Voices of Recovery:

Recognising intersecting risks, capacities and pandemic recovery needs in marginalised communities of Latin America

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NB The project research activity is ongoing (extensions agreed up to late 2025/early 2026). Hence, we present here some preliminary key findings – as headline statements

Overall points across the country studies:

- We have progressed as a programme of collaborative and creative engagement with communities, following themes and approaches that are responsive to the priorities expressed by those people with which we work
- The emphasis has been on understanding people's experiences and concerns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a time both of social and cultural dynamics and of continuing/intensified risk from other threats. The restrictions and fears associated with the pandemic tended to interact with and magnify ongoing vulnerabilities, in such a way that makes it difficult to conceive of recovery in a narrow, 'post-crisis' sense
- But, in communities already facing aspects of social, economic, political and geographical marginalisation, we also learned how the pandemic was often associated with enhanced ethics of care and the 'recovery' of indigenous knowledge….

PERU – 3 case study sites in the provinces of Chanchamayo and Satipo

- ✓ We worked with indigenous Ashaninka organizations and communities across the three sites.
- ✓ For these communities, recovery is not only an immediate response to a critical situation, but a longer-term strategy that connects past and present, and involves previous local indigenous responses as well as indigenous knowledge.
- ✓ In the central Amazon region in Peru there is a continuum of violence: missionaries, the time of enslavement for the hacienda, the rubber boom period that is still remembered, the period of the internal armed conflict, and lately, the spread of illicit economies in the region. Besides, there is a history of rebellion and emancipation with the figure of Juan Santos Atahualpa (XVIII century) that also speaks for recognition.
- ✓ Recovery is also about care and caring practices for the wellbeing of families, communities, and territories.
- ✓ During the Covid-19 pandemic, when the communities received minimal attention from formalized health services, local medicine practices were recuperated and put in practice: plants and recipes for special beverages to calm symptoms.
- ✓ But to speak about care and caring practices is also to speak about gender inequalities. Violence does not affect all people the same way, women are mostly affected. And there is also an inversed correlation related to governance: there are more women in leadership roles and becoming guardians of forests. Being a guardian of forests have turned into a dangerous activity (more than 45 guardians of forests have been assassinated in Peru in the last 8 years and some of them come from the central Amazon region).
- ✓ There is a common preoccupation to know more about their history as an ethnic group and, also as a local community. This understanding is vital for preserving life and dignity, especially as dispossession of land also intensifies with the advance of illegal economies in the region.

BRAZIL – 3 case study areas in the state of Pará

✓ We identified an intensification of extreme droughts and rainfall events in the three Brazilian sites, which can exacerbate the vulnerabilities of local communities, especially those that depend directly on natural resources for their livelihoods.

✓ Extreme droughts and high temperatures has led to an increase in fire occurrence in the Tapajós region, with impacts ranging from agricultural loss to health problems related to the exposure of aerosols from wildfires.

✓ The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified pre-existing vulnerabilities in communities, mainly affecting education, the economy and sociability. In the context of the school community, the lack of internet connectivity has hampered access to remote education, resulting mainly in the delay of literacy, in many cases, according to teachers, practically irreversible.

✓ Despite the challenges, opportunities were also identified, such as the strengthening of community ties and increased access to digital technologies. These experiences demonstrate a certain resilience on the part of the communities to face multiple simultaneous risks.

✓ During the field visits, the VOZES project made it possible to carry out reflective actions and co-create guidelines aimed at identifying ways to mitigate the impacts of socio-environmental threats. One example of a concrete action was Training in Environmental Monitoring using the SEM-FLAMA platform, which was presented as an essential tool for risk management, promoting community empowerment. Participants drew up response plans based on different levels of fire risk alert. The production of educational materials, such as comic strips and social cartographies, raised awareness of the risks, among other actions that are yet to be carried out.

✓ At the Quilombo Abacatal, the main effects of the pandemic on their way of life came mainly from the income factor. The financial situation worsened for those who had no fixed income. Faced with this scenario, one word would define the reaction of the people of Abacatal to the pandemic period: creativity. It reverberated in art, in collective initiatives, in partnerships with 'outsiders' and even as an escape from boredom.

COLOMBIA – 3 case study sites in the departments of Caldas and Caquetá

✓ Over two years of dedicated work in the field, various community initiatives were developed in collaboration with six organisations representing women, youth, and victims of the armed conflict. The application of narrative and artistic methodologies was crucial for encouraging active participation, expressing subjective experiences, strengthening communal alliances, and amplifying the voices of participants in local and regional public settings.

✓ Parallels were drawn between the experiences during the pandemic and the armed conflict in Colombia - both characterised by fear, social and territorial control, restrictions on mobility, strained social relations, and economic impacts. The shared challenges of shortages, loss of loved ones, displacement, and stigmatisation were also emphasised, revealing a pattern of ongoing social vulnerability during different crises.

✓ During the pandemic, people living in rural areas felt less affected by confinement, enjoying greater freedom and access to basic resources such as food, thanks to consistent food production. However, the lack of medical care posed a challenge, especially for individuals needing assistance for reasons other than COVID-19.

✓ The interrelationship between different axes of inequality—such as gender, class, and ethnicity—produces specific forms of exclusion for subjects who inhabit multiple positions of vulnerability.

✓ Rural women played a pivotal role during the pandemic, assuming care responsibilities not only for their immediate families but also for older adults and neighbours. Faced with distrust of the health system and barriers to access, they turned to ancestral knowledge of medicinal plants and home remedies, revaluing the garden as a space for care, connection, and feminine resistance. Affective networks were woven around cultivation that strengthened community ties and reconfigured care as a collective and political practice.

✓ Art is a crucial tool for young people's emotional and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through artistic expression, such as painting, music, or theater, young people can channel their emotions, releasing the stress and anxiety accumulated during these difficult times due to the uncertainty generated by the media, frustration with virtual classes, social isolation, and the excessive use of technology.