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The Silent Destruction: Environmental impacts of drug production and trafficking and State responses in Latin America and the Caribbean

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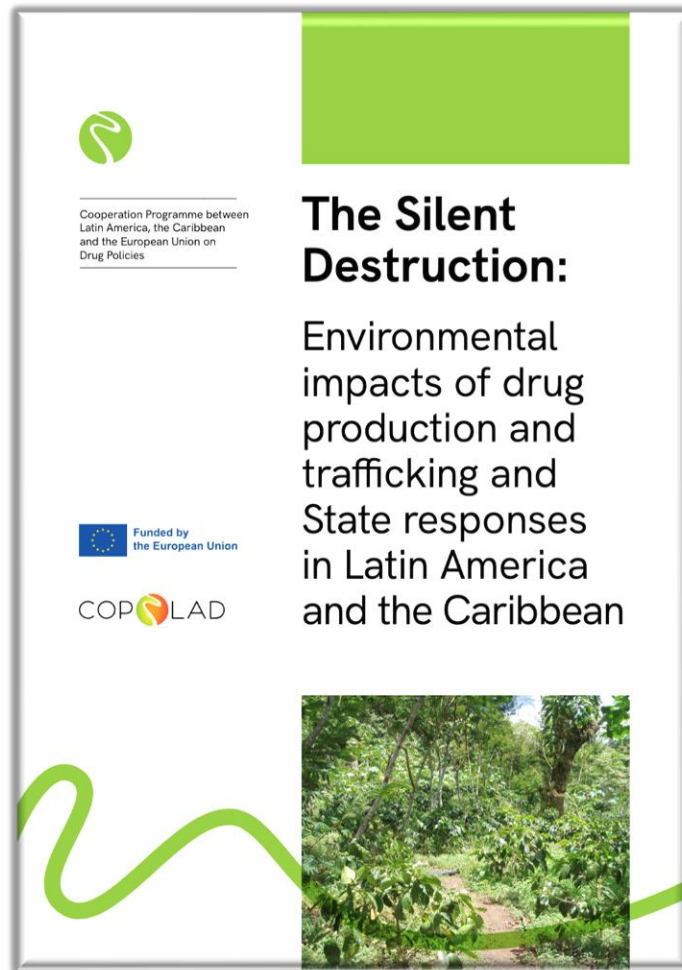
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THE SILENT DESTRUCTION

Objective of the report

To identify and explore the negative environmental impacts linked to the production and trafficking of illicit drugs and the interventions aimed at reducing supply

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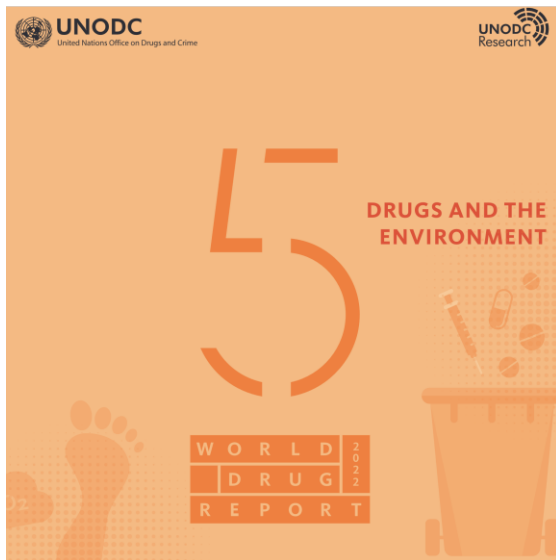




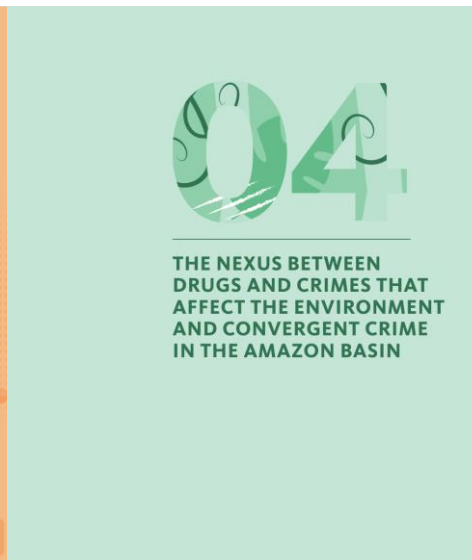
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What is the contribution of this report?

2022



2023



2024

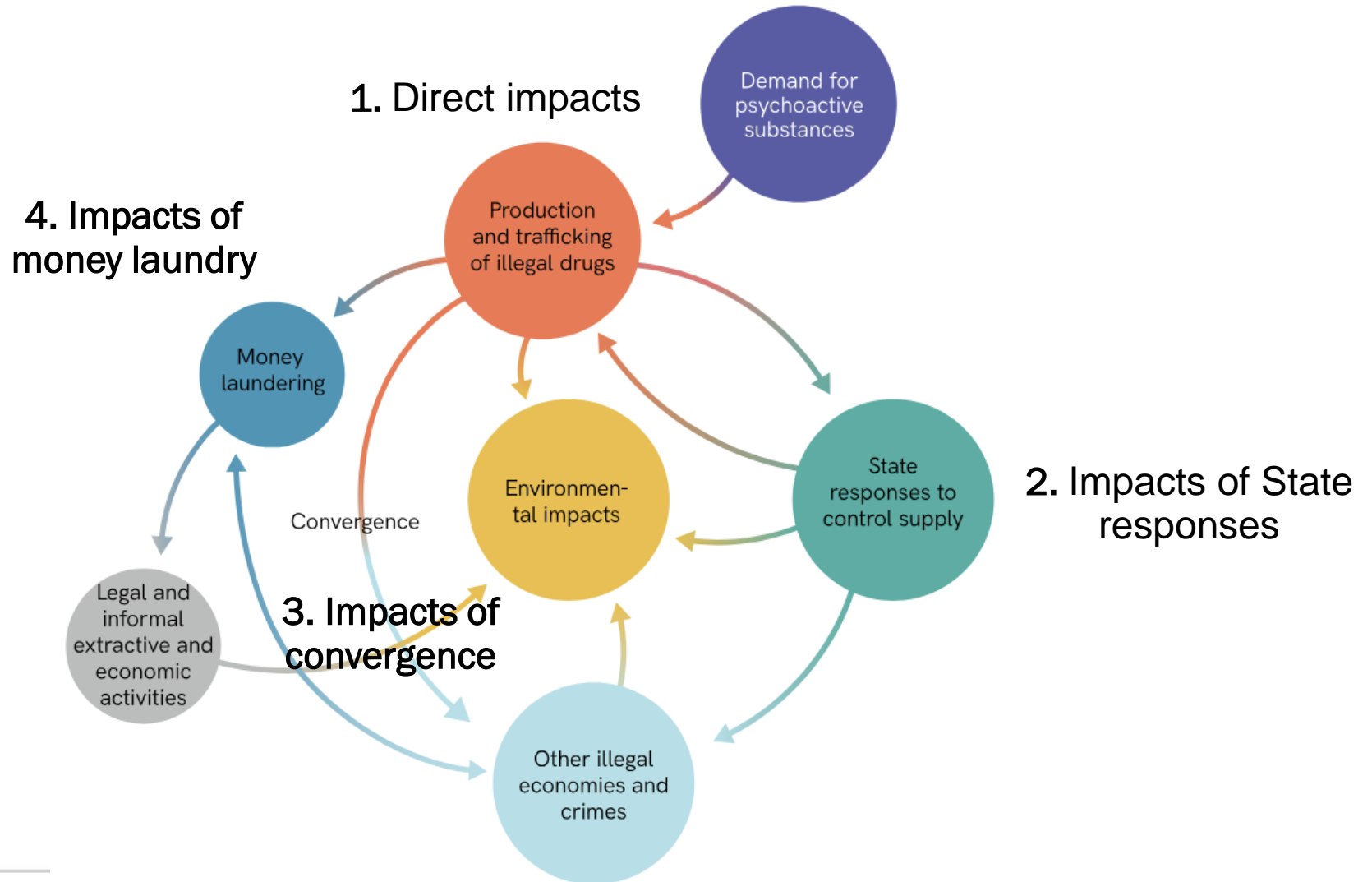
- **A systemic perspective** that analyzes and proposes possible alternatives to avoid, reduce, or compensate for environmental impacts.
- **Focus on Latin America** (and The Caribbean)
- Risks and impacts of the **State's responses.**
- **A methodological tool** for identification and monitoring the impacts.

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1. Impacts of illicit crops

Catatumbo and the Amazon in Colombia (2005 – 2014):

4% Direct deforestation

42% Estimated deforestation considering territorial changes

Ucayali Department in the Peruvian Amazon (2003-22):

50% of new coca crops in areas deforested for this purpose

Western Amazon Region:

48% Increase in the likelihood of deforestation compared to areas where there was not a history of coca crops cultivation

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Fuente: UNODC

The New York Times

'Narco-deforestation' and the future of the Amazon

The fate of Colombia's rainforest may lay in the hands of a rebel group linked to drugs and illegal mining.

Share full article



An illegal road in a deforested area of the Yari plains, in Caqueta, Colombia. Luisa Gonzalez/Reuters

Impacts of illicit crops in Protected Areas



Fuente: Mongabay. Perú: cultivos de coca amenazan áreas protegidas y pueblos indígenas en aislamiento en la Amazonía



↑ 16% in 2021
X2 compared to 2018



↑ 21.5% in 2021
X3 compared to 2010



6 de 23 Protected Areas
26% National Park Amboró
18% National Park Carrasco

Fuente: UNODC

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Impacts of illicit crops



ASSOCIATED WITH ILLEGAL CROPS
Granular/fragmented deforestation



ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER DYNAMICS
Large-scale deforestation



The responsibility for environmental impacts should not be placed on small producers and Indigenous communities in a vulnerable situation but **on actors with economic resources and the capacity to use coercion.**

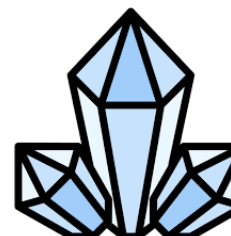
Production impacts



Potential coca leaf production

In 2022, 148.5 thousand tons of solid substances and 762.3 million liters of liquid substances

UNODC



Clandestine methamphetamine production

It could generate between 3,102 and 3,942 tons of chemical waste

Insight Crime

2. Impacts of drug trafficking (transit countries)

Biological corridors and protected areas

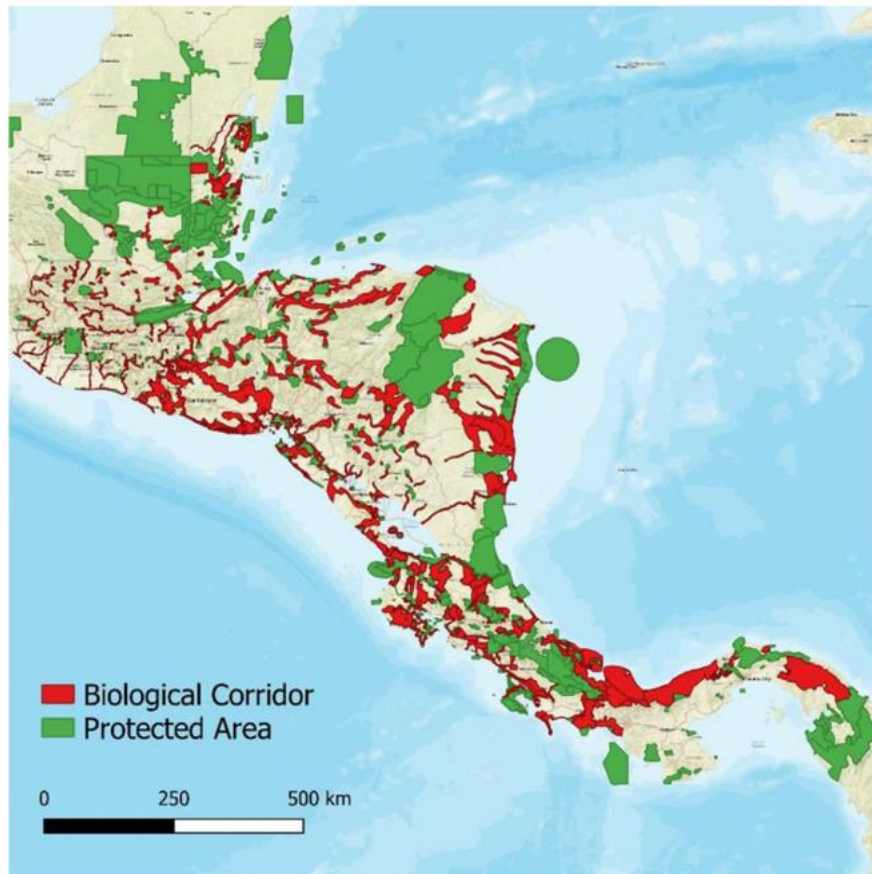
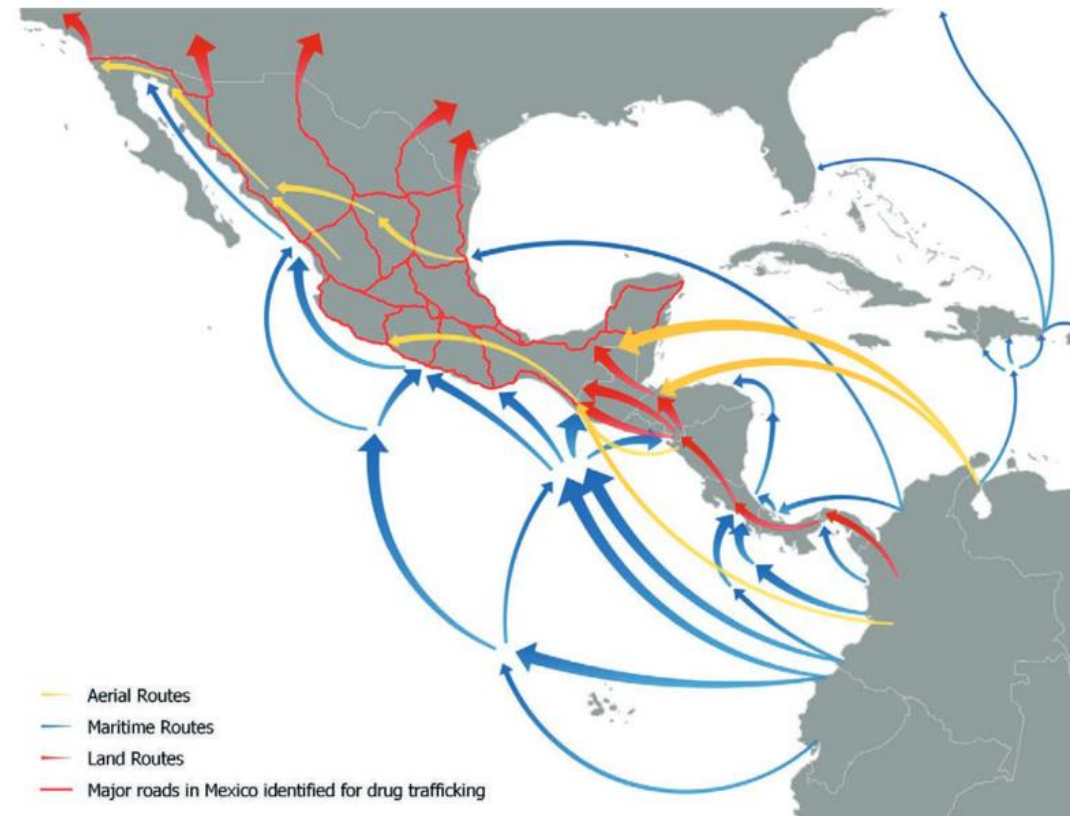


Fig. 4. Protected Areas and the Meso-American Biological Corridor of Central America. (Credit: authors)

Cocaine trafficking routes in Central America



2. Impacts of drug trafficking (transit countries)

Drug trafficking routes



Cocaine seizures

Figura 5 - Posibles rutas de tráfico de drogas en ríos de la región amazónica

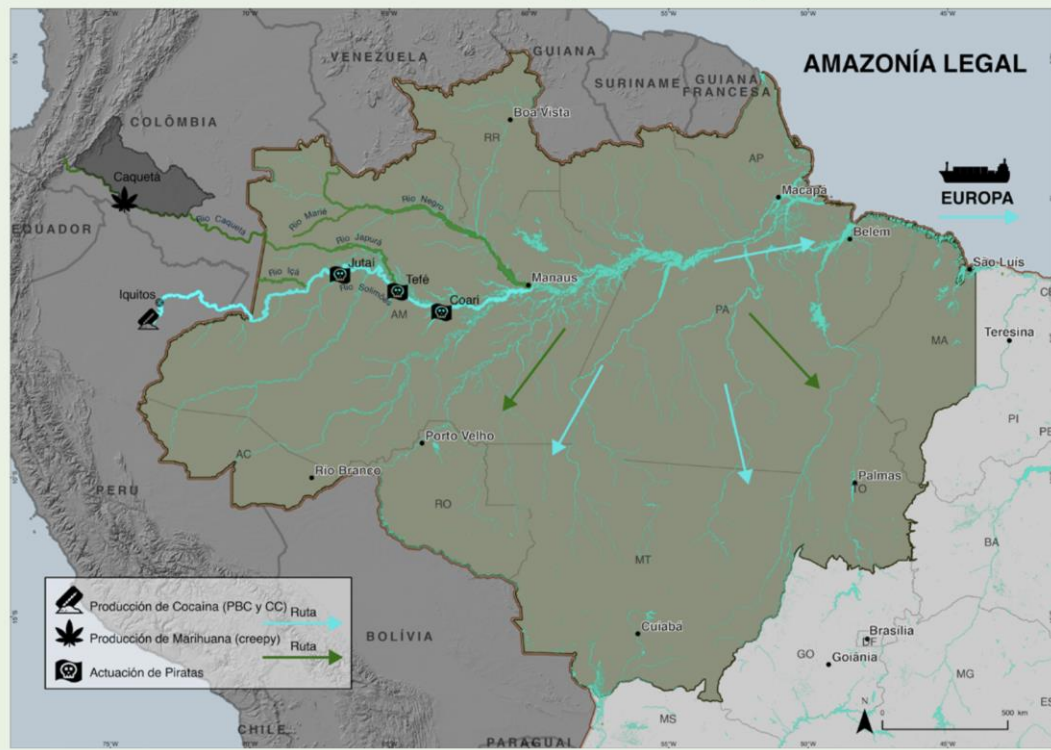
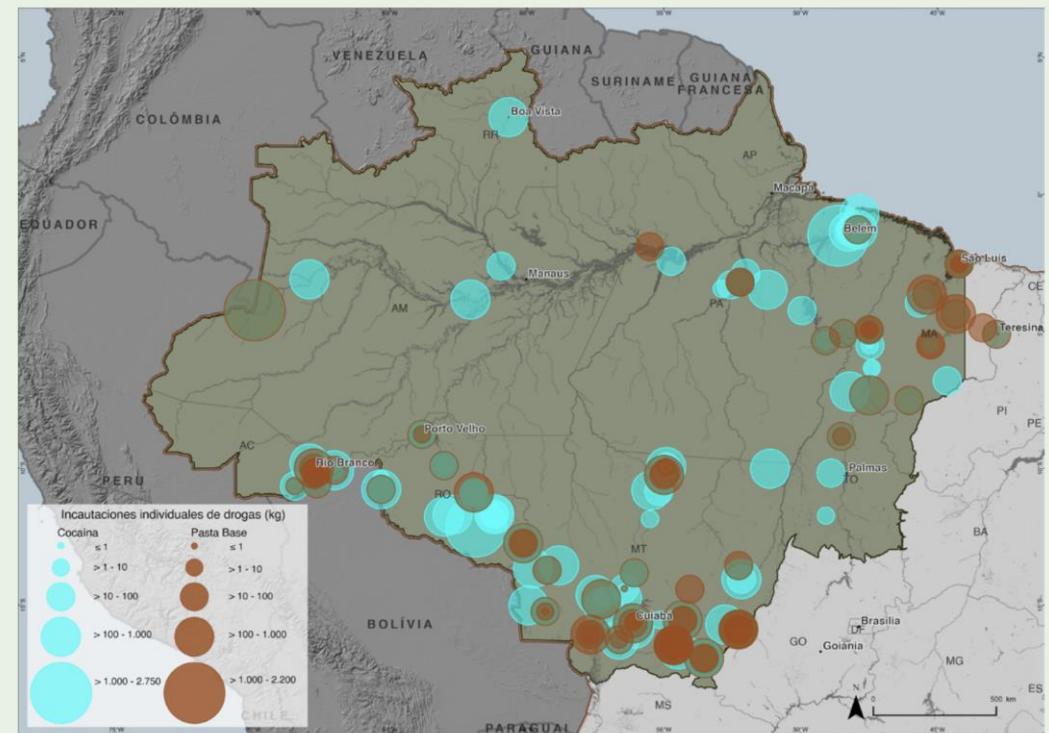


Figura 8 - Distribución geoespacial y representación cartográfica de las principales incautaciones individuales de cocaína y pasta base de cocaína en la Amazonía Legal en 2022



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Impacts of drug trafficking (transit countries)



Deforestación

Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua

15% y el 30%

Deforestation associated with the expansion of pasture areas capitalized by drug trafficking

(Sesnie y otros, 2017).

30% y el 60%

of new deforestation associated with cocaine trafficking and money laundering in protected areas.



Ortega y Gasset Award 2023 in the category of Best Story or Journalistic Investigation, by Bryan Avelar and Juan José Martínez Published in InSight Crime and El País

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3. The puzzle together: Amplifying the impacts



Illegal drug
trafficking

Convergence with crimes that impact the environment



Drug trafficking acts as **a catalyst** for other criminal activities.

Illegal wildlife trafficking



Smuggling routes and shared transportation methods

Barter trade

Illegal timber trafficking



Combined trafficking

Money laundering

Illegal mining



Shared smuggling routes and transportation methods

Illegal drug production and environmental crimes in the same territory

Money laundering

Type of convergence

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3. The puzzle together: Amplifying the impacts





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THE SILENT DESTRUCTION

The impact on environmental defenders and Afro-descendant and indigenous communities

88% of the murders of defenders occurred in Latin America

36% were indigenous, and **7%**, Afro-descendants.

Indigenous Reserves



18%
from 2021 to 2022



23.794 hectares of coca

127%
from 2018 to 2022

18,076 hectares of COCA

Fuente: UNODC



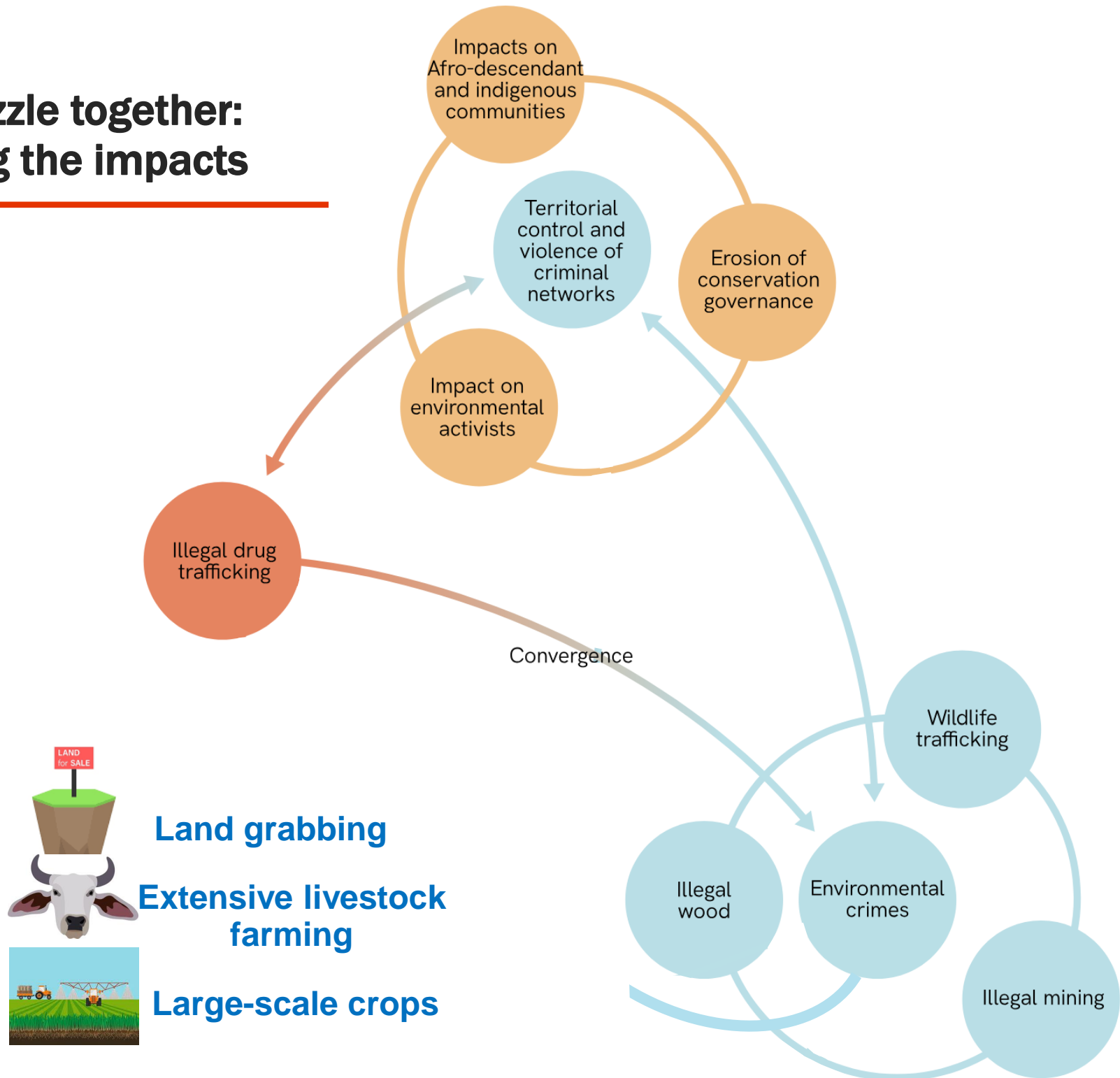
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3. The puzzle together: Amplifying the impacts



3. Impacts of the State's response



Aerial spraying with
glyphosate

X4 times more than that recommended
for commercial agriculture

Evidence based on its legal use shows the
potential damage to the natural
environment as a whole



Forced eradication of
coca crops

“Activities dedicated to
eradicating illicit crops
often have unintended
environmental
consequences” INCB



The destruction of
laboratories and
chemical precursors in
environmentally fragile
areas



Balloon effect

Shifting crops to biodiversity hotspots



Opportunities and levers for change to correct and mitigate environmental impacts

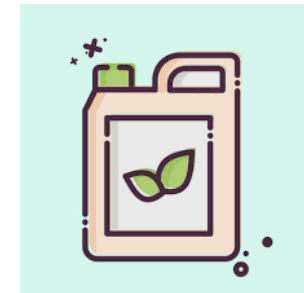
“Alternative development itself has an impact on the environment that, if not managed well, could be greater than the environmental impact of the illicit crops it is trying to address”
UNODC



The promotion of extensive crops and livestock as an economic alternative in environmentally sensitive areas.



Displacement and increase in illicit crops in areas surrounding where the DA is implemented.

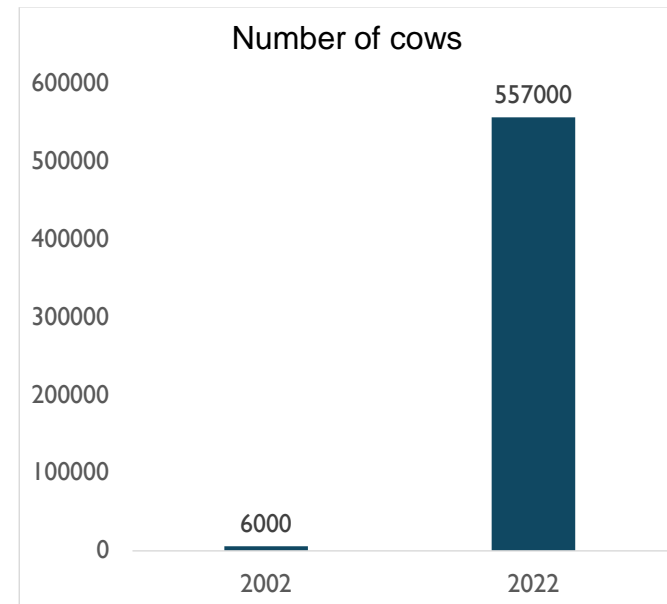
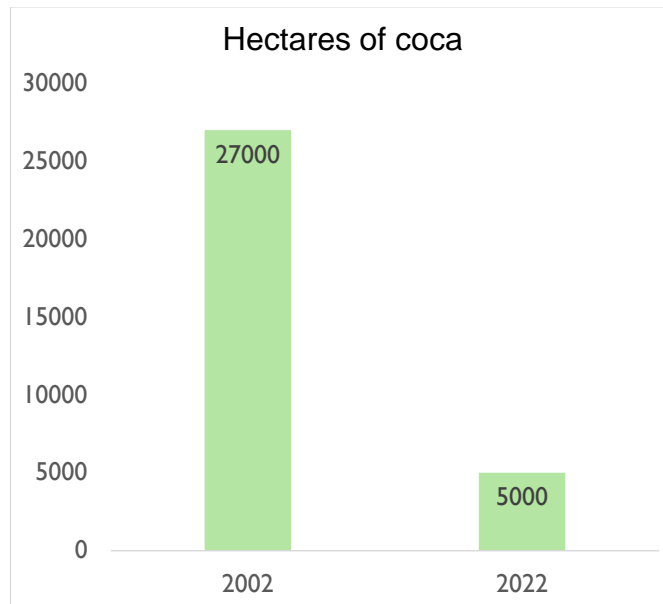


Maintaining agricultural practices that may have consequences for the environment

Legal economic transitions with
implications for the environment



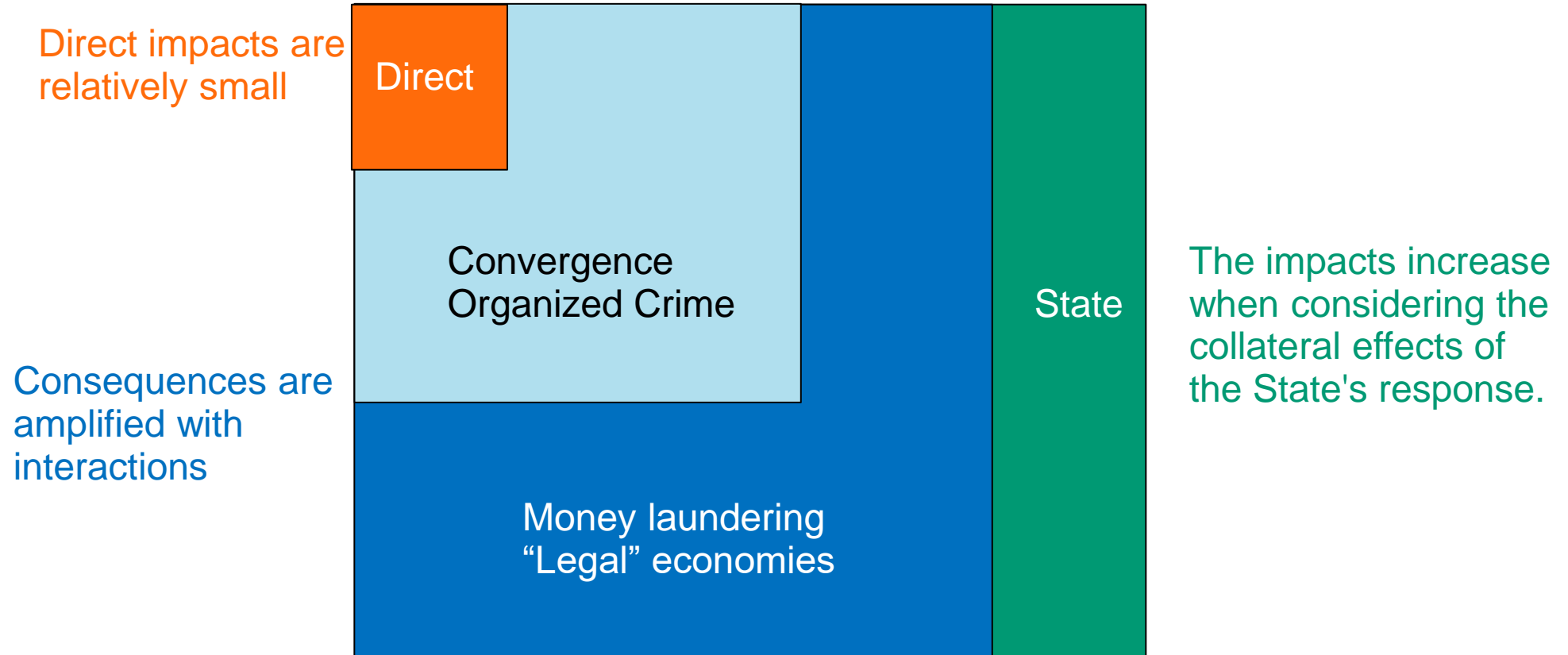
Guaviare



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The puzzle of environmental impacts



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Opportunities and levers for change to correct and mitigate environmental impacts



Improve information, expand monitoring and deepen knowledge



Working from convergence (not in isolation)



Recognize and disrupt illicit flows. Prevent and deter money laundering



Protecting environmental defenders
Protecting indigenous territories and Afro communities and strengthening their governance

Opportunities and levers for change to correct and mitigate environmental impacts



Moving Towards
Green Drug Policies



Alternative Development
oriented to the protection of
the environment

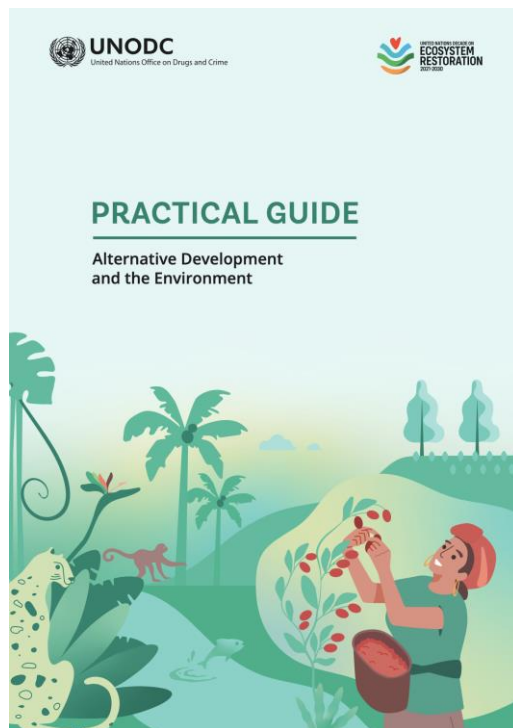


Regulation of psychoactive
substances with environmental
standards as part of the debate on
alternatives



Recognition and
participation of local
communities

Opportunities and levers for change to correct and mitigate environmental impacts



“Connecting drug policy to the environmental agenda not only has the potential to reduce environmental damage but can also be a catalyst for actions that contribute to the restoration and conservation of ecosystems that have been affected.”



Under the Principle of Common and Shared Responsibility

We can do it

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