



Socioeconomic conditions of the returned population in Santa Paula, Montería, Colombia

Condiciones socioeconómicas de la población restituida en Santa Paula, Montería-Colombia

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¹ Condiciones socioeconómicas de la población restituida en Santa Paula, Montería-Colombia

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Abstract:

This article presents an analysis of the socioeconomic conditions that characterize the current restituted population of the emblematic hacienda Santa Paula, which belonged to Clan Castaño, the visible head of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The study was structured in two sections; the first, through a historical synthesis, shows the context of the internal armed conflict in the department of Córdoba (Colombia); where the actions of the Illegal Armed Groups (GAI) break the social order, committing all kinds of humiliation against the communities; they are forced to leave their premises by acts of dispossession and displacement. The second section, describes the process of return and post-judgment based on Law 1448 of 2011. In Santa Paula, after the post-judgment, the returnees have joined state entities to train in different socio-economic projects. Therefore, the development of the research was carried out from a scrutineering glance at the official information of the Land Restitution Unit (URT) Section Córdoba, through the review and analysis of sentences, timelines and social cartography.

Keywords: armed conflict, displacement, land dispossession, land restitution, Santa Paula.

Resumen:

Este artículo presenta un análisis de las condiciones socioeconómicas que caracterizan a la población restituida de la emblemática hacienda Santa Paula, la cual perteneció al Clan Castaño, cabeza visible de las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). El estudio se estructuró en dos apartados: el primero, mediante una síntesis histórica, exhibe el contexto del conflicto armado interno en el departamento de Córdoba (Colombia), donde el accionar de los Grupos Armados Ilegales (GAI), irrumpen en el orden social, cometiendo todo tipo de vejámenes contra las comunidades; estas se ven obligadas a salir de sus predios, por hechos de despojo y desplazamiento. El segundo apartado describe el proceso que contempla el retorno legal de los pobladores a sus predios, con base a lo sustentado en la Ley 1448 de 2011. En Santa Paula, luego del posfallo, los restituidos se han adherido a entidades estatales para capacitarse en distintos proyectos socioeconómicos. Por tanto, el desarrollo de la investigación se llevó a cabo a partir de una escrutadora mirada a la información oficial de la Unidad de Restitución de Tierras (URT) Seccional Córdoba, a través de la revisión y análisis de sentencias, líneas de tiempo y cartografía social.

Palabras clave: conflicto armado, desplazamiento, despojo, restitución de tierras, Santa Paula.

1. Introducción

National security is one of the goals guaranteed by the State within Colombian territory. It seeks to ensure human dignity and manage conflict resolution in order to maintain peaceful relations within the country, as well as monitor legal and social situations for the purpose of protecting the life, honor, and property of the population, as enshrined in Article 2 of the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia.

The purposes of the State are: to serve the community, promote general prosperity, and guarantee the effectiveness of the principles, rights, and duties enshrined in the Constitution; to facilitate the participation of all in decisions that affect them and in the economic, political, administrative, and cultural life of the Nation; to defend national independence, maintain territorial integrity, and ensure peaceful coexistence and the existence of a just order. The authorities of the Republic are established to protect all persons residing in Colombia in their lives, honor, property, beliefs, and other rights and freedoms, and to ensure the fulfillment of the social duties of the State and of individuals. (Political Constitution of Colombia, 1991, para. 3).

Consequently, the Colombian State is obliged to take effective measures to protect the rights of victims of the internal armed conflict that has affected the population for decades. To this end, it enacted public policy Law 1448 of 2011 (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2011), known as the Victims and Land Restitution Law, through which the government made its first attempts at restitution and reparation for victims of the armed conflict.

Land restitution has been a fundamental aspect of social repair for victims of dispossession and displacement, allowing rural men and women to return to their lands and their lived world, which was interrupted by the scourge of armed conflict, a sociopolitical phenomenon that has affected Colombia for more than seventy years (Ríos, 2016), perpetrated by illegal armed groups (GAI). However, dispossession and displacement seem to be a never-ending reality, given the sluggishness of legal processes, security problems that make micro-targeting difficult, the persistence of the conflict, and the lack of conditions to move these processes forward.

In the department of Córdoba, since the 1970s, armed conflict has left a social and spatial mark on local populations located in the border areas of Antioquia and Córdoba, where the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) was based (Trejos, 2013). This group originated from the trade union and student movements of the time, achieving predominant control between 1960 and 1970 as a result of the dispossession of land suffered by peasants. In fact, the Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP) and the Program for Peace (PPP) (2016) argue that Córdoba's geostrategic location has been one of the territorial factors that attract the attention of the GAI, who are fighting for control of the region. These disputes constantly plunge communities into a world where violence does not

discriminate against social actors, creating a permanent scourge on the human rights of those living in the midst of armed conflict.

In this sense, the GAIs that have perpetuated the socio-spatial order in Córdoba, Antioquia, and surrounding areas for more than six decades have created a climate of terror. Among these organizations are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which established a presence in the subregions of Alto Sinú (municipalities of Tierralta and Valencia) and Alto San Jorge (Montelíbano). The FARC consolidated its power in the 1990s through fronts 18, 36, and 58. Since then, this violent armed organization has been active throughout the country (CINEP and PPP, 2016).

In particular, southern Córdoba is a favorable environment for the formation and presence of IAGs. This is due to its geopolitical characteristics, its mountainous terrain belonging to the Abibe, San Jerónimo, and Ayapel mountain ranges, the richness of the Paramillo National Natural Park, which consists of plains, rainforests, and mountains, and the source of the Sinú and San Jorge rivers (Corporación Autónoma Regional de los Valles del Sinú y San Jorge-CVS, 2018). and the source of the Sinú and San Jorge rivers (Corporación Autónoma Regional de los Valles del Sinú y San Jorge-CVS, 2018). These geophysical conditions and the absence of the State have been factors that have contributed to the intensification of the armed conflict for decades.

It is in Córdoba where paramilitary groups emerged as an organization. Since 1980, they were known as Los Tangueros, Mochacabezas, or Magníficos. They later consolidated into the Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá (ACCU), responding to subversive actions and any leftist ideology (Verdadabierta.com, 2014). They then consolidated into an organization with great control over Colombian territory, known as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), which implemented a nationwide paramilitary project with the aim of countering guerrilla actions and controlling income from drug trafficking (Centro de Memoria Histórica, 2018), while also committing crimes against humanity against the civilian population. at the same time, committing crimes against humanity against the civilian population.

In the years following 1990, paramilitary groups began to emerge in Córdoba, taking control of the territory and forcing peasants to abandon their lands due to their interest in owning them, given their high commercial and productive value, which led to acts of victimization. In this context, the case of the former Santa Paula hacienda, a territory that was a victim of the armed conflict, where its inhabitants were invaded and dispossessed of their land due to paramilitary actions, is brought up.

Santa Paula is located in the district of Leticia, within the jurisdiction of the municipality of Montería, the

departmental capital of Córdoba. Its territory covers a total of 1,195 hectares (Ha), and is located 40 minutes away from the urban center of Leticia (Figure 1).

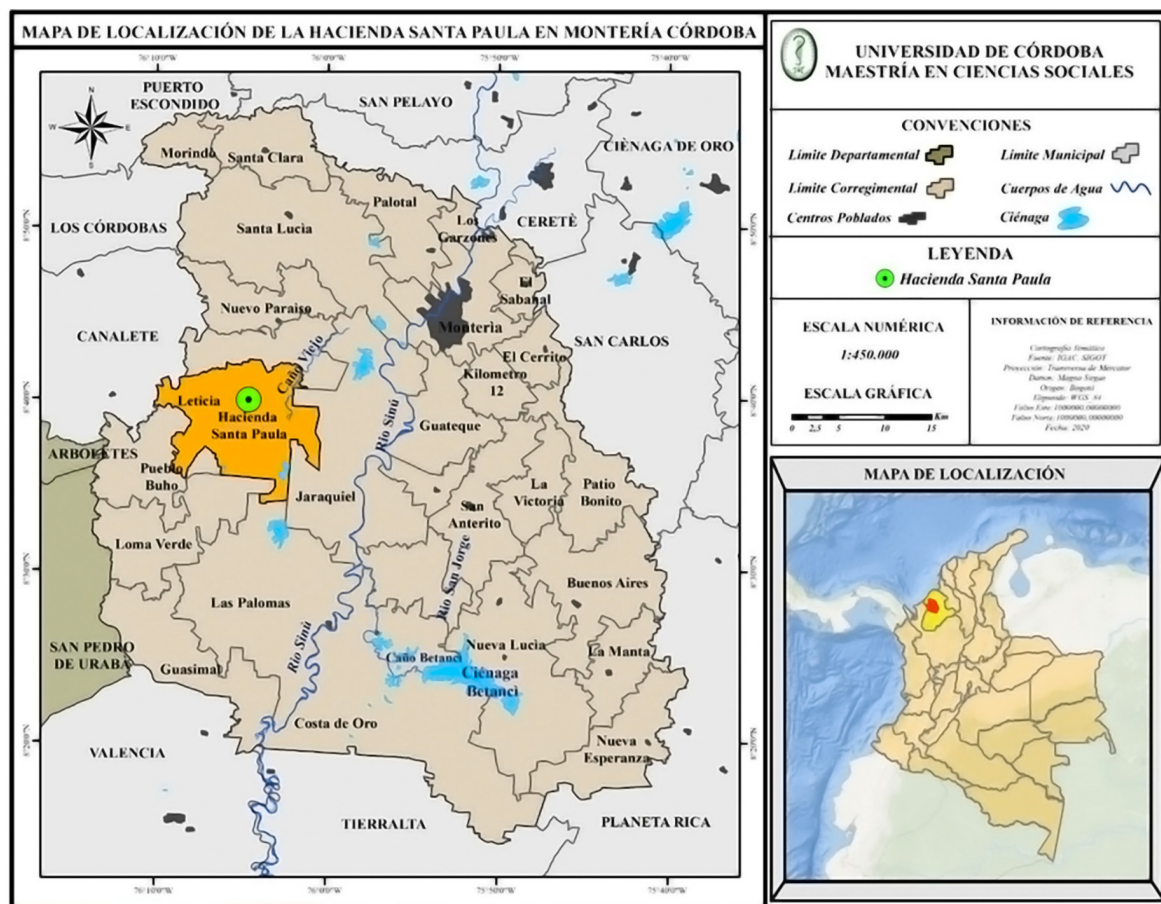


Figure 1: Geographic location of the Santa Paula estate

Source: Prepared by the author, 2022

Santa Paula has been a historically strategic territory due to its proximity to the Las Tangas estate, the center of operations for the Castaño family, known as the Magníficos or Mochacabezas. This estate is a transit point for reaching the municipalities of Valencia, Tierralta, and San Pedro de Urabá. It is located just 63 kilometers (km) from Montería, the capital of the Department of Córdoba (Electoral Observation Mission-MOE, 2017), an urban area that serves as a mobility and connectivity corridor for the GAIs, as it has a national airport, all kinds of entities (banking, administrative, educational, etc.) and greater economic dynamism. These conditions place Santa Paula in a privileged geopolitical position for the activities of the Castaño family (Forero et al., 2015).

2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the documentary analysis method, which, according to Dulzaides and Molina (2004), is a form of research based on a set of operations that seek to describe and represent the original information in the documents consulted, facilitating la unificación y sistematización de la existing information on a particular phenomenon. In this

order, the documents examined were: judgments and laws enacted during and after the land restitution process in Colombia, specifically in the case of the Santa Paula estate, where the experiences of rural communities bear witness to the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the GAIs.

The documents reviewed were: context analysis, judgments, timelines, and social mapping by the Córdoba Section of the Land Restitution Unit (URT), which were the main sources of secondary information when detailing the violent acts committed in Santa Paula. These documents record the social and historical events of the rural residents and families subjected to displacement and forced land dispossession. Similarly, primary information was collected from qualitative interviews with the residents of Santa Paula, who recount the actions of the GAIs and the socioeconomic conditions in which they find themselves after the armed conflict.

In summary, the research has a qualitative approach, relying on close and detailed observation of the subject in its own context (Díaz, 2018), addressing the phenomenon in two sections that respond to the objectives set out. The first section describes the victimizing events that occurred in Santa Paula, detailed in timelines and social mapping by the

Córdoba Section of the URT. The second section focuses on the socioeconomic conditions of the communities of Santa Paula, which are set out in the judgments and minutes of the Córdoba Section of the URT, following the ruling on land restitution..

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Santa Paula: land dispossession and restitution

In terms of conflict and human rights violations, the case of the Santa Paula estate is similar to the experience of Montes de María, a subregion of the Colombian Caribbean that was severely affected by the armed conflict and characterized by the convergence and confrontation of multiple social and armed actors (Gaviria et al., 2020). Among these, large landowners, paramilitary groups, and guerrillas unleashed a series of violent acts against the civilian population of the 15 municipalities that make up the region, seven of which belong to the department of Bolívar and eight to the department of Sucre (United Nations Development Program-UNDP, 2010). Both territories (Montes de María and Santa Paula) are often described as laboratories for armed struggle and organization in contemporary Colombia.

In Córdoba, the large landholding phenomenon was associated with armed groups that sought to refound the country within the framework of regional development, pointing to the paramilitary groups that carried out an illegal agrarian reform, consummated by paramilitary leader Fidel Castaño, who handed over land to peasants and demobilized members of the EPL, who were later dispossessed by Sor Teresa Gómez, a close relative of the Castaño family, through violent demonstrations, fear, and intimidation. The term “dispossessed” refers to individuals and communities whose property and rights have been expropriated and privatized (National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation-CNRR, 2009), associating this concept with the social and symbolic dimensions of the population of Santa Paula.

The Santa Paula estate was one of the first properties to be divided among more than 120 smallholders, each of whom was granted a plot of land by public deed signed in December 1991 and early 1992. These awards initially had certain conditions: the beneficiaries had to commit to improving the donated land, i.e., it had to be productive and used in the best possible way. This condition of improving the land later became a restriction that prevented them from selling, renting, or mortgaging the land, leading to coercion, although no major acts of violence were committed. These actions were instrumentalized by the Córdoba Peace Foundation (FUNPAZCOR), which was run by the Castaño family.

FUNPAZCOR was a device for Fidel Castaño's peace and for the agrarian reform program in the countryside

(Machaco, 2000), which emerged from the demobilization of the ACCU and then the EPL, actions that originated in a context of armed conflict that was not yet over, and a peace that was slow to emerge (Sánchez and Quintero, 2020). At the time, this foundation was applauded by local and national political authorities. However, with this strategy, the Castaño family sought to realize its political project and establish a “protective fence around its properties for personal use, made up of peasant families dependent on financial, technical, and administrative support” (URT, 2012, p. 9, para. 2).

The situation described above took shape in the late 1990s, when paramilitary groups in Córdoba reorganized, partially laying down their arms and implementing the political strategy of agrarian reform developed by FUNPAZCOR (García, 2016), an entity that formalized the allocation of plots of land to the beneficiaries of Santa Paula through a call for applications in the Rancho Grande and Santa Clara neighborhoods (urban areas of the city of Montería) between 1991 and 1992.

Over time, it has become clear that between 1996 and 2006, processes of dispossession took place on the Santa Paula estate. Hundreds of families were forced to sell their land at a loss or, failing that, abandon it due to the coercive measures described above. Forero et al. (2015) maintain that the dispossession processes in Santa Paula were violent, involving threats and psychological pressure; phrases such as “if you don't sell, we'll buy from the widow” sowed terror among the inhabitants. Added to this is the abandonment and indifference of the State towards the situation of those dispossessed, a population that survived in conditions of vulnerability, poverty, displacement, and stigma.

In response to the victimizing acts of displacement, dispossession, murder, and threats, public policies were proposed, such as Law 975 of 2005 (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2005); a law resulting from the Santa Fe de Ralito (Córdoba) agreements between the government and the AUC; and Law 1448 of 2011, known as the Victims and Land Restitution Law. These pronouncements represented progress in the restoration of rights and, at the same time, led to reprisals directed especially at land claimants and human rights defenders.

The process of comprehensive reparation for the victims in Santa Paula began in 2013 with the handover of the first plots of land to those who had been dispossessed, leaving the properties free of conditions so that the beneficiaries could dispose of them as they wished. In this context, it should be noted that the reparations process at the Santa Paula estate has had a historic and spatial impact on the municipality of Montería, becoming a pilot project for land reparations and restitution in the territory of Córdoba. In this regard, the single registry of victims in Córdoba reports that a total of 168 smallholders have been restored to their lands as of 2021 (Table 1).

Table 1: List of published judgments in Santa Paula**Source:** own elaboration, 2022, based on data from the Single Victims Registry, 2021

File number	Date of judgment	Process	Complainant	Number of applications
230013121001-2012-00004-00	12/03/2013	Special process for the formalization and restitution of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned lands	Leonidas Quirino Berrocal Segura Land formalization.	13
23001 31 21 001 2012 0003 00	15/03/2013	Special process for the formalization and restitution of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Judith Margarita Zurique et al. v. through the Administrative Unit Special Restitution Management of Dispossessed Land — Córdoba Territorial Directorate Córdoba.	16
23_001_31_21_001_2013_0017_00	24/04/2014	Special process of formalization and restitution of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Judith Margarita Zurique et al. v. through the Administrative Unit Special Restitution Management of Dispossessed Land — Córdoba Territorial Directorate Córdoba.	1
23001 3121001 -2013-0001	10/05/2013	Special process for the formalization and restitution of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned lands	Special Administrative Unit for Land Restitution Management Dispossessed _UaegrtD_Address Territorial - Córdoba	1
230013121001-2013-0002	10/05/2013	Special process for the formalization and restitution of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned lands	Special Administrative Unit for the Management of Land Restitution _UaegrtD_Address Territorial - Córdoba	4
23001 31 21 001 2013 0007 00	17/05/2013	Special process for the formalization and restitution of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned lands	Luis Alfonso Suárez Rodríguez and Luis Miguel Bohórquez Yanes, through the Special Administrative Unit for Land Restitution Management - Córdoba Territorial Directorate	2
230013121001 -2013 o0004-00	27/05/2013	Special formalization and restitution process of dispossessed or abandoned land by force	Miguel Bohórquez Yanes, through the Special Administrative Unit for Land Restitution Management - Territorial Directorate Córdoba-	11
23001 31 21 001 2013 0005 00	31/05/2013	Special process for formalization and restitution of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Leopoldo Jaraba Pérez y otros a través de la Unidad Administrativa Especial de Gestión de Restitución de Tierras Despojadas - Dirección Territorial Córdoba-	18
23001 31 21 002 2013 00002 00 (04)	18/07/2013	Special formalization and restitution process of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Hipólito León Medrano and others	3
23001 31 21 002 2013 0001 00	21/07/2013	Special formalization and restitution process of dispossessed or abandoned land compulsory	Manuel Gregorio Casarrubia Noble.	1
23001 31 21 002 2013 0004 00	2/08/2013	Special formalization and return procedure of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Elías Plinio Doria Bello y Otros	59
23001 31 21 002 2013 0006 00	18/12/2013	Special formalization and restitution process of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Leónidas Quirino Berrocal Segura	1
23001 31 21 002 2013 00013 00	9/04/2014	Special process of formalization and restitution of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Ana Matilde Peña	1
23001 31 21 002 2013 00016 00	24/04/2014	Special process of formalization and restitution of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	José Francisco Nieves Serna	1
23001-31-21-002-2013-00017-00	28/04/2014	Special process of formalization and restitution of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Special Administrative Unit of Land Restitution Management Dispossessed	2
23_001_31_21_001_2013_0015_00	30/05/2014	Special process for formalization and restitution of dispossessed or abandoned land forcibly	Special Administrative Unit of Restitution Management Dispossessed or Abandoned Land _UAEGRTD_ Territorial Directorate _ Córdoba	9
23001 31 21 002 2014 00004 00	18/12/2014	Special formalization and restitution process of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned land	Special Administrative Unit for the Management of Restitution of Dispossessed or Abandoned Land _UAEGRTD_ Territorial Directorate _ Córdoba.	1

23001 31 21 002 2014 00029 00	19/12/2014	Special process for formalization and restitution of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned land	Special Administrative Unit for Restitution Management Dispossessed or Abandoned Land _UAEGRTD_ Territorial Directorate _Córdoba.	22
23_001_31_21_001_2016_0107_00	31/03/2017	Special process of formalization and restitution of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned lands	Special Administrative Unit for Restitution Management Dispossessed or Abandoned Land _UAEGRTD_ Territorial Directorate _Córdoba.	1
23_001_31_21_002_2017_00002	12/03/2019	Special process for the formalization and restitution of forcibly dispossessed or abandoned lands	Francisco Miguel Martínez Solera and others	4

According to Álvarez (2014), this land restitution aimed at rural development and the organization of communities as subjects of law should focus especially on assisting those affected by the conflict, rather than on land use planning, with the aim of rebuilding the socio-territorial fabric of the population. In other words, the main objective of restitution was to rebuild the social and emotional ties that the villages of Santa Paula had before they were dispossessed. However, since 2013, Law 1448 has been condescending that the land restitution process be carried out in all areas (social, economic, territorial, cultural), although it has been hampered by adverse situations that seek to prevent the law from succeeding, including the presence of emerging armed groups, who perpetuate threats, murder social leaders, and dispossess residents of the municipalities of Valencia, Tierralta, Planeta Rica, and some townships and villages in the rural area of Montería, hindering the work of URT officials, despite the rulings issued in court orders by courts and tribunals specializing in land restitution.

It should be noted that in order to legally protect the properties returned in Santa Paula, 31 national orders and 137 regional orders were issued. The former were addressed to the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute (IGAC), the entity responsible for updating the country's cadastral and cartographic records. The latter were sent to the municipal Public Registry Offices to register the judgments, cancel mortgages, consult registry records on encumbrances, limitations on ownership, precautionary measures, false traditions, etc. (CINEP, 2015); in addition, to grant protection to the property for a period of two years, lift embargoes, and register the applicants' permanent partners as owners. Furthermore, other orders were sent to notaries to make marginal notes on the non-existence of sales and declare the non-existence or nullity of legal transactions.

In terms of restoring the right to property and ownership of dispossessed land, it is argued that the land restitution policy has been effective; in fact, administrative and judicial proceedings are currently underway for other claims. It is therefore expected that the land in Santa Paula will be returned to the owners who were dispossessed and forcibly displaced by the AUC.

3.2. Socioeconomic conditions of the restituted population

Before delving into the socioeconomic context of the restituted population in Santa Paula, it is necessary to highlight some key aspects, beginning with the collective reparation process itself, which began in September 2013. At the same time, it is important to focus on land restitution activities and the approval of the return plan for smallholders who were dispossessed of their land. In this regard, collective reparation in a context of justice and peace refers to the benefit conferred on a group of people (communities) to compensate for the harm caused as a direct result of human rights violations (United States Agency for International Development-USAID and International Organization for Migration-IOM, 2012).

Collective reparation in the Colombian context is protected by the 2005 Justice and Peace Law and the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law, which are the two legal frameworks for carrying out this process, allowing affected communities to submit applications for recognition and reparation for damages suffered during the armed conflict.

In the case of Santa Paula, following the return of the farmers to their restored land, the Córdoba Territorial Directorate of the URT, in coordination with the various entities of the National System for Comprehensive Care and Reparation for Victims (SNARIV), established a series of actions that are also multilateral benefit strategies. These actions included the improvement and adaptation of the Montería-Santa Paula road, providing better security conditions for traffic to these territories; likewise, the construction of decent housing, access to basic public services, the implementation of productive projects, the construction of a school and a health center, and the guarantee of educational places for children and adolescents in the educational institution of the township of Leticia; in addition, the ability to provide the population with complementary training programs with the support of the National Learning Service (SENA). Likewise, the implementation of health brigades and vaccination campaigns, the relocation of two community homes of the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), and the execution of the community kiosk and collection center revitalization project.

Given the commitments between the public policy proposed by Law 1448 of 2011, the responsibilities of the SNARIV institutions, and other international human rights entities related to the restituted population of Santa Paula, the following are the actions aimed at improving socioeconomic conditions within the post-fall implementation.

One of the first activities carried out in Santa Paula was the strategy called *Entrelazando* (Intertwining), which aims to rebuild the social fabric and community ties. To implement this strategy, a workshop entitled *El ser tejedor y tejedora* (Being a Weaver) was held, designed by the professional team of the National Unit for Victims, with the main purpose of strengthening psychosocial skills and advancing training processes on tools for diagnosing harm.

During the psychosocial workshops, the residents of Santa Paula who had been returned to their homes were able to express the events that had marked their lives in the context of the armed conflict. For example, on June 30, 2015, the community itself, with the support of the Victims Unit, held a commemorative ceremony and paid tribute to the social leaders who had been killed for defending and demanding their rights. In particular, the name of Yolanda Izquierdo was highlighted, and other figures and victims who died as a result of the armed conflict were remembered. As part of these events, a promotion committee was formed to draw up a map of institutional participants for the community of Santa Paula and surrounding towns, who are being trained in aspects related to Law 1448 of 2011, focusing on health, education, and the right to a dignified life.

In this process of restitution and collective reparation, short-, medium-, and long-term strategies have been outlined to address the issues identified during the working sessions of the various committees that have been created in the communities of Leticia and Santa Paula. These committees mention the community's distrust of state institutions due to promises of welfare and development that have not been fulfilled.

Likewise, mention is made of the breakdown of the social fabric due to the effects of the armed conflict and other negative factors, such as the loss of cultural identity and socioeconomic practices (cultivation of corn, plantains, cassava, beans, and rice, and livestock and poultry farming), which used to meet local food needs. Similarly, the committees highlight a lack of awareness of the Victims' Law and the procedures for collective reparation, as well as the failure to address material and economic needs, which, if not resolved, will leave the community vulnerable to the IAGs.

The URT, the Córdoba Territorial Victims Unit, and other SNARIV entities involved in the collective reparation process have outlined activities consistent with the reparation and State outreach strategy, with the aim of restoring the repaired communities' trust in State institutions and supporting the legal process of land restitution. To achieve these actions, the reparation

process has been explained to leaders in Leticia and in the villages of Palmito Picao, El Tronco, and Tenerife. There is clear interest in promoting collective unity within the community, improving neighborly ties, and strengthening good leadership, thereby benefiting the active and conscious participation of the populations in their own development as a means of reconciliation between the local inhabitants of Santa Paula and the State.

In the village of Leticia, a community leader acknowledges what she experienced during and after the armed conflict. In her own words, she says: "It has united us as a community; it has strengthened our desire to work for the village, its surroundings, and the surrounding communities. It is one of the positive things that has come out of this, because one thing that the violence took away from us was our trust and unity with neighboring communities. People from Palmito Picao, Tenerife, and Cocuelo are working on this project; this has brought us together as a community. Although not everything is rosy, it has been a challenge to get the mayor's office and the governor's office to join these processes and comply with the orders given by the land judges in their rulings. For example, the entrance to Santa Paula from Leticia: the road is paved up to Leticia, but the entrance is unpaved... When it rains, it is inaccessible" (Pastrana, A., personal communication, February 15, 2018).

Another community leader is hopeful and says, "I hope that after all this, peace will return; that everyone will be calm, that we will be happy, that fear will disappear, that we will remember the past, but that we will never live through it again, that there will be no repetition of all these problems. Hopefully, the government agencies will really take action and do things correctly, as stipulated, so that tomorrow the victims can say: the State kept its promise to us, we feel happy and satisfied... But things are not always as we would like them to be; there is still much to be done, and we must ask the relevant authorities to comply with the rulings of the judges and Law 1448. The fact is that Santa Paula still has problems with public services, such as water and electricity, which do not reach the entire district" (Sibaja, R., personal communication, February 21, 2018).

In terms of productive relations, the URT, in compliance with Law 1448, assigns each resettled family a productive project, providing support for two months through technical and logistical teams and NGOs, through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Both organizations have been essential in financing projects for different families, groups, and foundations created by the community itself. These projects become the economic support and source of income for the population of the Leticia district.

Following the failure in Santa Paula, state entities such as SENA have joined the effort, training communities in projects involving livestock, fish farming, pig and chicken breeding, with livestock being the most popular option, with each family receiving four to five head of cattle (Figure 2).

An official from the National System for Comprehensive Care and Reparation for Victims, in an interview on the land restitution process at the Santa Paula-Montería estate (García, A., Interviewer), stated that as of 2019, a total of 177 productive projects had been completed and 14 were receiving technical assistance. Some have been running for three years, while others require ongoing support from the URT.

En este orden, otro líder social, cabeza de hogar, alega que: “no ha sido un proceso fácil, al principio no tenía el conocimiento necesario para sacar adelante el proyecto de las cinco vaquitas que me dio la unidad, incluso pensé en venderlas, dejar la tierra en alquiler y devolverme para Montería, pero gracias a la asesoría de la unidad de restitución, del acompañamiento del SENA y de la ayuda que nos brindó la FAO, pudimos sacar el proyecto adelante y ahora del ganado recibimos la lechita, el queso, la mantequilla, por medio del queso uno consigue lo demás. Como uno hace el quesito va y lo vende o lo cambia por la yuca, lo cambia por la carne” (Palomo, M., comunicación personal, 18 de marzo de 2018). Lo expresado por este líder demuestra que los parceleros en Santa Paula, tienen la posibilidad de ser productivos por sí mismos, propiciando recursos de autogestión y apropiándose del predio restituido.

In this way, the URT and other institutions that make up the SNARIV closely monitor the process of the restituted residents. They also manage and establish links for the participation of entities such as SENA and NGOs, providing assistance to rural communities so that they can improve their social conditions as they begin their new lives and productive projects, with the dual purpose of ensuring that they meet the minimum standards for a decent life and enjoy their rights. This allows us to argue that the process of land restitution to peasants and smallholders in Santa Paula, in addition to being a pilot project in Córdoba and Montes de María, i.e., the first land restitution project in the Colombian Caribbean, has been one of the most successful processes, with around 90% of the provisions of Law 1448 of 2011 having been implemented. In terms of support, advice, and guidance for productive projects in communities affected by the armed conflict.

4. Conclusions

The Colombian government, in its efforts to counteract the crisis generated by the armed conflict, is implementing strategies that seek to resolve the situations arising from this phenomenon, which has been responsible for multiple crimes against humanity. One of the first mechanisms for restoring victims was the land restitution process, which is beginning to gain visibility in academia through conceptual categories that interpret the reality experienced by victims of displacement.

Thus, there is a need in the country to create legal, regulatory, and institutional conditions that allow victims of the armed conflict to be recognized by the State and to have access to comprehensive reparation mechanisms, taking into account measures of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition of the violent act, for the restoration of the material, moral, and symbolic rights of individuals and families affected by the armed conflict.

The article was structured around the case of the population returned to Santa Paula, a rural area in the district of Leticia (Montería), where the dispossession and displacement of peasants from their lands was an event that deeply marked the community. However, with the enactment of Law 1448 of 2011, the Colombian State, in terms of protection and compensation for victims of the armed conflict, is attempting to be a key tool for rebuilding the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the population. Nevertheless, the challenges and expectations are numerous. On the one hand, it strengthens, benefits, and directly compensates victims through the records that accredit them. On the other hand, there is discontent among some social leaders and local organizations that disagree with the activities and decisions taken with regard to the restitution processes, which is leading, in some way, to a rethinking of government policies on social development and agricultural support for greater effectiveness among the victims of the conflict.

The instrumentalization of the land restitution process in Santa Paula has caused tensions; for example, political participation in the context of collective reparation, framed



Figure 2: Productive projects in Santa Paula.
Source: Prepared by the authors, 2022.

by Law 1448, which led to persecution, murders, threats, and revictimization of the population, particularly targeting social leaders, many of whom were killed for being active members of land claim groups.

Therefore, land restitution, in the spatial context of Santa Paula, is considered a cornerstone of public policy for victims of the armed conflict, focused on returning land to displaced and dispossessed people, compensating for the damage caused to hundreds of peasants who were subjected to crimes against humanity, who not only lost their land but also their security, peace of mind, economic livelihood, and, in general, their living conditions.

Finally, the case of the Santa Paula farm shows the socioeconomic reality that characterizes a community that was restored after being a victim of the armed conflict in Colombia. In this way, compliance with Law 1448 has gradually allowed for the reconstruction of the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the inhabitants, where the implementation of collective reparation workshops, productive projects, social strengthening, and institutional support have become key elements and factors in the land restitution process. However, the restitution processes have led to the emergence of new problems, resulting from the entrapment and lack of control of the GAIs, the revictimization of land applicants, the insufficient action of state institutions, and the little or no solidarity of some sectors of society with the victims of the armed conflict.

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