



ISAGEN and the Construction of the Amoyá River Hydroelectric Center - La Esperanza

Tolima, Colombia

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CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and
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Presentation

Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) present this case study as part of a collaborative learning project conducted with businesses that have undertaken projects in environments in which Armed Non-State Actors (ANSAs) are present. The project is financially supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

This document presents the case of a hydroelectric plant in the San José de las Herosas village, in the Chaparral municipality, Tolima Department (Colombia). The project was carried out by the Colombian company ISAGEN. The period during which the hydroelectric plant was planned and constructed was critical in terms of security in the San José de las Herosas region, because the Colombian armed forces were seeking to regain control of the area from the FARC's Front 21.

This case study is part of a group of three studies that were compared in a separate joint analysis document. The joint analysis of the cases is part of a broader learning project about corporate responsibility and the identification of effective practices to manage projects in a way that enables constructive relations with other actors in the context, diminishes violence and risks of violence, and increases human security in areas with a presence of armed non-state actors.

The difference between this study carried out by FIP and CDA and other case studies on this topic is that here, the research examines successful cases from the perspective of external actors (authorities, communities, leaders, civil society organizations) and from a corporate perspective, identifying and analyzing the corporate decisions and actions taken to carry out the projects. It is worth adding that these corporate decisions did not contribute to the exacerbation of local conflicts, nor were they a factor in the deterioration of the region in social, economic, environmental, and political terms. On the contrary, they contributed to strengthening and developing local communities.

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Introduction

This case study tells the story of the construction of a hydroelectric power plant in the village of San José de Las Herosas, in the municipality of Chaparral (south of Tolima Department) between 2006 and 2013. This region was characterized by the longstanding presence of Front 21 of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or the FARC (by its Spanish acronym).

The inhabitants of southern Tolima have experienced sustained violence since the 1950s – first the period known as “*La Violencia Partidista*” or the Party Violence, then the strengthening of the FARC guerrillas and other illegal insurgent and counter-insurgent armed groups, and finally the problems generated by the illegal cultivation of poppies as a source of revenue for the armed groups.

In 2006, ISAGEN decided to implement a hydroelectric project at the fork of the Amoyá and Davis rivers in the Canyon de las Herosas, taking advantage of the fact that, at that site, the project could be viable without the construction of a dam and a reservoir. However, topography suited to this type of infrastructure was also suited to the needs of the FARC, which had a historical presence in the area. One of the guerrilla group’s oldest fronts, led by High Commander Alfonso Cano, used the Canyon de las Herosas as a base of operations.

ISAGEN moved forward with the project despite these severe security risks. For the project to succeed, the approval and participation of the communities represented by the Cañón de Las Herosas Community Action Boards (CAB) were essential. These boards together formed the Las Herosas association called Asohermosas.

ISAGEN carried out a long process of dialogue and coordination with Asohermosas, even as the FARC’s continued its operations and the armed forces attempted to wrest control of the region from the guerrillas. ISAGEN and Asohermosas reached an agreement about project implementation steps, environmental management measures, local content and community benefits, regional development activities, and security measures, with human rights guarantees for community members. The result of these negotiations was codified in a document entitled “Coordination of Benefits with the Community in the Area of Influence of the Amoyá River Hydroelectric Project.” The community understood this document as the blueprint for all aspects of project implementation, and referred to it as “the Testament.”

From the beginning of their dialogue, there was a shared understanding between ISAGEN and Asohermosas that the project required the presence of the national army for security. As the project moved forward, the confrontation between the army and the FARC intensified, affecting the peace and security within the local area, whose residents had coexisted with the armed group in relative calm over the course of decades. The FARC had also played a governance role and provided security in local communities. The effects of the conflict and complaints about human rights violations by the armed forces were addressed in an open and participatory dialogue forum called the “Transparency Roundtable” (*Mesa de Transparencia*), chaired by the Governor of Tolima Department.

The formation and administration of the Transparency Roundtable was facilitated by ISAGEN. The roundtable included delegates

from the United Nations (UN), the Vice President's Council for Human Rights, the People's Ombudsman's Office, the armed forces, the Tolima police, the Attorney General's Office, the Mayor's Office, and the Chaparral Municipal Ombudsman's Office, as well as the communities of Las Herosas. The Roundtable provided a forum for communities to express their complaints, and for the armed forces to respond to them. The army had long viewed the Las Herosas communities as collaborators with the guerrillas, and the communities had long seen the army as a hostile and violent force. The Roundtable enabled dialogue between these conflicting groups. At the most critical moments of the project, the Transparency Roundtable enabled its continuity.

The Amoyá River Hydroelectric Center – La Esperanza was inaugurated in July 2013, despite security problems, attacks against workers, interruption of the Roundtable dialogue, and other obstacles. The inauguration of the plant was also the culmination of an exemplary process of strengthening and expanding community leadership, especially that of the Asoherosas organization, as a competent and credible representative of the communities.

The project's problems, challenges, and solutions are addressed in detail through the case study's three sections: i) the context of violence at the national, regional, and local levels; ii) background, challenges, and implementation of the project; and iii) the situation in the region after the conclusion of the project.

Methodology

The present case study is based on information collected both from within the company and from stakeholders of the project, including members of the Las Hermosas communities.

ISAGEN provided for review a range of internal documents, including technical studies related to the construction of the hydropower station. Information was also collected through semi-structured interviews with ISAGEN personnel, including executives. The goal was to understand the project from the operational standpoint, including the challenges, dilemmas, and decisions taken by the company in order to achieve its business objectives.

Data was also taken from primary and secondary sources including the press, academic studies, regional analyses, and official sources. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with communities, local authorities, and leaders who were directly involved in the construction of the hydroelectric plant and the Transparency Roundtable.

Interviews with operational personnel and external actors were carried out in April 2016 at ISAGEN's headquarters in Medellín. The external interviews were carried out in the Chaparral Municipality in May 2016.

The study is written in a narrative format in which the operational challenges and external actors' actions are addressed in some detail. The objective of the narrative is to demonstrate the course of the history of the project and its outcomes, in addition to presenting two different perspectives (the company's and those of external actors) on the creation of the plant.

Fundación Ideas para la Paz and CDA are grateful to ISAGEN for its interest in this case study and for having collaborated in the logistical and documentation processes. We would also like to thank the community leaders who were interviewed in the Chaparral municipality for having generously given their time for interviews and consultations, and for having provided the information necessary for the completion of this study.



List of acronyms

Asohermosas: Asociación de Las Hermosas con desarrollo al futuro (Las Hermosas Association, for Development towards the Future)

AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)

CCC: Comando Conjunto Central de las FARC (Joint Central Command of the FARC)

CDA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

CNMH: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Center for Historical Memory)

FARC-EP: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, Ejército Popular (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, People's Army)

FIP: Fundación Ideas para la Paz (Ideas for Peace Foundation)

ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)

EPL: Ejército Popular de Liberación (People's Liberation Army)

PC3: Partido Comunista Clandestino (Clandestine Communist Party)

EMP: Environmental Management Plan

FGFP: Forest Guardian Families Program

CAB: Community Action Board

The Case of the Amoyá River Hydroelectric Center - La Esperanza



Image 1. Aerial view of the Las Herosas Canyon. Image taken from the Colparques website. [Online] [Accessed October 7, 2016]. Available at: <http://www.colparques.net/HERMOSAS>

1. Context

1.1 Location of the project

In 2013, the Amoyá River Hydroelectric Center – La Esperanza began operations. It had been built by the Colombian company ISAGEN in the community of Las Herosas, Chaparral Municipality, in southern Tolima Department (Colombia). The hydroelectric station has capacity to generate 80 MW (megawatts), taking advantage of the convergence of the Amoyá and Davis rivers through a process of capturing the “run of the river,” avoiding the construction of a dam.

The Chaparral municipality is 163 kilometers from Ibagué, Tolima’s capital. The village of

Las Herosas is located in the Las Herosas Canyon, in the lowlands of the Las Herosas National Park, in the central mountain range that runs between the Valle del Cauca and Tolima departments. The park, which is 125,000 hectares in total, is characterized by the presence of craggy outcrops, more than 300 lagoons, extensive moorlands, steep mountainsides, and Andean jungles, making access difficult. The Amoyá River, among others, begins in the park.

The main economic activity in Chaparral is agriculture, in which coffee and fruit growing have prominence. Animal husbandry and fishing are secondary activities, carried out in rural areas. In the urban area, incomes derive from commercial activities and services

including banks, transport, and sales of food and supplies.

Chaparral municipality is divided into five territories, and 151 villages. According to official figures, the approximate number of inhabitants of the municipality was 47,248 in 2016, of whom 26,176 were in the urban area and 20,532 were in the rural area.¹

The Las Hermosas territory includes a total of 28 villages and covers approximately 46,000 hectares. With respect to its population, according to a community census in 2014, there were 5,111 people, of whom 2,312 were women and 2,799 men.

The settlement of Las Hermosas began in the 1930s, with greater growth between 1960 and 1970 because of the expansion of the coffee economy at the national level. For the inhabitants of the territory, the 60s and 70s were a prosperous time, especially because of the high price of coffee on the global market. The first community organizations were created during this period, including the Coffee Growers Committee and the Community Action Boards (CAB).

These organizations were the first to promote the construction of community projects such as bridges and footpaths, given the few public initiatives at the time.²

¹ Source: National Administrative Statistics Department (DANE) – 2015.

² ASOHERMOSAS and Universidad Javeriana Data. Las Hermosas Sustainable Development Plan 2012 – 2030, Chaparral, Tolima. Bogotá, 2014. p.37.

The settlement process of the Las Hermosas territory did not involve national or regional institutions, or significant investment in public works. The projects carried out through local initiative during the settlement process were insufficient to meet the basic needs of the community, such as access to clean drinking water, education, health, and transportation.

At the time when construction of the Amoyá Hydroelectric Center got underway, the population perceived that the local and national governments had failed to care or account for their needs. According to the territory's Development Plan (2014), state institutions were present in the form of schools and teachers, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF by its Spanish acronym),³ the national parks service, and eventually health brigades.⁴

Among the critical indicators that stood out in the baseline study of the territory taken in 2012 was the fact that only 39% of the population had running water, only 5.7% had access to sewage services, and 20% of homes did not have electricity. A large part of the residential infrastructure was deteriorating, with many houses located near roads and paths and in areas at high risk of landslide.⁵

The most prominent economic activity in the territory was coffee cultivation, although there were low levels of productivity and mechanization in the coffee sector. In some villages at higher elevations, there was milk production and keeping of livestock as well.

³ National Colombian institution in charge of child and adolescent protection.

⁴ Data Ibid.

⁵ Data. Ibid. Pp. 41 – 42

1.2 National context of armed violence

Before addressing the dynamics of violence and presence of illegal armed groups in the region, it is important to explain the national arena in which those dynamics developed, in order to contextualize ISAGEN's hydroelectric project in Chaparral Municipality.

Since the 1960s in Colombia, there has been a low intensity armed conflict between illegal actors and Colombian state forces. Among the illegal actors are leftist guerrilla groups: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, People's Army (FARC-EP by its Spanish acronym), the National Liberation Army (ELN by its Spanish acronym), and the People's Liberation Army (EPL by its Spanish acronym). In the 1980s, right-wing paramilitary or "self-defense" groups, arose in reaction to the insurgency. In addition, there are drug trafficking cartels and other organized crime groups associated with narcotics trafficking and kidnapping.

Analyses of the causes of the conflict diverge with respect to its origins and drivers, as well as the different periodizations of Colombian history. However, current dynamics of conflict can largely be explained by the challenge the guerrilla groups presented to the Colombian State in the sixties, in addition to international factors such as the Cuban Revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union in the middle of the twentieth century. Some of the factors that have prolonged the conflict until today are the substantial resources armed groups have been able to generate through drug trafficking, combined with a state that has been weak historically in terms of its ability to monopolize the use of force.

The origins of the conflict can be traced to the times of the Party Violence from 1948 to 1958. This chapter of Colombian history

involved a conflict between sympathizers of the Conservative and Liberal parties, respectively, in a confrontation that, without being declared a civil war, left approximately 300,000 people dead. Even though this period is said to begin in 1948 with the assassination of Liberal political leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in Bogotá during the 19th Panamerican Conference, interparty violence had been occurring since the 1930s.

Gaitán's assassination, however, triggered episodes of violence in different areas of the country. Liberals, furious over the murder of their leader, acted against Conservative families and leaders. Conservatives recruited and armed peasants and sympathizers in the Boyacá Department, with the intention of preserving the Conservative government of President Mariano Ospina Pérez. Conservative armed groups, known as "chulavitas," were ferried to conflict zones to quell uprisings. This situation intensified the violence in broad swaths of the country such as the Eastern Plains (in the east of Colombia) and the center, including Tolima Department.

In Tolima, the "chulavitas" confronted the so-called "gaitainistas," resulting in several massacres in the municipalities of Anzoátegui, Falan, Chaparral, and Rovira. In these municipalities, organized Liberal self-defense groups fled to rural areas for safety. These groups were the early manifestations of the future Liberal guerrillas in the south of Tolima.⁶

In the early years of the 1950s, the country experienced widespread instability and

⁶ Data. URIBE, María. Violence and Massacres in Tolima: from the death of Gaitán to the National Front. [Online] (1991). [Accessed October 18, 2016]. Available at: <http://www.banrepcultural.org/node/32650>

insecurity. Prominent political actors viewed military governance as the solution to the rural violence and party divisions. In the context of interparty violence, the national army became a neutral actor, unlike the national police, which adhered to the ideas of the Conservative Party. In 1953, military man Gustavo Rojas Pinilla assumed the Presidency in a military coup (1953-1957). Among his first actions was the de-politicization of the police force and an amnesty that aimed to facilitate the disarmament of Liberal militias. In the south of Tolima, some groups took advantage of the amnesty. However, some communist groups abstained, forming the earliest guerrilla units of the FARC.

Although the Rojas Pinilla government tried to "pacify" Tolima, as did the civilian president who succeeded him, Alberto Lleras Camargo (during the National Front period, when political leadership alternated between Liberals and Conservatives by mutual agreement), the region saw high levels of violence. In 1958, for example, there were 52 massacres related to interparty conflict, forcing military authorities to take over governance of the department. In addition, the government authorized the civilian population to carry weapons for self-defense, as by this time armed groups of bandits had also emerged in the south of the department.

1.3 The origins of the FARC in Tolima Department

During the government of Guillermo León Valencia (1966-1967), who was the second president during the National Front, the so-called "pacification" of the republic began. This consisted of attacking groups of bandits, as well as significant military action against militias. In some areas, militias had declared "independent republics" – areas where

guerrilla groups had formed with the support of the Colombian Communist Party, where the guerrilla units exercised territorial control. In Tolima, the bandit groups, who commanded no political allegiance from the local population, were now clearly differentiated from the communist guerrilla groups.

The south of Tolima was home to the so-called "Independent Republic of Marquetalia" in the town of Gaitania, Planadas municipality, very close to Chaparral. This is commonly considered the "birthplace" of the FARC. It is a mountainous area where the guerrilla groups that did not lay down arms during the the amnesty had taken refuge. These guerrilla groups included FARC commanders Pedro Antonio Marín, alias "Manuel Marulanda Vélez" or "Tirofijo," and Luis Alberto Morantes, alias "Jacobo Arenas."

In 1962, the army and the Liberal guerrillas began intense military confrontations in the area, forcing the guerrillas' temporary withdrawal into the Central Mountain Range. In July 1964, these guerrilla members formed the Southern Bloc, which expanded towards the Eastern Mountain Range and the Orinoquia region. In 1966, the Liberal guerrillas started to call themselves the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – FARC.

After the official offensive against the "Independent Republic of Marquetalia" there was no effective strategy for consolidating state control in southern Tolima. In addition, the challenging topography allowed the FARC to use the region as a refuge and fallback position. The area was also strategic for the guerrillas, as it is close to the Colombian capital and functioned as a safe transit corridor for the insurgency, connecting the

northern, southern, eastern, and western regions of the country. This allowed the guerrillas favorable conditions for movement, expansion, and stockpiling supplies.⁷

Since that time, the south of Tolima has been a central part of the area of influence of the FARC Joint Central Command or Central Bloc, which, along with the Eastern Bloc, includes the highest-ranking commanders of the guerrilla group.

1.4 National security strategies

The construction of the Amoyá Hydroelectric Center occurred during the second presidential term of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2006 – 2010) and the first term of President Juan Manuel Santos (2010 – 2014). Although the conflict in Tolima began during The Violence, it was between 1996 and 2006, and then during the military offensive of Álvaro Uribe in his effort to eliminate the guerrillas from the south of Tolima, that the violence in that area was most acute.

The National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH by its Spanish acronym) found that during the decade from 1996 to 2006, the conflict worsened in many parts of the country, with particularly significant repercussions for the civilian population and for national infrastructure.⁸ During this time the armed groups fought each other and the armed forces for control over territory and illegal economic activity such as coca and poppy cultivation, drug and contraband

⁷ Fundación Ideas para la Paz. Dynamics of the armed conflict in Tolima and their humanitarian impact. [Online] (2013). P. 8. [Accessed October 4, 2016]. Available at:

http://archive.ideaspaz.org/images/DocumentoMonitoreo_ConflictoArmado_Tolima_Julio2013.pdf

⁸ Ibid. p. 111

trafficking, extortion, and theft of gasoline. During this period, there rates of violence and incidents relating to conflict skyrocketed.⁹ In 1991, Colombia had a record homicide rate of 81.12 per 100,000 people, and in 2000 it reached a total of 3,478 kidnappings – the highest number in the history of the country for that offense.

Leading into the 1990s, guerrilla activity increased greatly after the Fifth Summit of the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination, which was convened in 1987 with the objective of coordinating action among the various guerrilla groups across the country. The summit included the FARC, the ELN, and the EPL, among others. At the Fifth Summit, the armed groups agreed to carry out an offensive against security forces, and to increase attacks against strategic infrastructure. The offensive against infrastructure had several goals, one of which was pressure to oil and power generation companies and operators for extortion payments. Another was to demonstrate the guerrillas' capacity to the national government and to the public. Examples include the systematic bombing of the Caño Limón Coveñas oil duct in the Arauca Department (in the north of Colombia), and the bombing of electricity towers all over the country.

In response, President Cesar Gaviria Trujillo (1990-1994) formed the National Counter-Violence Strategy, launching a counter-offensive against the guerrillas and a program to strengthen the military, as well as a stronger justice policy directed towards the leaders of the drug cartels. During this period, the armed forces focused their action on neutralizing the FARC and ELN high

commanders. However, no important commanders were neutralized and the guerrillas were able to use resources from drug trafficking to strengthen their own capacities.

During the mandate of President Ernesto Samper Pizano (1994-1998), the armed forces suffered one of their most significant setbacks and the country suffered a major escalation in violence. The setbacks included FARC attacks and take-overs of several military bases in the south of Colombia, such as Delicias and Miraflores. These attacks negatively affected the morale of the armed forces and built up public support for intervention in Colombia by the United States. In addition, Samper's military and political leadership came into question, as he was accused of receiving money from drug trafficking to finance his presidential campaign.

Also at this time, the paramilitary groups began to organize themselves and expand to more areas of the country, under a counter-insurgency strategy. This was consolidated by the formation of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC by its Spanish acronym) in 1997. In some regions such as Montes de María in Sucre and Bolívar (northern Colombia), and in the eastern region of the Antioquia Department, the AUC achieved significant control of territory and population.

Towards the end of Samper's time in office, the security situation was deteriorating, leading to discussion of a negotiated end to the armed conflict – a proposal made by Andrés Pastrana Arango (1998 – 2002), who was elected president based on this aspect of his campaign. When Pastrana assumed his mandate, he started peace talks with the FARC in a large area in the southeast of the

⁹ Ibid. p. 156

country, where the military vacated four municipalities in order to facilitate the dialogues. However, the FARC took advantage of the absence of the military from the region to increase their military and economic capacity. Finally, in February 2002 after the kidnapping of Senator Jorge Eduardo Gechen, the government abandoned the peace talks after four years of fruitless negotiation.

Despite the failure of the dialogues and the strengthening of the guerrilla groups, the government of Andrés Pastrana carried out a significant modernization of the armed forces, with improvement of operational capacity and purchase of better arms and military airplanes. Most of this process of military strengthening was carried out with resources from Plan Colombia.¹⁰

The failure of both the peace talks with the FARC and the attempts at dialogue with the ELN during Andrés Pastrana's term facilitated ascendancy to the presidency by Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), who was elected under a promise to recover national security by military means. This strategy was known as "Democratic Security," and allowed the rapid expansion of the armed forces in most of the country, and a considerable increase in military operations.

In 2002, for the first time in several years, offensive actions by the armed forces' were

more frequent than those by guerrillas.¹¹ The Uribe government also neutralized several commanders from the FARC secretariat, including alias "el Mono Jojoy" and alias "Raúl Reyes," and reduced both the FARC's and the ELN's capacity by almost half.¹² The state offensive forced the armed groups to return to traditional guerrilla warfare, based on small group combat operations with reduced effort to control territory.

During Uribe's military offensive against the guerrillas, the AUC began a process of demobilization and judicial processing (2003-2006), in which approximately 31,600 members of the different paramilitary groups demobilized, among them the Cacique Nutibara Bloc, the Centauros Bloc, and the Autodefensas Campesinas del Magdalena Medio or Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Magdalena Medio.

Later, some ex-paramilitaries formed criminal groups in the regions where the paramilitary structures demobilized, creating a new focus of violence, especially in urban contexts. The crimes perpetrated by these groups include micro-extortion and micro-trafficking, a problem that authorities are now confronting and communities are facing in several municipalities of the country.

¹⁰ Plan Colombia was an anti-drug trafficking and state-strengthening cooperation plan approved in 1999 by the United States Congress. Through this plan, the Colombian government received approximately \$2.8 billion (2000-2015). The Bush administration then asked Congress for an additional \$463 million.

¹¹ See statistics in Fundación Ideas para la Paz. Current Situation of the FARC. Bogotá, 2011. Pp. 7 – 10 [online] [Accessed July 20, 2016]. Available at: <http://www.ideaspaz.org/publications/posts/78>

¹² At the beginning of 2002, the FARC and the ELN had approximately 24,000 combatants between them; in 2015 the FARC had fewer than 8,000 combatants and the ELN had fewer than 1,000.

2. Regional context of armed violence

The national armed conflict has taken on a range of forms across the country, due to geographic conditions, sources of conflict financing, economic interests, and regional control, among other factors. These regional differences have marked the conflict and had pronounced effects on development throughout the country. Colombia has areas in which the state has more control and provides public goods and services, specifically in the center and some departments in the north. However, in the periphery of the country and the frontier areas, the armed conflict has been felt with greater intensity, and the influence of illegal armed groups has been more constant.

2.1 Analysis of the conflict at the community level

The area in which the Amoyá Hydroelectric Center is located has long been dominated by the FARC guerrilla group, especially the Front 21. The FARC capitalized on the size and rugged terrain of the Las Hermosas Canyon, using it as a base for controlling the surrounding area and its population. Before the Amoyá project, the national army was almost completely absent from this region.

As a consequence, in Chaparral there are two fundamentally different contexts: one in the urban area, where the majority of the population lives, with the mayor's office, the Church, the Coffee-growers' Committee, the police command, and other institutions; and the other in Las Hermosas itself, where the FARC exercised near-complete control. The Las Hermosas Canyon area was known as a "FARC resort" because the FARC troops used it to recover, regroup, and plan. Before

ISAGEN's investment in the area, the majority of the roadways were in bad condition, and there was no military presence, so few civilians ventured into the area without advanced permission from local CAB leaders.

The FARC supplanted the state authorities in the Canyon and became its own sort of government for the residents of Las Hermosas. The FARC administered justice, maintained security and civic order, controlled transit schedules and movement of people, provided security, and solemnized marriages, among other functions. In one of the interviews conducted for this study, a leader from the area indicated that, while the FARC controlled the area, there was no crime, and people left the doors of their houses unlocked. Locals referred to the FARC's processes for matters of civil and criminal justice as "Justice 21," in reference to the FARC's Front 21.

Front 21 had always been fundamentally political-military in nature. It was part of the Central Joint Command, led by Alfonso Cano, the highest leader of the guerrilla group, who was killed in 2011 by the army. Cano was considered one of the main ideologues of the FARC, and one of the pioneers in the 2000 formation of the Clandestine Communist Party (PC3), which comprised rural and urban political cells meant to impart communist doctrine and provide support to the FARC in diverse areas of the country.

In the 1990s, Alfonso Cano assumed the leadership of the Central Joint Command, and later of the PC3. During that decade, Front 21 became one of the main fronts of the FARC, with more than 3,000 men at arms at the apex of its power.

By the time ISAGEN began planning the hydropower station, inhabitants of Las Hermosas Canyon had been accustomed to living alongside the FARC for approximately 50 years. The communities had an ambivalent relationship with the armed group – they had learned to reconcile the interests of the insurgent organization with their own interests as a community. It was common in Las Hermosas for one's family members to be actively involved in or sympathizers of Front 21. The population interacted with FARC troops on a daily basis, personally knew the leaders, and had regular encounters with FARC soldiers. The FARC were intimately involved in the daily life of the communities in a peaceful and quasi-paternalistic way.

The guerrillas provided “preferential” treatment to the population in the Canyon. This entailed little physical violence, and none of the extortion fees that the FARC charged in other areas of the country. This allowed the community to live in a climate of relative peace and stability. The urban area of the municipality of Chaparral was not exposed to much violence either. The guerrillas made no attempts to control the municipality, and no massacres were recorded there.

To finance its operations, Front 21 had cultivated poppies in the area since the mid-1990s, either planting its own crops or charging fees to other growers, drug producers, and drug traffickers. The problems associated with poppy cultivation and trafficking attracted the attention of the national government, not only because it was financing Front 21, but also because it was located inside a national park.

2.2 Emergence of leadership in the midst of conflict

In 2003, the national government launched an alternative development strategy to benefit families who were located in eco-systems that were valuable to Colombia but were being used for illegal crop cultivation. This strategy included the creation of the Forest Guardian Families Program (FGFP), whose first phase included 30 villages in Chaparral as well as other territories around the country. The program consisted of the voluntary abandonment of coca or poppy cultivation and the gradual replanting of forest species by farmers, in exchange for a temporary subsidy from the government and technical assistance for the implementation of alternative income projects.

There had been no meaningful institutional programs in Las Hermosas Canyon since the Party Violence. At the beginning, the program was well received by the families who registered, because it was a form of fixed income. However, a few months after implementation began, the FARC prohibited the community from accepting payments, possibly because they saw the program as a threat to their territorial control. The FARC's ban had a serious impact on the income of program beneficiaries.

The communities began to voice their discontent to the CAB, who relayed the information to the guerrilla leaders. The CAB formed a “Management Committee,” which was to engage with FARC commanders and represent the interests of the community. This caused tensions between the community leaders and some of the guerrilla factions. The commanders of Front 21 believed that the communities were taking the side of the government or even trying to support

intelligence-gathering activities by the Colombian military. In the words of a former leader from the area, due to the FGFP, the guerrillas started to “see ghosts everywhere.” This concrete divergence between the interests of the community and those of the FARC represented a subtle but significant change in the relations between the two.

As the FARC sought to exert increasing control over the communities, complaints of abuses against the population by the FARC increased. The guerrillas, in turn, accused community members of being informers or collaborators of the army, or of violating Front 21’s rules, and they began to bring community members before judicial hearings. The CAB had internal mechanisms to manage these conflicts, and they activated the Coexistence Committees stipulated in Colombian law to resolve internal community conflicts. Paradoxically, the commanders of Front 21 saw the actions of these committees in a positive light, as they took some responsibility for the conflicts away from the FARC, who therefore did not have to “throw themselves into the community,” as one community leader put it.

In the midst of this situation, community representatives started to play leadership roles, redefining the communities’ positions and interests with respect to the armed group, and gaining the experience of negotiating the common interests of the population they represented.

These first manifestations of community leadership constituted the roots of the Las Hermosas Association for Development towards the Future (Asohermosas), which ultimately came to represent all of the 28 villages in the area. Asohermosas arose formally as part of a community strategy to

capitalize on the possible benefits of the construction of the hydroelectric station, a project initially managed by the Colombian company Generadora Unión.

3. Project background

In 1999, Generadora Unión, a company from Antioquia, obtained the environmental license to construct a power plant that used the Amoyá River.¹³ Due to its design, this project was nationally and internationally recognized for taking advantage of the course of the water without having to flood any area – that is, without creating a dam or a reservoir.

Generadora Unión arrived in Las Hermosas in 2001 with the intention of introducing locals to the idea of the project and negotiating with the community. In the community entry process, the company discovered the difficulties it would face in dealing with the strong FARC presence in the area, and the group’s influence over the communities in the Canyon. The company raised expectations within the community, which were not fulfilled for a variety of technical and financial reasons. These expectations were passed down to ISAGEN when it took over the project a few

¹³ Corporación Autónoma Regional del Tolima (CORTOLIMA), through Resolution 0386 of March 18, 1998 provided Generadora Unión permission for a study of the natural resources in the Amoyá and Ambeima River network, with the goal of conducting a hydroelectric project. Later, on June 18, 1999 Generadora Unión presented its Environmental Impact Study (EIS). After analyzing the EIS, CORTOLIMA determined that the project was environmentally viable and issued the Unique Environmental License for the construction and operation of the hydroelectric generator on the Amoyá River through Resolution 1858 of December 16, 1999 which was modified on various occasions (Information provided by ISAGEN).

years later. Among the promises Generadora Unión made to the community were investments including improvements to hospital equipment, schools, access routes, and an aerial tramway.

In addition, the company promised the communities that they could participate in the project's security through the creation of a cooperative that would make the army's presence in the area unnecessary. The communities welcomed this news, not only because it would generate temporary employment for the inhabitants of the villages, but also because it meant that Front 21 commanders would be more likely to approve the implementation of the project, as the guerrillas' greatest concern was that the State would use the project to establish a military presence in the area. In reality, building a hydroelectric station without the presence of the army was impausible, as power plants are considered "social interest works," and the State guarantees their protection.

It is worth noting that when Generadora Unión arrived, it found the in the territory communities that were already organized around the CABs, which facilitated the initial negotiations between the company and the communities. The CAB presidents and representatives of the villages would meet first with company employees in Chaparral's urban area, and then later with community members in the Canyon. The FARC also insisted on knowing what was being negotiated, but as the FARC was a proscribed group, it was illegal for any company to engage them directly. The community's interests lay in the benefits that the project would provide, but it would be impossible to execute the project without the assent of the FARC. The CAB presidents therefore entered

into a dialogue process to convince the guerrillas of the social benefits that would accrue to communities as a result of the project. This effectively obligated the CAB presidents to negotiate and consult with the guerrilla commanders, and the CAB presidents became informal negotiators between the company and the armed group. A few months after this process got underway, with the benefits the community would receive from the project already defined, Generadora Unión announced that the project would be assumed by another company. In 2006, ISAGEN bought the project plans and assumed the challenge of building the hydroelectric plant.¹⁴

3.1 ISAGEN

Until the beginning of 2016, ISAGEN was a mixed enterprise, whose majority owner was the Colombian state, with 57% of the shares. By decision of the national government at that time, this percentage was sold to private investors.

There are several reasons why ISAGEN was well-positioned to acquire the project. First was the upper management's high level of interest. The General Manager presented the initiative to the Board of Directors, highlighting its financial viability and profitability. The General Manager believed that ISAGEN had the necessary capacity to manage the risks present in Las Hermosas Canyon, as will be explained later.

¹⁴ Through Resolution 531 of June 1, 2006 CORTOLIMA approved the cessation of environmental rights and obligations of the hydroelectric project in the Amoyá and Ambeima Rivers to ISAGEN S.A. E.S.P.

The second reason for acquiring the project was its profitability. The project would not require the acquisition of much land, nor the resettlement of local populations, and the potential return on investment was high, in part due to the strength of the energy market at the national level and national laws that favored electricity generation projects.

Third, and most important, was the fact that ISAGEN was a mixed enterprise with significant state ownership, which meant that it could assume greater contextual risks, such as those represented by Las Hermosas Canyon. The project was a public initiative that had the approval and interest of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

3.2 Valuation and exposure to risk

By the time ISAGEN acquired the license for the project, the company had had experience with Colombia's armed groups. At the end of the 1990s, ISAGEN began to receive threats at its other project sites from guerrilla groups. The guerrillas held that the company and the power industry in Colombia had a "large debt" to society. They blew up electrical towers and kidnapped company personnel. These events provoked ISAGEN's directors to seek a deeper understanding of the complexity of the regions in which the company operated at the time.

Through meetings with civil society actors and contextual studies, the company came to view security risks were not as simply threats of industrial damage and physical harm to company staff. They also included the risks to external actors that flowed from the presence of the company's operations in particular contexts. As a consequence, the company began valuing its security and human rights risks, taking into account in its operations the expectations and recommendations of

communities affected by its operations. In its risk management models, the company also included risks to the context that were created by the operation itself, not only in terms of construction of electric infrastructure, but also in operational decisions such as agreements with the armed forces, hiring and management of security personnel, acquisition of local assets and services, and other aspects of its operations.

This approach to risk meant that the company was analyzing and valuing the social risks that it would have to manage, and creating specific strategies to address them. According to corporate interviews conducted for this report, the Amoyá Hydroelectric Center was ISAGEN's effort to operationalize this risk management approach as a pilot project. The company viewed the approach as offering a competitive advantage that would help with other projects in Colombia as well.

Some ISAGEN employees and the consulting firm hired to conduct the initial engagement with communities recognized that they were always exposed to a high level of security risk. However, after the analysis carried out by the risk analysis team, ISAGEN developed a robust strategy to manage the physical security of employees and contractors. First, the company initiated entry into operational areas accompanied by the military, thereby ensuring minimum physical security conditions were met. Operational measures were also coordinated, including continuous monitoring of possible effects on human rights resulting from the project, and permanent training for staff in risk awareness and physical security measures.

3.3 First approach by ISAGEN

In approximately 2006, ISAGEN began its work with the communities of Las Hermosas.

The company found a very organized community, particularly in terms of the representation provided by Asohermosas. The process of internal organization of communities, as has already been explained, was rooted in the communities' experience in the FGFP.

The processes of negotiation, consultation, and coordination of the project with the communities began in the urban area of Chaparral. In order to facilitate Asohermosas' role as the communities' representative, the company supported the organization with a permanent office, rent for rooms for meetings with the CAB representatives, and transport and food costs. Asohermosas made it clear to ISAGEN that, throughout the course of negotiations, Asohermosas would have to continually consult with their "superiors" – a demand made directly by the commanders of Front 21.

ISAGEN began its negotiations with Las Hermosas communities by undoing promises made by Generadora Unión, many of which were impossible or impractical in the extreme. The company informed the communities that the construction of the hydroelectric station, as an asset of general and social interest, was not feasible without the presence of the armed forces, contrary to the initial commitments of Generadora Unión. The community understood that a large part of the project involved the construction of tunnels and underground works for which explosives were required. Under Colombian law, military security is mandatory for such materials. In addition, it was illogical that the project would not be accompanied by the armed forces, as ISAGEN was a state entity. Communities were disappointed by this, even though the company's honesty with respect

to the community's expectations was seen by the community as credible and trustworthy.

Apart from ISAGEN's negotiations with Asohermosas the armed forces in 2006 launched an offensive to capture or kill "high value objectives" – the main heads of Colombia's guerrilla groups. Several operations targeting the FARC's highest commander, Alfonso Cano, got underway in Tolima.

Even though in the months before the military offensive, the negotiation between ISAGEN and the communities in Chaparral had progressed, once the offensive got under way, it made the negotiating climate more difficult. For the guerrilla groups, it was clear that the armed forces sought to drive the FARC from Las Hermosas Canyon, and they associated that initiative with ISAGEN's project. This stalled the negotiations and delayed the initial engineering tasks.

In order to overcome this problem, ISAGEN hired an independent consultant with experience in complex environments to help identify and implement a community relations strategy.

The consultancy's first task was to conduct a regional assessment, in addition to an actor mapping, which was to be used to identify actors who were critical to community relations and key in forming a partnership strategy for the project. One of the exercise's recommendations was to involve the then-governor of Tolima, who had been elected in 2006. The governor was from Chaparral and was a known figure among the authorities and communities in the municipality. This representative was crucial to the formation of the Transparency Roundtable, which will be explained later.

The first meeting between the consultant and communities had to be carried out in the urban area of Chaparral because ISAGEN still could not “go up there,” referring to the FARC-controlled area of Las Hermosas. There was a climate of distrust in the first meetings between the consultant and Asohermosas. Meetings could last for hours without any progress towards an agreement. Despite the difficulties, community participants in the dialogues highlighted that the company’s representatives always conducted themselves respectfully and openly.

These efforts were led by negotiation experts invited by the consultant, in addition to other representatives including the director of ISAGEN’s project, whose presence was especially important so that the communities felt that a high-level representative was involved.

The conversations between the company, the consultant, and the communities lasted approximately one year. The dialogue progressed very slowly because the company prioritized agreement with communities over the progress of the project, deeming the former to be critical to the ultimate success of the latter. Within ISAGEN, it was assumed that the dialogue would advance slowly. In the words of the consulting firm’s director, “*we were prepared for a marathon, not for a sprint.*” ISAGEN did not allocate a specific length of time to conduct the negotiations, despite the fact that work could not get underway until they were resolved. When asked about management expectations of negotiation timelines, one member of ISAGEN’s community relations staff indicated that “we were told to negotiate until we reached an agreement.”

Over the course of the negotiations, a rule was developed among the parties: independent of their differences, they would continue to dialogue until they arrived at an agreement, no matter how long it took. This focus formed the basis of trust between parties.

4. Challenges

4.1 Security and armed conflict

By the middle of 2007, Asohermosas was effectively mediating between the parties so that the civil works could begin. The army had also strengthened its operations in Las Hermosas Canyon. The command of the military offensive was in the hands of General Gustavo Matamoros Camacho.

The General supported ISAGEN’s project, as he believed that in areas in which the FARC had a strong base and historic presence in the communities, the armed forces’ response should be integrated and not only military. He thought that there should be a process by which the army gained the trust of the community through social investment, health brigades, and construction of basic infrastructure, among other efforts, and he saw the hydropower project as an opportunity.

Even as the army established the first military bases in the Canyon, it also began to carry out social programs. However, this did not mean that the project could commence. The army commanders’ position was that the armed forces should be consolidated before civil works were carried out. This program of consolidation went on for approximately one year.

For the commanders of Front 21, the army’s actions represented a clear threat to their

territorial control. Although the FARC commanders reviewed and endorsed the agreements between the community and the company, they retracted their initial support for the project in response to the increased military actions. The communities experience friction with the guerrilla commanders on this point. Guerrilla commanders accused community leaders of being “suck-ups” or “sell-outs” because of their insistence on the construction of the hydroelectric center.

Similarly, there were tensions between some members of the communities and Asohermosas, as they criticized the association’s leadership in the negotiation process and insistence on the construction of the hydroelectric project. At this point in the project, the environment was volatile because of the army’s offensive and the guerrilla group’s rejection of the start of construction. The communities were in an unusual situation, because despite the fact that the FARC had a historic presence in the region, until then there had been no confrontations with the army. Combat and aerial offensives were something new to Las Hermosas Canyon.

4.2 Benefits plan for the community

Even though the project already had an approved Environmental License, ISAGEN decided that as part of its strategy, it should agree on a compensation plan based on impacts and investment in the local communities and the regional environmental authorities. This plan was outlined in an Act of Acceptance that was included in the document “Benefits Agreement with the Community in the Influence Zone of the Amoyá River Hydroelectric Project.” This was widely distributed among the communities, who began referring to it as “the Testament.” The document contained the totality of the agreements between the community and the

company relating to the social and environmental benefits of the project, some framed in the Environmental Management Plan and others in the “Complementary Management by the Company” section. Government institutions had also signed as guarantors in order to bolster the communities’ confidence in ISAGEN’s commitments.

The Act of Acceptance was signed in the Chaparral mayor’s office on December 18, 2007 by Asohermosas, the Governor of Tolima, the Mayor of Chaparral, the municipal Ombudsman, and the General Manager of ISAGEN. The document included topics such as the functioning of the Transparency Roundtable, the creation of the Human Rights Observatory, the creation of a Citizen Oversight Committee, and programs to recover micro-watersheds, conservation of water resources, and reforestation and maintenance of forested areas. The document also contained plans to address the most significant social and environmental concerns of the communities, relating to access to water, land management, local labor hiring, social infrastructure works, health programs, environmental education, and others.

With respect to local hiring, it was agreed that contractors would give priority in hiring to personnel from the villages in the Canyon, and in the case that the required professional profiles could not be found there, contractors would look to other areas of Chaparral. It was agreed that Asohermosas would receive applicants’ résumés. For the purpose of recruitment processes, ISAGEN provided Asohermosas with an office in the urban area and resources to hire personnel to carry out this responsibility. As a result, the association went from a few less than 100 affiliates to almost 1,300.

In the Acceptance Act, the company also agreed to contribute to community development in areas such as education, culture, health, repair of roads damaged due to the movement of heavy vehicles, and other benefits for the villages and Chaparral Municipality.

4.3 The Transparency Roundtable and the Human Rights Observatory

A main concern of Asohermosas during the course of the negotiations was the loss of the relative tranquility that had for years characterized Las Hermosas. They also feared being in the middle of the conflict between the army and the FARC. Despite the fact that a large part of the environmental, social, and local hiring commitments between the company and the community had already been agreed, the community still feared for its safety. This prevented the formalization of the agreements between the company and the community, and delayed the start of civil works.

The community's fears motivated ISAGEN to develop options for a human rights protection mechanism and a channel for voicing complaints about possible human rights violations in the villages.

General Matamoros was familiar with reconciliation roundtables that had been created in the Arauca Department with communities and civil society in contexts marked by disagreement and confrontation, and he proposed that ISAGEN replicate this type of institution in Chaparral. The company agreed, and also established a complementary mechanism proposed by the community, namely the Human Rights Observatory. During the creation of the roundtable, the Governor of Tolima was crucial as a mediator between the parties, as

well as coordinating the participation of the Vice President's Office for Human Rights and the United Nations delegate.

The Roundtable convened in a venue provided by ISAGEN in the urban area of Chaparral, where the community and civil society representatives from Las Hermosas attended alongside state organs such as the People's Ombudsman's Office, the Inspector General's Office, the Attorney General's Office, the Municipal Ombudsman, the Vice President's Office, the Tolima Governor's Office (through its Secretary of Government and Peace Advisor, a position created for this purpose), the Chaparral Mayor's Office, the national army and police, and the NGO Reiniciar. The United Nations also monitored the dialogue. Logistics and invitations were in the hands of ISAGEN and the Tolima Governor's Office.¹⁵ Neighboring villages of El Limon and La Marina also participated, even though they were not areas of direct influence of the Rio Amoyá project, because the greatest complaints about infringements on rights came from those locations. They were therefore accorded the same role in the process as the Las Hermosas community.

The Human Rights Observatory was created by the community as a mechanism to identify events or incidents that could affect human rights or community-army relations, ahead of meetings of the Transparency Roundtable. Communities received human rights training, including how to record information necessary for the investigation of alleged

¹⁵ For more information on the methodology and details of the Transparency Roundtable, consult the FIP document: Transparency Roundtable and Human Rights Observatory – Amoyá Hydroelectric Project – ISAGEN. [Online] (2014). [Accessed November 24, 2016] Available at: <http://www.ideaspaz.org/tools/download/59644>

abuses. The Observatory was convened by community members and the Municipal Ombudsman's Office, receiving allegations of abuse by the armed forces. Allegations were then assessed and analyzed before being presented to the Transparency Roundtable. This process aimed to avoid the need for victims of abuses to appear in person at the Roundtable to present their cases.

ISAGEN's role in the Transparency Roundtable was limited to logistics and participation as an official observer. The company was not an active participant in discussions, even though complaints relating to the implementation of the project could be voiced there.

For General Matamoros, it was not easy to convince members of the armed forces to sit at the Transparency Roundtable, where they could be evaluated for their actions in the field. This difficulty was especially acute given the stigma and perception that the communities in Las Hermosas were members or sympathizers of the FARC.

The Transparency Roundtable and Observatory were useful mechanisms to confront critical situations in the relationship between the population and the armed forces. Between 2007 and 2008, communities in southern Tolima frequently claimed the occurrence of "false positives." This was the name given to a practice attributed to the army, in which innocent community members were killed and presented as members of the guerrilla group, in this case Front 21. Community members also presented a range of other claims against the armed forces, including forcible entry to private lands in search of guerrillas, and the capture of community leaders who the army accused of belonging to or supporting Front 21.

The most significant incident was the capture of the president of Asohermosas together with 10 other people in Chaparral and Ibagué, for supposedly being members of Front 21 and the PC3. This resulted in protests by the communities and local authorities. One of these protests was a march convened in August 2009, in which approximately 600 people from San José de las Hermosas, La Marina, San Antonio, and El Limón (Chaparral) participated. The protest involved blocking highways and roads into both the urban area of Chaparral and the construction zone of the hydroelectric project. The intention was to call the attention of media and government institutions to the situation the communities were dealing with as a result of military operations.

Members of the communities who participated in the protests remember the high levels of tension they felt at that time. They mention that the communities of Las Hermosas and the neighboring towns lived in a climate of stigmatization. On one hand, some members of the guerrilla groups accused community leaders of being at the service of the State and the armed forces, while the army and the community in the urban area of Chaparral was suspicious of Las Hermosas communities for their supposed collaboration with Front 21. During the 2009 protests, communities carried candles and white flags and marched peacefully towards the urban area of Chaparral. According to some participants in that march, they heard guns shooting into the air, and businesses closed in response to rumors that the demonstrators were FARC partisans who had come to take the town.

The protests resulted in more dialogue and the communities' public expression of complaints at the Transparency Roundtable,

which proved its value as a channel for resolving the issues driving the protests.

4.4 Social management and relationships

Throughout the process of negotiating and construction, the ISAGEN team adopted a particular approach to its field operations. Internal guidelines stipulated that each member of staff, from the project managers to the civil and environmental engineers, had a role in creating and sustaining trust between ISAGEN and local communities. This allowed for cross-cutting management of community-related challenges from all involved areas of the organization, and less “friction” in sharing across the company critical information about the context. For example, representatives from the social and environmental areas, as well as staff from engineering departments, all participated in community meetings, and routinely met together afterwards to analyze and interpret those discussions.

To gain the trust of communities, ISAGEN made an overt commitment not to share information about communities with the armed forces. ISAGEN’s community teams minimized their interaction with the army, as well, in order to avoid the appearance of coordination or collaboration between the two.

Although ISAGEN staff strived to maintain a close relationship with communities, between 2009 and 2010 the security situation prevented them from entering any of the villages, either because of combat, or because the guerrilla groups barred entry by company staff. During this period, ISAGEN convened meetings in safer communities, in the urban area of Chaparral, or by telephone, in order to maintain communication, participation, and

ongoing discussion with community organizations and representatives.

It is also worth noting that community relations staff were instrumental in mediating between the operational security vision of the Logistics Department (which was in charge of security) and the views of some of the other project staff, some of whom held that the safest way to operate in the area was to militarize company security. The community relations staff convinced them of the value of strong relationships with the community, and of other benefits of a strong social license to operate. In particular, communities frequently provided ISAGEN with intelligence about the movements of the FARC, and about which areas of the Canyon were safe and which were not at particular times.

4.5 Construction

The total construction time of the project was five years. Although the FARC initially gave tepid support to the project, given their reservations about it, the construction phase was not free from security problems, especially with respect to the contractors. In 2010, a member of a contractor’s staff was murdered, and the same happened again in 2011, presumably at the hands of Front 21.

Although the area in which the power station was built was well protected by the military thanks to the installation of a base nearby, in the higher elevations of the Canyon where the construction of the water storage facilities took place, security was more complex. Apart from the murders of contractor staff, there were hostage situations and explosives were left in areas through which contractor personnel and ISAGEN operators frequently passed. Some interviewees suggested that this may have been the FARC’s response to a

contractor's refusal to make extortion payments.

Community members clearly indicated that they were motivated to take the risks that they did by the social investments and local content articulated in The Testament; acceptance of the project was the condition of possibility of these opportunities. The FARC was suspicious of the project, but wanted the support of the communities. In addition, the FARC saw that the dialogue between the communities and the armed forces in the Transparency Roundtable yielded concrete results. One interviewee quoted a member of Front 21 as saying: *"They can build the hydroelectric station, but if they (the army or the company) continue higher up the Canyon, we will be waiting for them there."*

The Amoyá River Hydroelectric Center – La Esperanza was inaugurated in July 2013, in an event attended by national, regional, and community authorities. This civilian project generated more than 1,100 jobs during construction, for which 60% were hired from the villages of Las Hermosas and the surrounding region. Another benefit of the hydroelectric station was the payment of royalties to the Chaparral and CORTOLIMA municipality. These resources are used for basic sanitation and environmental initiatives in the territory.

5. Current situation

Social and environmental state

The Amoyá Hydroelectric Center – La Esperanza generated a significant change for the communities of Las Hermosas, in terms of community development, especially in health,

education, and basic sanitation.¹⁶ Community members perceive that since the center was built, the water in some springs and wells has decreased, affecting some villages. The environmental authorities and the company are uncertain of the cause, and have not yet determined whether it stems from the center's operations.

In addition, thanks to the organization of the community and Asohermosas' consensus-building work over the course of the project, the inhabitants of Las Hermosas became more cognizant of their own capacity for improving their lives. The community captured a large part of its own vision in the "Las Hermosas Community Sustainable Development Plan (2015-2030)," financed by ISAGEN and created by the communities with support and guidance from the Universidad Javeriana. For the Asohermosas' leaders, this development plan is an important legacy of the Amoyá project, and constitutes a key planning tool for the administration of the territory.

Community organization

For ISAGEN and Asohermosas, It is a significant achievement to have constructed the center in the midst of violent conflict. Interviewees indicated that relation between the army and the Las Hermosas communities are greatly improved since the inception of the project, and so the work of the Transparency Roundtable should be seen as a key element of that achievement. Community

¹⁶ To see the social, environmental, and community management results, see the ISAGEN document "Balance of Social and Environmental Management – Amoyá River Hydroelectric Project" [Online]. [Accessed October 7, 2016] Available at: https://www.ISAGEN.com.co/comunicados/Amoya_balanceGSA_nov29_final.pdf

leaders remarked that they never imagined themselves sitting across the table from high-ranking military officers the conduct of troops in their communities. The process of strengthening Asohermosas left behind an empowered community that was more confident of its leadership and negotiating capacity.

The Transparency Roundtable still exists, although it does not meet as regularly as it did during the project's construction period. Participants continue to discuss human rights topics, but the agenda has changed and now focuses more on issues relating to health, education, and livelihoods.

Security and coexistence

Chaparral Municipality is experiencing a period of calm, especially because of the Colombian army's military success, as their offensive neutralized high commanders Alfonso Cano and alias "Marlon," in addition to reducing the number of guerrilla combatants in the south of Tolima. The region is also in relative calm due to the peace talks between the national government and the FARC in Havana (Cuba), which appear to have diminished the intensity of the conflict in this area of Colombia.

Currently in Chaparral, there are two military bases that periodically establish checkpoints on the way to and from Las Hermosas, and monitor who is coming and going to and from the Canyon. Communities report that dissatisfaction with this practice, as for several years such check points did not exist.

The current security problems in Chaparral and Las Hermosas now focus more on everyday incidents affecting community life, such as small scale illegal drug commerce, domestic abuse, and fights between individual

residents. Communities and the armed forces will likely confront a new set of social and security challenges if the FARC demobilizes as part of the negotiations between the government and the guerrillas.



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