, who reflect and develop advocacy actions to make visible the role of women in the contexts of extractive projects.

## 2.5. Integral care strategies

**C**are, as a traditional role carried out by women in a broad manner, is also part of the work in the processes of territorial defense. In contexts where life is threatened and precarious, turning to personal and collective care work represents a political action of revindication.

### 2.5.1. Selfcare

**S**elf-care is indispensable to sustain the processes of struggle, to weave networks that sustain and to heal. The Consorcio organization works on self-care in a comprehensive manner: they have a project, Casa La Serena,<sup>29</sup> which supports women activists to recover their health, and has publications to work on the subject, such as the Compendium of self-care and healing tools (Compendio de herramientas de autocuidado y sanación)<sup>30</sup> and Journeys of thought and action: self-care experiences of women human rights defenders in Mesoamerica (Travesías para pensar y actuar: experiencias de autocuidado de defensoras de derechos humanos en Mesoamérica).<sup>31</sup>

### 2.5.2 Communal health

Faced by physical, emotional, and social illnesses, many women defend their territory through community

health. For example, the K-luumil X'ko'olelo'ob Mayan women's collective in Bacalar, Quintana Roo,<sup>32</sup> which works in the recovery of native plants for traditional medicine, or the organization Tochan Nuestra Casa, an organization that works on communal health from the women's perspective. They are located in the north-eastern Sierra of Puebla and their health work is closely linked to the melipona bees.

Other materials that recover ancestral knowledge for healthcare are those of the organization Ka'Kuxtal, A.C., from Los Chenes, Campeche, which shares the manual Plantas medicinales del pueblo maya en tiempos del Covid-19.<sup>33</sup> The material Mujeres tejiendo redes de apoyo y autocuidado,<sup>34</sup> was created by Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Francisco de Vitoria, and the guide of Calala, Fondo de Mujeres,<sup>35</sup> about selfcare are just a few examples of the variety of materials that show the work of women in caring for their personal and collective health.

### 2.5.3. Psychosocial support

Psychosocial support is of utmost importance in cases of harassment, aggression, and multiple forms of violence against women, in contexts of threats and dispossession of life and territory. Aluna, Acompañamiento Psicosocial, works in the accompaniment of people living socio-political violence and has materials to understand and work on this issue.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.5.4. Security protocols

Sometimes, threats and harassment become a threat to the life and integrity of women activists, which is why it is essential to have protection measures and protocols to follow in these cases. Protection also includes cyber se-

<sup>29</sup> <https://consorciooaxaca.org/>

<sup>30</sup> [https://consorciooaxaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/compendio\\_Autocuidado.pdf](https://consorciooaxaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/compendio_Autocuidado.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> <https://consorciooaxaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/LibroAutocuidadoweb.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> <https://es-la.facebook.com/pages/category/Cause/K-luumil-Xkoolleob-287329495070049/>. Para ver un video sobre su trabajo: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E70hJUH-JlBo&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E70hJUH-JlBo&feature=emb_title).

<sup>33</sup> <https://desinformemonos.org/plantas-medicinales-del-pueblo-maya-en-tiempos-del-covid-19/>

<sup>34</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pbhM7xHrGMNrs6NpTVZV\\_prEOcOBdAgC/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pbhM7xHrGMNrs6NpTVZV_prEOcOBdAgC/view)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.calala.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/autocuidado-en-tiempos-de-pandemia.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.alunapsicosocial.org/aluna>

curity. The organization Protection International offers manuals for women's human rights activists,<sup>37</sup> a guide for women activists in rural areas<sup>38</sup> and for activists of LGBTI rights<sup>39</sup>. The organization Front Line Defenders supports comprehensive security, both physical and virtual.<sup>40</sup> The organization Técnicas y Rudas supports social and human rights movements with a gender perspective.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.6. Strategies for sustainability

**T**hese initiatives are also part of the defense of the territory since they provide support and permanence throughout the movement and the struggle. Some examples are local raffles, the sale of handicrafts and textiles made by the women themselves, bartering goods, elaboration and sale of foods such as tamales, tacos, aguas frescas, coffee, honey, and salsas.

## 2.7. Strategies for advocacy

**I**t is important to understand the processes that are carried out to raise awareness in the decision-making processes. The document prepared by the Inter-American Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA), the organization Equidad de Género, Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia, and the Office in Mexico of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Derechos humanos y perspectiva de género en las contribuciones nacionalmente determinadas (NDC) en América Latina" (Human Rights and Gender Perspective in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in Latin America),<sup>42</sup> is an example of the guidelines needed to influence the incorporation of gender perspective in the area of climate change.

Técnicas y Rudas<sup>43</sup> has also developed various materials for working with a gender perspective on guidelines for the open governance of natural resources in the context of extractive industries; it also has tools for quantifying and measuring impacts in these contexts.

## 2.8. Agrarian strategies

**I**t is essential to think about agrarian strategies to address and deal with the very unequal reality that persists in the territories regarding land tenure and the dynamics that derive from this. These strategies include the following: creation of policies to integrate women in community assemblies based on internal ejidal regulations; communal statutes; reactivation of each Women's Industrial Agricultural Unit (UAIM) in the agrarian communities, so that women can work the land according to their needs and perspectives; strengthening of indigenous normative systems with a gender perspective; and territorial management (participatory mapping in which the differentiated view of the territory between men and women is made visible, land management processes, promotion of family land tenure and usage<sup>44</sup>).

Other actions being carried out to reduce inequality gaps in already adverse contexts include increasing women's access to land tenure, as well as updating agrarian registries and the internal ejidal regulations or communal statutes to make agrarian and community spaces more egalitarian between men and women.<sup>45</sup>

It should be said that, at this moment in time, it is a major challenge that political strategies such as advocacy, which requires dialogue with local, state, and federal governments, and national or international litigation, to mention just a few actions, integrate a perspective of greater substantive equality for women.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.protectioninternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Cuaderno-n.4-Protegiendo-tu-vida-mi-vida-nuestra-vida.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.protectioninternational.org/es/manuales-de-proteccion/guia-de-proteccion-para-defensoras-y-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-en-areas#>

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.protectioninternational.org/sites/default/files/publications/lgbti\\_manual.pdf](https://www.protectioninternational.org/sites/default/files/publications/lgbti_manual.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/es/programme/digital-protection>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.tecnicasrudas.org/es>

<sup>42</sup> Read more: <https://aida-americas.org/es/derechos-humanos-y-perspectiva-de-genero-en-las-ndc-en-america-latina>.

<sup>43</sup> For review: <https://tecnicasrudas.org/en/node/144>.

<sup>44</sup> The Centro de Derechos de la Mujer en Chiapas works within these parameters: <http://cdmch.org/cdmch/>.

<sup>45</sup> This is the work of the organization Tequio Jurídico, which resides in Oaxaca: <https://tequiojuridico.org/>.

Rural women in Mexico, as well as in other Latin American countries (e.g. Colombia and Peru), together with their organizations or movements, carry out diverse strategies of action and resistance to confront the current processes of harassment and territorial dispossession by megaprojects and extractive projects.

Especially within these contexts, women play a fundamental role in the generation or strengthening of women-only organizational spaces, in which they build processes from an integral perspective, as well as from their subjectivity and their bonds with the territory. These spaces provide a different idea of territory, fostering and renewing communal logics of struggle for life, equality, and dignity.

Through work such as those previously mentioned, rural women contribute to the modification of power relations between men and women, and to the reconstruction of narratives about indigenous and rural women living in territories affected by megaprojects and extractive projects. Furthermore, these processes have also resulted in the existence of political subjectivation processes as well as in the responsibility to get involved

in territorial defense. In turn, they have forged individual processes in which women move from the private to the public sphere: from fear and shame to speak out, to active participation and decision-making. Their important work in the preservation of the territory, its natural assets, and the reproduction of community life is made visible.

The various strategies mentioned in this document have undoubtedly represented a change in the way of conceiving the struggles for the defense of land and territory. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go to achieve fairer, more dignified, and egalitarian spaces for the women who are part of these processes and who struggle every day to improve their own circumstances, as well as those of their communities and territories.

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