







COPOLAD III International Seminar

Drugs, Vulnerabilities and **Urban Territories**



Moura Community, Fortaleza (Brazil)

24 - 26 April 2023





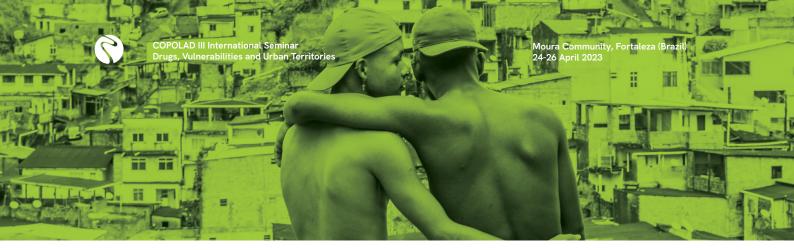








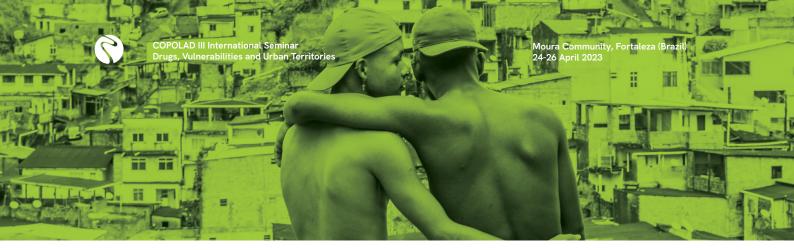




Conclusions and Reccomendations

From 24 to 26 April 2023, the International Seminar on drugs, vulnerabilities and urban territories was held in Fortaleza, Brazil, with the participation of representatives from the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean. The participating countries were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Venezuela, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Spain, Greece and Portugal.

The first day was dedicated to the experiences of the territorial approach developed in the different countries present, in the context of public drug policies of each of them. On the second day, the working methodologies in the territorial approach to tackling drug consumption were presented and a space for exchange and knowledge of territorialisation practices was created and the third day was focused on microtrafficking and the different approaches that each country has been implementing in its fight against it.



Proposals for Territorial Intervention

Synthesis made by Raquel Barros, from RAISSS as specialized assistance in the territorialization line of COPOLAD in the International Seminar "Drugs, vulnerabilities and territories" in Fortaleza, Brazil in April 2023.

The proposals for territorial intervention that were presented throughout the day show a set of alternatives in institutional and community prevention, some of them for harm reduction and others that are in conditions of high vulnerability such as street life and treatment with the development of institutionalised care and social insertion programmes. The following is a summary of some of the contributions made and the common elements found:

→ Interventions for, with or from communities: Different approaches are presented when referring to interventions that include a community perspective. Some countries share models such as ECO2 or CADCA, where work is done from and with the communities, i.e., it is from them that the action is defined. Others, in which the community is part of a plan of action previously drawn up on the basis of a diagnosis that prioritises areas that are generally highly vulnerable in relation to drug-related issues. These interventions have allowed the strengthening of civil society, building trust, encouraging the participation of various social actors, the search for joint responses, the expansion of networks and the articulated work with other institutions and dialogue with other issues such as security, coexistence, street life or HIV.

These experiences show the importance of interventions in the territory as they achieve a better use of resources, the development of direct services for people such as low-threshold services (listening, therapies, food, etc.), others in relation to networks (social development, health, education, etc.) and transforming the stigmatisation and self-stigmatisation that people experience due to drug use.

Another important achievement that stands out is the design of policies from the base, from reality, and the importance of having a good articulation between professional teams, the State and the communities. These programmes are instances of rapprochement, they are in the territory, reaching the people who live in the territory, each programme is diverse because it adjusts to the realities and the population differences with a rights and gender perspective.



- → Interventions directed towards institutions, especially educational institutions, with programmes aimed at reducing risks and strengthening capacities with children and institutional capacities to address prevention. These experiences articulate universal and selective prevention actions, in internal and extra-school instances, and also integrate articulation processes with the health sector mainly, with the surrounding communities and with local governments. Generally, these are responses that come directly from the State and are implemented in educational institutions on the basis of diagnoses and action plans drawn up by teams of professionals. These teams train teachers and members of the educational institutions and monitor the development of the processes in the selected areas. In terms of sustainability, these strategies face a lack of financial resources for their maintenance and projection over time.
- → Articulation of service networks to the various community or institutional programmes that complement the actions in prevention, harm reduction or treatment. There are mainly articulations between the areas of food, health, family, micro-credits, culture, sports, housing, education and work, the latter in the process of social insertion or prevention indicated in the work with gangs or to reduce youth violence or in the attention to women affected by violence.
- → Territorial control actions or interventions in which control of the problem is exercised through the presence of state forces that are present to complement community action with community councils or committees (which is a form of citizen organisation in the context of state participation) from which issues of gangs, drug dealing, delinquency or consumption, especially by young people, are dealt with. In some of the experiences presented, these committees are supported by a community advisor and financed with state resources.
- → Capacity building in the teams that act at the institutional or community level to address the populations and develop action strategies. Most of the experiences highlight that the teams are trained in the intervention proposals and these in turn develop training actions with the community and institutional actors so that they can achieve a better implementation of the work strategies. This increase in capacities is fundamental to achieve quality in the intervention and to achieve better results.
- → Inclusion of human rights, ethnic diversity and gender perspectives are approaches found in the experiences presented. They consider responses tailored to women, the search for access for all people to health and social services, the reduction of stigma and discrimination, and the promotion of the participation of all in the design and implementation of action strategies.

Addressing not only drug use but also other related issues such as violence, gender-based violence, HIV, being homeless and extreme poverty, among others. The complexity of drug use and its relationships with other issues has been understood, as well as the need to incorporate more comprehensive readings and diagnoses that are built with more social actors, including people who use substances.



- → **Diversity of populations addressed**, the most representative of which are young people and children. Also noteworthy are working mothers, older adults, people deprived of liberty through actions in penitentiary establishments, young offenders, women affected by gender violence, street dwellers, people who inject drugs and the populations of highly vulnerable communities.
- → Social insertion actions with innovative programmes such as housing for those who finish treatment processes and require a place that allows them to continue with their life project and therapeutic support. Micro-credit programmes to make initiatives proposed by people sustainable and to help them become economically independent or self-supporting, or in the case of young people, to reduce risks through employment and the generation of enterprises. Education and academic improvement actions are also highlighted as strategies that increase protection factors, along with sport and culture in the case of children and young people. In the work with vulnerable populations such as street dwellers or people with risky consumption, actions are aimed at improving living conditions, which implies a greater number of sectors that have to be articulated, such as food assistance, health care, work with family or neighbourhood networks, treatment or harm reduction services.
- → Specific harm reduction programmes with people who inject drugs require other approaches involving the definition of specific territories, active search, street work and the distribution of hygienic material for safe consumption. The process involves first determining territories according to the density of problems and conditions of drug use, then inserting oneself in the territory, and from there generating the practices of delivery of elements and others, which allow for safe consumption. These processes are carried out in partnership (agreement) with civil society organisations. Action in the territories is based on a harm reduction model.
- → Actions of education on drug use whose purpose is to provide information to young people, seeking to generate prevention and to address cases early on. A need is seen in these initiatives to move towards more comprehensive care programmes with access to basic services, social reintegration, entrepreneurship, and others to contain and reduce the risks of drug use.
- → Treatment programmes that serve diverse populations with a care plan that provides the means for the person to progress in overcoming drug use. These programmes provide places for them to live, care spaces, education, food, personal care, substance testing and training. They are given a certificate so that they can re-join society. These people are sought after and motivated to be in the processes. These programmes are staffed by psychosocial teams, counsellors, managers, health professionals and educators, among others.
- → Interventions from mental health. The actions have been aimed at people with mental problems, on the street, with lack of access to services, victims of sexual harassment. This initiative seeks to install mental health services in the community for people on the street with mental health and substance abuse problems.



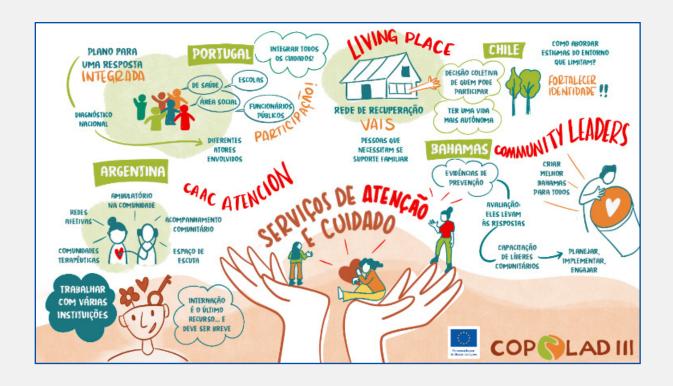
→ Preventive alternative development programme in sectors of high vulnerability with the seal of family farming, commercialisation and family recognition with socioorganisational certification. It is about strengthening the capacities of sustainable producers and good practices in the production chain. In this context, promoters and other elements for the market and distribution process are trained.

The experiences presented also reveal some of the challenges that are being faced and which are considered to be important:

- Stable and permanent financing of the strategies, as well as of the people in their life projects.
- Training of professionals and construction of evidence of the progress made and the practices developed.
- Leadership training.
- Review and identification of evidence of community-based actions.
- Exchange of experiences in various fields, with mental health as a key issue.
- Get people to know and understand what is being done.
- Being able to integrate the different cultural aspects of the communities.
- Influencing decision-makers towards sustainability of the programme.
- Support in infrastructure, evaluation, monitoring, mental and social assistance, and reintegration in prisons.
- Move towards opportunities for young people in order to stop migration, feminisation, low competitiveness and ageing of rural areas and to increase the conditions for rural youth agribusinesses.
- Community engagement.

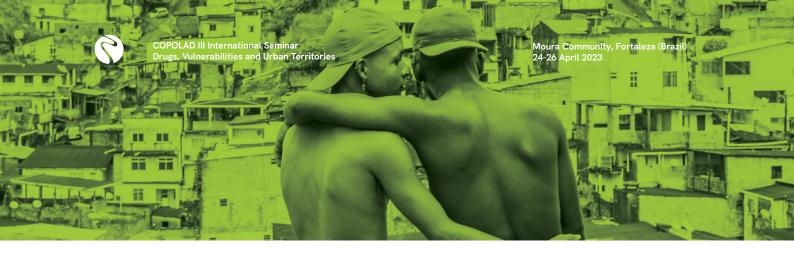












Proposals for Territorial Intervention (II) 25 april 2023

The second day was devoted to territorial intervention methodologies that underpin the practices presented. Some of the common variables that were presented are summarised.

- → Integration of new population groups to be considered and new sectors to be considered. Integrate or develop interventions that consider groups made up of women, indigenous peoples or black population, who are generally at a disadvantage in such a way that they find answers based on their relational, social or cultural particularities, reducing the stigma and discrimination to which they are subjected when they participate in services or actions. This requires the development of local diagnoses that account for the diverse situations and the articulation with social actors in the community through which to increase dialogue in the construction of policies. It is important to include the voice of the people in the recognition of their territory, in the identification of situations, so that the responses that emerge are coherent with the changes that are expected to be generated.
- → Integration in urban areas of sustainable, humane and peaceful alternative development programmes to offer a response based on health and socio-economic reinsertion, in order to face the situation in the most vulnerable areas. It is important to recover and re-signify spaces through processes that include all social actors, training in human rights and support for entrepreneurship. It is also important to build a more dignified life and increase levels of public safety.
- → Prioritise work mainly on drugs that young people find in their territories, based on a more comprehensive policy connected to what is happening in their youth reality, in their living contexts and with the participation of civil society, and the training and empowerment of community actors.
- → Work from the territories and public spaces that allow for greater security and respect the differences and particularities of young people, women and sexual diversity. This will allow for a greater connection and sense of belonging of the population with the territory, with the dynamics that take place in it, with the identity that is built and the



definition of safe spaces. This implies important work in the street and with the people, based on listening, dialogue, reflection and joint design. New ways of doing things, more creative proposals and a project built from the communities are required.

- → To increase the guarantee of access to services for all people, that is, to advance in the processes of decentralisation of drug policies from national to local and territorial level, increasing the possibilities for people to participate in the design of these policies, but also to access the services they find in their territories. There is a need to implement low-threshold access devices where people require them. Distance makes social integration even more difficult, so a strategy of access to services from the territories must be promoted. It is important to reduce the gaps that prevent people from accessing services.
- → Build comprehensive networks empowering communities to develop alliances with their leaders and institutions to reach specific groups more effectively. These interventions must be evidence-based, appropriate to the people and their particularities, coherent and sustainable. The local community must be empowered by establishing alliances with leaders, integrating what already exists in the territory. Participation is very important, one must be able to link the different plans with what one has and verify the gaps. To achieve the development of comprehensive networks, political consensus is required, inter-ministerial, housing policies, public procurement, technical roundtables. The objectives should be aimed at facilitating accessibility, reducing stigma, and providing care for families. Non-investment in drug policies is being spent in economic costs and suffering. It is more effective to invest in research, treatment, prevention and integration.
- → Strengthen local responses in income and income generation that also come from the community and are the product of community processes and responses to their needs. These responses must recognise the creativity of the leaders in seeking solutions, sometimes with unconventional actions, but with more local strategies. The strategy of community banks, cooperatives and all the other initiatives that can be generated in the communities are ways to creatively confront community problems and jointly get out of situations that counteract risks and empower the community. Public policies cannot be based only on bringing services to the community, it is important to recognise what exists and support it, as well as to believe in the productive capacity of the communities.

From the reflection "People have no frontiers, they are in our heads", what can be a community-based approach is proposed. It is different to think of the community as a culture or as a place. A distinction must be made between interventions that are based on the cultures and ways of communities and on the geographical and human realities where programmes come down. Both types of intervention have very different strategic perspectives.

The ECO2 proposal and community treatment are based on the territory as a starting point. Of all drug users, only 20% are in treatment and 62% of them are repeat offenders. Where are the 80% who do not go to treatment and what can be done? If they are in their communities or in prisons, then you have to work with the communities. This implies

that access to treatment requires other approaches. In order to talk about the territory from the territory, it is necessary to change the narrative, from below, giving a voice to those who do not speak.

An example is given to help understand what it means to bring a policy down to the territory: In Mexico City there is the Torre Latinoamericana, and to go down from the 44th floor to the street, someone can ask themselves, "What floor am I on? As a professional I am normally outside the territory, as a person I am in the territory. In a bottom-up logic, the starting point is the concern of knowing how many floors you have to climb to get this or that thing (money, for example). Every time one moves from one floor to another, one moves from one border to another. Entering the limit of the community is an emotional experience, it is an inner change that has to do with security, you enter to be part of the vulnerability, for which training is required. It is about having access to the community, and it is an agreement that involves training and knowing how to do it, being clear that we are the ones who need access.

If you start working in the context, the logic changes, people take a place and not just a profile. It is necessary to consider that communities are there before and after the intervention. People survive in the context. Communities have a non-formally installed capacity that allows them to maintain their flexibility and adaptation, which guarantees continuity and sustainability. This installed capacity consists of non-formal networks, which build leadership and non-formal networks. A strategy is therefore required to connect them, to be able to identify these relationships and to build a working method from there.

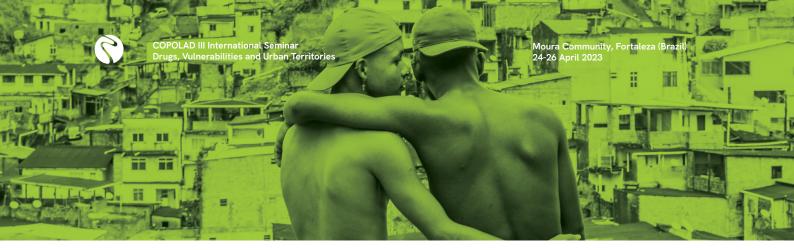
In the visit made at the end of the second day to the Oitao Preto Moura Community, located very close to the meeting venue, the aim was to offer the participants the opportunity to share different forms of intervention in the territory with vulnerable populations, as methodological tools for the development of territorialisation plans. All the participants gathered to walk out guided by monitors and volunteers from the community (Instituto Migrante Arte y Cultura, Núcleo de Articulación comunitaria y Afirmativa and Centro Espirita Casa de Sopa).

The experience ended in the Cultural Centre where the Fair of the communities was inaugurated, with the exhibition of the different artistic works of communities from Latin American and Caribbean countries. There were celebrations, dances and meals together with community leaders. The event ended with the recognition of the people who guided and organised this experience by giving them diplomas of participation.









Forum On Micro-Trafficking: Challenges and Effective Responses for Latin America and The Caribbean. 26 April, 2023

Synthesis carried out by Erika Rodríguez, expert of the COPOLAD III program. The systematization has been validated by the participants of the Seminar, both Public Administration Organizations from Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, as well as civil society organizations, financial institutions and academia.

Within the framework of the International Seminar the last day was devoted entirely to the "Forum on dialogues on comprehensive approaches to drug micro-trafficking," a topic agreed as a priority by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for discussion this year in the framework of the EU/CELAC Mechanism for Coordination and Cooperation on Drugs.

The Forum was divided into 3 sessions in which several aspects of the problem associated with micro-trafficking and its social impact were analysed. The Forum aimed not only to provide a detailed overview of the phenomenon in question, but also to become a space for participants from different countries to discuss the phenomenon and the challenges in tackling it, to share their experiences, both from the public sector and civil society, and to collaboratively propose alternatives and proposals for intervention and public policy. In addition to the Forum, the hosts of the Moura Community, in the city of Fortaleza, Brazil, offered their experience of history, life and community action, welcoming the Seminar participants to their neighbourhood.

One of the common topics within the different sessions was social vulnerability and how it is deepened by situations such as racism and institutional machismo. Within the analysis associated with the presence and impact of micro-trafficking, special emphasis was placed on the difficult situation of those who are the "weak links" in the chain of production, trafficking and distribution of substances considered illicit.

It is particularly serious the situation and the lack of understanding of the specific situation of women and the phenomena of violence that particularly affect them, and which are associated with their precarious social situation. Sexual violence, discrimination and



lack of opportunities are key factors to confront in order to break out of the cycles of exploitation and violence.

Likewise, many of the experiences and diagnoses reported at the Forum alluded to the need to address a gender vision, but also to address the need to promote decolonial approaches that understand social structures, do not criminalise or belittle victims based on their ethnic conditions, and that value and promote their own solutions "from below".

Security policies based exclusively on securitisation and punitive approaches have been shown from different experiences to be ineffective in tackling crime, but also to lack human rights guarantees and to be counterproductive in terms of reducing vulnerability to involvement in illicit activities. It is important to consider a broader approach to security issues, not based on the more restricted paradigm of public security, but broadened to include important aspects of sustainable development, such as citizen security or human security.

In this sense, it was stressed the urgency of addressing the challenges that microtrafficking generates in terms of citizen security, incorporating a functioning of police action and its practices that reduce violence and guarantee, on the one hand, the right to security of all the inhabitants of the communities and, on the other, the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as permanent and affirmative synergies with other dimensions of development and the life of the communities. A new push for innovative initiatives to strengthen community-oriented policing and human development is urgently needed in the region to achieve better results.

In this case, the specific problems and challenges faced by youth have been pointed out; their criminalisation generates pockets of exclusion and is an asset that criminal actors feed on, fuelling cycles of intergenerational violence and recidivism.

In the case of the analysis of policies designed to tackle micro-trafficking, the experiences of various countries were shared, emphasising the importance of improving not only institutional capacities, but also that the system should adopt a rights-based approach, which also seeks to rebuild bonds of trust at all levels.

In fact, reference was made to the many cases in which, despite the existence of alternative sentencing systems, judicial officials are unaware or distrustful of them, given that they do not guarantee key processes of social and economic inclusion that facilitate the inclusion of people who have offended. This is a serious situation, as it demonstrates the limitations imposed within the public authorities and requires rethinking the architecture of alternative criminal justice measures, with the inclusion of proposals and services for accompaniment, care and support to ensure that the cycles of recidivism are broken.

Other experiences demonstrated the importance of having information, data and the capacity to make evidence-based decisions, a challenge shared by all countries and their law enforcement agencies. In this case, it is important to highlight the importance of improving citizen security capacities through the use of resources to improve the effectiveness of their interventions and to avoid associated or collateral negative social costs.



Another extremely important aspect was the dialogue on the creation of economic alternatives as a preventive element and to reduce the dependence of individuals, families and communities on the micro-trafficking economy.

Finally, the importance given throughout the Forum to the role of organised civil society in the design and implementation of effective interventions, it was pointed out together with the difficulties faced by the public sector in scaling up and maintaining programmes that include differential and rights-based approaches, despite the fact that in many cases they have proven to be effective.

The Forum demonstrated that micro-trafficking is much more than a phenomenon related to organised crime and therefore, requires a comprehensive approach that ensures respect for human rights and aims to overcome inequalities rather than to use heavy-handed measures that tend to aggravate the situation.

→ Systematisation of the results of the executive workshop by working groups to improve the effectiveness of responses to micro-trafficking and to reduce the dependence of affected communities on illicit economies.

1. Knowledge and research on the phenomenon in your country

Participants pointed out the need to improve the information on which public policies are designed and to strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes.

One of the broadest points of consensus, in the case of the Caribbean countries is the need to generate data to understand the scale and impact of the problem of micro-trafficking. Likewise, the existing weak characterisation of drug consumption is also noted. In the case of these countries in particular, the importance of tourism for their economy is related to micro-trafficking, although the analyses in this regard are limited and, therefore, so are the opportunities to take advantage of the positive aspects of tourism to reduce social vulnerability.

Some Latin American countries drew attention in the same line to the need to create baselines, and to work on the characterisation of the problems, the actors and their interests.

A very interesting contribution, shared by Latin American and European countries, is the need for evaluations of the effect and impact of the policies implemented. The lack of this evidence limits the capacity to design more effective policies.

Finally, the need to improve data collection systems by changing the questions on the issue of drugs that are asked in household surveys or in different opinion and behavioural survey instruments was pointed out.



2. Participation in the policy cycle and coordination

In addition to the need to generate evidence-based policies, the lack of effectiveness of these policies and the lack of capacity for change and innovation that have marked micro-trafficking control policies in general in recent decades were pointed out. Another relevant aspect is the consensus on the need to improve institutional coordination and reinforce leadership, as well as the need for a broader range of actors. This means stimulating public-private alliances, including sub-national governments and having mechanisms that allow the demands, ideas and experiences of civil society to be integrated into the public policy formulation cycle.

Finally, the need for better training and awareness-raising systems for the different bodies of public officials was pointed out.

3. Effectiveness of interventions

In this area, ideas emerged, and very concrete needs are visualised. Among them is the need to articulate broad social policies that understand and respond to the different dimensions of vulnerability related to the presence and consequences of micro-trafficking. This means that, for example, associated risk indicators such as school absenteeism or unwanted teenage pregnancies, among others, need to be addressed.

The need to improve the viability and sustainability of interventions, especially those related to the provision of licit sources of livelihood for groups vulnerable to micro-trafficking, was also pointed out. This is especially relevant for very vulnerable groups, such as those who have left the prison system. Sustainability is ensuring that interventions have a real individual impact and are not limited to the project cycle. Interventions need to be better tailored to the needs, challenges and risks faced by particular groups, taking care not to fall into institutional traps or systems of racism or diminishing the agency of the target population of the interventions.

In order to improve the quality of concrete interventions, it is important not to give up but, on the contrary, to promote major reforms that allow for better drug policies. These include reforms to the penal codes, which are excessively punitive.

4. Political feasibility of improvements / social and institutional representations

On this point, the Forum generated very concrete ideas, including the need to decentralise a debate exclusively on public security parameters, empowering communities, social movements and local governments. For this to take place, it is necessary to dialogue, listen, and create mechanisms for a real dialogue on the issue. Another relevant idea, due to its innovative nature, is the possibility of creating systems for the participatory management of budgetary resources.

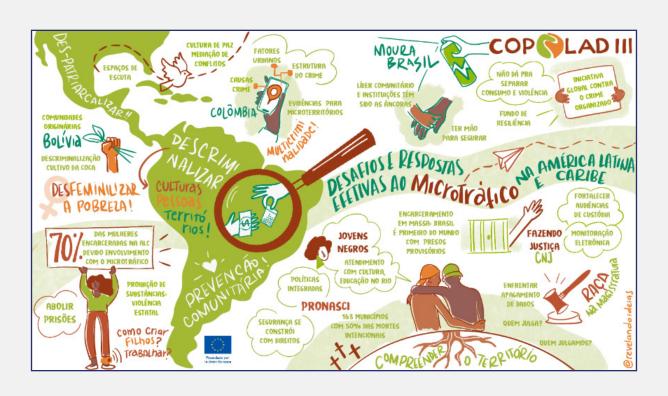


5. Regional, bi-regional and COPOLAD III programme cooperation

On this last point discussed in the workshop, the participants maintained their good impression of the work that COPOLAD III is generating, and additionally, they presented interesting ideas to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of cooperation programmes.

The development of working groups and governmental cooperation pacts on effective strategies to reduce the violence of micro-trafficking and state actors in the dynamics of the "war on drugs" was proposed. In other words, addressing the particularity of violence-prone environments and creating alternatives and forms of action. Other interesting ideas were:

- a) The formulation of a pilot project of experimental micro-urbanism, which contemplates the relationship with people, nature and technology; and the possibility of creating an urban laboratory.
- **b)** The invitation to contribute to the training of judges and prison officials.
- c) Continue to generate international meetings or collaborations for the exchange of experiences with or between successful programmes in the field of drug and micro-trafficking policies with a cross-cutting perspective.





















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