

Women's access to and control over natural resources. The case of the Community Council of Palenque Monte Oscuro – FIAN Colombia (Colombia)

The Community Council of Palenque Monte Oscuro (CCCPMO) located in the town of Puerto Tejada Cauca, Colombia, consists of 50 families of African descent (around 340 persons), who face violations of the right to food due to restrictions of their access to land by big development projects, mainly the expansion of the agro-industrial sugarcane sector. These communities are of a rural tradition with strong roots in the territory – exercised through the collective ownership of land – and productive activity aimed at food self-sustainability, which has become difficult to exercise. In particular the communities' women's right to adequate food and nutrition has been impaired because the women of the CCCPMO do not have safeguards for agricultural production and to grow adequate food with their own seeds, and do not have individual or collective titles for lands. The State does not provide protection to the transfer of traditional knowledge, of which women are the primary holders, and thus, the survival of their culture. Furthermore, women do not have sufficient financial capacity to purchase culturally and nutritionally adequate food and do not enjoy adequate access to drinking water since water sources are heavily polluted by industrial wastes and by-products of spraying.

The CCCPMO has been demanding secure access to their lands since 2004 and has since been attributed small plots of land by state authorities. However, implementation of the decisions has been slow and the families have been repeatedly displaced from some of the lands that were attributed to them. The CCCPMO has used the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in their advocacy and the women of the CCCPMO have presented their case at the UN Women's Rights Committee (CEDAW), which has issued recommendations regarding the elimination of barriers for women's access to land and natural resources.