

Online Communication and Mobilization throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

**The case of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target
populations in shaping transformative action**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines Colombia as a distinctive case in Latin America and the Caribbean, marked by overlapping economic, social, and political crises and a recent shift toward a progressive government. The escalation of these crises, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, triggered mass protests in 2020 and 2021, culminating in the Colombian social outcry. These protests combined street demonstrations with the growing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). During this period, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played a key role in defending the civil and political rights of protesters, many of whom belonged to their target populations.

In this context, the COVID-19 confinements generated a distancing effect, reducing interaction between NGOs and their target populations. Both had to modify their communication, increasingly relying on ICTs. The digital transition in the Colombian non-governmental sector occurred amid significant digital gaps and operational burdens that affected its work. Nevertheless, Colombian NGOs responded rapidly and unconventionally, as they have done on the front line of other crises, while target populations also engaged proactively and resiliently through digital tools.

Situated in the field of reflexive and critical development studies, this research advances a novel conceptual framework built on three interconnected pillars. First, *Networks for Transformation* positions the study within the dynamics of horizontal communication networks and the inclusion-exclusion logics of the information society. Second, *Development Communication* shifts the focus from communication infrastructures to the actors and their interaction processes, often overlooked in the first pillar. Third, *Transformative Action*, a recent concept in critical development studies, emphasizes the role of awareness, knowledge, and agency, both individual and collective, in transforming social reality.

This research employs an instrumental case study approach, using the example of an online mobilization initiated and led by Colombian NGOs in 2020. The mobilization began with a petition signed by 256 NGOs and was followed by a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter/X. Around 620 posts addressed the uncertainty and disruptions faced by the non-governmental sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were collected from 2020 to 2022 via an online survey, 31 semi-structured interviews with NGO leaders, and two focus groups with target populations. The study examines online social mobilization through qualitative network analysis and capacity building through the development communication approach. I argue that these communication processes realized by digital technologies can shape transformative action.

The analysis contributes to ongoing debates on development and digitalization involving civil society actors. Findings indicate that online communication and mobilization present both opportunities and pitfalls in engaging in transformative action. New channels of communication among NGOs and their target populations were created through WhatsApp groups, videoconferencing, social networks, and learning platforms. Online communication and mobilization also broadened participation geographically and cost-effectively. However, NGOs and their target populations lean towards a hybrid form of communication combining online and in-person interactions. Key challenges include the potential loss of on-site engagement when relying solely on ICTs, limited technological infrastructure, low digital literacy, and the lack of a digital culture.

Kurzfassung

Diese Arbeit betrachtet Kolumbien als besonderen Fall innerhalb Lateinamerikas, ein Land, das durch multiple Krisen geprägt ist und jüngst einen Wandel hin zu einem progressiven Regierungsprojekt vollzogen hat. Die Verschärfung wirtschaftlicher, sozialer und politischer Krisen, einschließlich der COVID-19-Pandemie, führte 2020/21 zu massiven Protesten, die im sozialen Aufruhr von 2021 kulminierten. Die Proteste kombinierten Straßenaktionen mit der zunehmenden Nutzung von Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien (ICTs) zur Online-Mobilisierung. Dabei spielten Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NGOs) eine zentrale Rolle beim Schutz der zivilen und politischen Rechte der Demonstranten, von denen viele zu ihren Zielgruppen gehörten. Die COVID-19-Beschränkungen erzeugten einen Distanzierungseffekt, der die Interaktion zwischen NGOs und Zielgruppen einschränkte. Beide mussten ihre Kommunikationsstrategien anpassen und verstärkt auf digitale Technologien zurückgreifen. Der digitale Wandel im kolumbianischen NGO-Sektor vollzog sich unter Bedingungen signifikanter digitaler Lücken und operativer Belastungen, die seine Arbeit beeinträchtigten. Dennoch reagierten die NGOs schnell und unkonventionell, während auch ihre Zielgruppen proaktiv und resilient digitale Werkzeuge nutzten.

Theoretisch ist die Studie in der reflexiven und kritischen Entwicklungsforschung verortet und entwickelt ein konzeptionelles Rahmenwerk auf drei Säulen: *Networks for Transformation* verortet die Analyse in den Dynamiken horizontaler Kommunikationsnetzwerke und der Inklusions-Ausschluss-Logik der Informationsgesellschaft. *Development Communication* richtet den Fokus von Infrastrukturen auf Akteure und Interaktionsprozesse. *Transformative Action*, ein aktuelles Konzept der kritischen Entwicklungsforschung, betont die Rolle von Bewusstsein, Wissen und Handlungsfähigkeit bei der Transformation sozialer Realität.

Empirisch basiert die Studie auf einer instrumentellen Fallstudie: einer von kolumbianischen NGOs initiierten Online-Mobilisierung im Jahr 2020. Diese begann mit einer Petition, die von 256 NGOs unterzeichnet wurde, und setzte sich als Social-Media-Kampagne auf Facebook und Twitter/X fort. Rund 620 Beiträge thematisierten die Unsicherheiten, denen der NGO-Sektor während der Pandemie ausgesetzt war. Die Datenerhebung (2020–2022) umfasste eine Online-Befragung, 31 halbstrukturierte Interviews mit NGO-Leitenden und zwei Fokusgruppen mit Zielgruppen. Die Analyse untersucht Online-Sozialmobilisierung mittels qualitativer Netzwerkanalyse und Capacity-Building-Kurse im Rahmen des Development-Communication-Ansatzes. Es wird argumentiert, dass digitale Kommunikation transformative Prozesse begünstigen kann.

Die Ergebnisse tragen zur Debatte über Entwicklung und Digitalisierung unter Beteiligung zivilgesellschaftlicher Akteure bei. Sie verdeutlichen, dass Online-Kommunikation und -Mobilisierung Chancen wie Schwierigkeiten für transformative Prozesse bergen. Neue Kommunikationskanäle zwischen NGOs und Zielgruppen entstanden über WhatsApp, Videokonferenzen, soziale Netzwerke und Lernplattformen. Online-Formate ermöglichten eine breitere und kosteneffizientere Beteiligung, doch bevorzugten beide Akteursgruppen hybride Kommunikationsformen, die digitale und Präsenzinteraktionen verbinden. Zentrale Herausforderungen bleiben der Verlust direkter Beteiligung vor Ort, begrenzte technologische Infrastruktur, geringe digitale Kompetenzen und das Fehlen einer etablierten digitalen Kultur.

Resumen

Esta investigación presenta a Colombia como un caso distintivo en América Latina y el Caribe, un país caracterizado por múltiples crisis y un reciente giro hacia un proyecto gubernamental progresista. La intensificación de la crisis económica, social y política, incluida la pandemia de COVID-19, provocó protestas masivas en 2020 y 2021 que culminaron en el estallido social de 2021. Estas protestas combinaron las manifestaciones en las calles con el uso creciente de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC) para la movilización en línea. Durante este periodo, las organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONG) desempeñaron un papel clave en la defensa de los derechos civiles y políticos de los manifestantes, muchos de los cuales formaban parte de sus poblaciones objetivo.

En este contexto, los confinamientos por COVID-19 generaron un distanciamiento que redujo la interacción entre las ONG y sus poblaciones objetivo. Ambas partes tuvieron que emplear nuevas formas de comunicación, recurriendo cada vez más a las TIC. La transición digital del sector no gubernamental de Colombia tuvo lugar en medio de profundas brechas digitales y cargas operativas que afectaron su trabajo. No obstante, las ONG respondieron de manera rápida y no convencional, como lo han hecho en primera línea frente a otras crisis, mientras que las poblaciones objetivo también se involucraron de manera proactiva y resiliente a través de herramientas digitales.

Ubicada en el campo de los estudios críticos y reflexivos del desarrollo, esta investigación propone un marco conceptual novedoso basado en tres pilares que se interconectan. El primero, *Redes para la Transformación*, sitúa el estudio en las dinámicas de las redes de comunicación horizontales y en las lógicas de inclusión-exclusión de la sociedad de la información. El segundo, *Comunicación para el Desarrollo*, desplaza el enfoque desde las infraestructuras de comunicación hacia los actores y sus procesos de interacción, a menudo ignorados en el primer pilar. El tercero, *Acción Transformadora*, un concepto reciente en los estudios críticos del desarrollo, destaca el papel de la concientización, el conocimiento y la agencia, tanto individual como colectiva, en la transformación de la realidad social.

Esta investigación emplea un enfoque de estudio de caso instrumental, tomando como ejemplo una movilización en línea iniciada y liderada por ONG colombianas en 2020. La movilización comenzó con una declaración firmada por 256 ONG y fue seguida por una campaña en redes sociales en Facebook y Twitter/X. Alrededor de 620 publicaciones abordaron la incertidumbre y las disrupciones que enfrentó el sector no gubernamental durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Los datos se recopilaron entre 2020 y 2022 mediante una encuesta en línea, 31 entrevistas semiestructuradas con líderes de ONG y dos grupos focales con poblaciones objetivo. El estudio examina la movilización social en línea a través de un análisis cualitativo de redes y el fortalecimiento de capacidades mediante el enfoque de comunicación para el desarrollo. Se argumenta que estos procesos comunicativos mediados por las TIC pueden contribuir a generar acción transformadora.

El análisis contribuye a los debates actuales sobre desarrollo y digitalización en los que participan actores de la sociedad civil. Los resultados indican que la comunicación y la movilización en línea presentan tanto oportunidades como retos para impulsar acciones transformadoras. Se crearon nuevos canales de comunicación entre las ONG y sus poblaciones objetivo a través de grupos de WhatsApp, videoconferencias, redes sociales

y plataformas de aprendizaje. La comunicación y la movilización en línea también ampliaron la participación de forma geográfica y rentable. Sin embargo, tanto las ONG como sus poblaciones objetivo tienden a preferir una forma híbrida de comunicación que combine interacciones en línea y presenciales. Entre los principales desafíos se incluyen la posible pérdida del enfoque territorial al depender exclusivamente de las TIC, la limitada infraestructura tecnológica, la baja alfabetización digital y la falta de una cultura digital.

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“No es poético lo que digo, no al odio, no a la confrontación, hay que trabajar por la esperanza, la lucha continúa por un mundo mejor” Pepe José Mujica

Back in 2018, I told my colleagues at the Confederación Colombiana de ONG (CCONG) that I was going to apply for a doctoral scholarship in Germany. One of them said to me: “Go for it. We can prepare the applications together. When you obtain a doctoral degree, it will be as if I had done it myself”. This person was a great mentor to me, an independent researcher, policy practitioner and passionate farmer I admired. We traveled together around Colombia facilitating diverse workshops and conferences. I witnessed her dedication to approach and mobilize civil society organizations, her ability to keep silence to let local communities speak up, to share knowledge and establish bonds of trust. Thank you for your encouragement, guidance and humor. At that time, I wanted to become like you, and you wanted to be me, pursuing this academic qualification. I see it as a win-win situation today.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

English

Confederation	Colombian Confederation of NGOs – CCONG
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HRD	Human Right Defender
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Spanish with English Translations

ACONC	Asociación de Consejos Comunitarios del Norte del Cauca	Association of Community Councils of Northern Cauca
ANDI	Asociación Nacional de Empresarios por Colombia	National Business Association of Colombia
ANUC	Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos	National Association of Peasant Users
DIAN	Dirección de Impuestos y Aduanas Nacionales	National Directorate of Taxes and Customs
FENALCO	Federación Nacional de Comerciantes Empresarios	National Trade Federation
JAC	Junta de Acción Comunal	Action Community Board
MinTic	Ministerio de las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación	Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies
PND	Plan Nacional de Desarrollo	National Development Plan
RSPC	Rendición Social Pública de Cuentas	Public Social Accountability Report
RUES	Registro Único Empresarial y Social	Single Business and Social Registry

German with English Translations

GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH	German development cooperation agency
ZEF	Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung	Center for Development Research

Stylistic Notes

The names and acronyms of the NGOs involved in the study are presented in Spanish for easier recognition and consistency with their commonly used forms.

Key terms are presented with their corresponding translation in either English or Spanish to ensure readability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March, 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was more than just a health crisis, it has had a ripple effect, impacting all dimensions of life (Shi et al., 2020). Public health systems and public health were affected directly, while indirect socio-economic effects were felt by every single sector of the economy and society (Fakhruddin et al., 2020). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted dramatically the use of, and dependence on, digital technology(ies), which have accelerated, expanded and intensified since the pandemic began (Gkeredakis et al., 2021).

With the implementation of face-to-face and movement restrictions during the health emergency, digital solutions acquired a vital role in maintaining social and productive activities marking a turning point in how widely they are used (ECLAC, 2022a). Consequently, one of the lasting legacies from the pandemic has been the greater adoption of digital technologies for many advanced economies, but also for economies and industries that had been lagging behind (IMF et al., 2023). That is the case of Latin America, in which an impressive digital adoption occurred in diverse sectors such as commerce, education and health care, but that still hasn't been enough to overcome the digital divide in this region (Wilson Center, 2024).

With respect to the secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, these have been argued to be more catastrophic and longer-lasting than its direct impacts, particularly in developing countries (UK Parliament, 2021). Such secondary effects concerned reversals in humanitarian and development areas such as healthcare, food security, poverty, gender, civic space, among others (VENRO, 2021).

Even though the global economy has been recovering gradually from the pandemic, there are still many challenges related to inflation persistence, labor market gaps, and poor climate transition (IMF & Gourinchas, 2023). Moreover, there has been a rise in tensions and wars in many regions of the world (BaFin, 2024), which have also characterized the post-pandemic scenario.

Living in a state of multiple crises, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a key role in the frontline of any crises (Simo & Bies, 2007; Meyer & Simsa, 2018; Prasad et al., 2018, Schwartz & Yen, 2017). During the COVID-19 pandemic, civil society was actively involved in mitigating the consequences of the crisis as best as possible

(Schrader, 2021). However, CSOs have had to keep helping their communities while they tackle the crisis themselves (Kuenzi et al., 2021). The long duration of the pandemic, introduction of strict safety protocols and economic repercussions became environmental stressors for them (ibid., p. 822). CSOs had to quickly adapt their operations to physical distancing rules, react to the sudden loss of funding streams, shift their priorities, and adopt new technologies (McMullin & Raggo, 2020).

Departing from the field of reflexive and critical development studies, this research explores through an instrumental case study how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the work of the non-governmental sector in Colombia forcing NGOs and their target populations to change the way they communicated and mobilized increasing the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The study argues that (online) communication and mobilization might shape transformative action in Colombia, in which the COVID-19 pandemic has been only part of the multiple crises the country has been through for a prolonged time. For the study, the crucial relationship among NGOs, considered one of the diverse groups of CSO, and target populations is examined by employing a bottom-up or development from below orientation which acknowledges civil society actors as agents of transformation.

1.1. LATIN AMERICA'S CONTEXT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE DIGITAL BOOST

Overlapping issues such as conflict, socio-economic crises, migration and natural hazards characterize the humanitarian situation in Latin America and the Caribbean (European Commission, n.d.). Moreover, there is a tendency towards political instability and erosion of democracy in most of the countries within the region (BTI Transformation Index, n.d.-a). Even though multiple crises have created an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear in this region, they have also prompted countries to come up with creative political and cultural strategies towards new paths for development and social change (CALAS, n.d.). Therefore, Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions in the Global South with a vast experience in dealing with multiple crises (CALAS, n.d.).

The “Global South” is a geopolitical concept describing regions outside the dominant centers of economic, cultural, and political power (Roysen et al., 2023). Defined mainly in contrast to the “Global North”, its boundaries are often unclear, shifting, and socially constructed (ibid., p. 1). Generally, the “Global South” refers to countries affected by

colonialism, imperialism, and global capitalism (ibid., p. 1). At the same time, the “Global South” is also a space where alternative, community-based approaches to sustainability and decolonial struggles are emerging (ibid., p. 3).

Youkhana et al. (2024) discuss the concept of the “New South” that has been introduced to refer to countries that are adopting local strategies and experimenting with both alternative development models and alternatives to the European model, which remains centered on economic growth and technology. In this study, however, the term “Global South” will be used to emphasize the ongoing contested and relational dynamic with the Global North, despite these countries’ determination to pursue different development pathways.

With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, it seriously affected Latin America and the Caribbean both in economic and human terms (Dietz et al., 2022; IMF et al., 2020). According to the United Nation’s women organization UN Women, the COVID-19 pandemic caused one of the worst health, economic, social and humanitarian crises in the Latin American and Caribbean region this century (UN Women, 2020). For the United Nations Development Program for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDPLAC), “the COVID-19 pandemic [...] has exacerbated existing inequalities and led to a significant increase in poverty, giving rise to social and political tensions in the region” (UNDP, 2023, p. 3).

A series of lockdowns, travel restrictions, quarantines, and in general physical distancing measures and mobility restrictions measures with different scopes and durations were implemented by the governments worldwide throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in order to avoid the spread of the virus until a vaccine was developed. These kinds of isolating measures brought a series of trade-off costs across countries but especially for vulnerable groups, which were at more risk because of their socio-economic conditions (Li et al., 2023).

In particular in LAC, the inhabitants of big conurbations, informal workers, and indigenous communities as well as youth, children and women, were among the most vulnerable groups affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions (Schulte, 2022) . These population groups live under high levels of social inequality and poverty,

have poor access to health facilities, and suffer from house segregation (ibid., p. 25). During the COVID-19 pandemic, these aspects were exacerbated and became risk factors for infection since these populations couldn't accomplish the hygiene-preventive measures, physical distancing and mobility restrictions needed to avoid the spread of the virus (ibid., p. 26).

With respect to the informal sector, 53% of the working population of this region was employed informally by 2020 according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) (Carosio, 2022). Informal workers receive very low salaries and lack social security taking into account that these are benefits attached to formal employment (ibid., p. 36). Under the lockdown measures this population group was not able to generate income to survive (ibid., p. 36). Besides, 'home office' was not a viable option for informal workers due to the nature of their jobs, their educational level, and the lack of adequate equipment, including limited internet access (ibid., p. 36). Other job roles in aviation, tourism, trade and free trade zones were also affected by the quarantines leading to job losses and salary cuts (ibid., p. 36). Moreover, a many micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, which account for 99% of businesses in this region by 2020, didn't survive the pandemic closure restrictions (ibid., p. 36).

The COVID-19 pandemic also exacerbated the tense situation of the education sector in the region (Dietz et al., 2022). In most of the countries within the region schools and universities were closed for a long time (ibid., p. 10). As a consequence, the students had to study from home using online tools (ibid., p. 10). Some countries took advantage of this to promote the digitalization of formal education with programs they had already implemented, but in general, the switch to home-schooling further increased the inequalities in terms of learning and access to education (ibid., p. 11). In particular, children and youths in marginalized urban and rural areas don't have the necessary living conditions, nor equipment or stable internet connection to learn from home (ibid., p. 11).

Another risk identified by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was the high level of urbanization in LAC, which is related to housing segregation (Schulte, 2022). This means that the infrastructure and the living conditions of rich and poor people are very different (ibid., p. 25). For those living in

informal urban settlements, it was very difficult to maintain physical distancing and hygiene measures, which made them more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid., p. 25). For those living in rural areas, poverty and the lack of social security were concerning risk factors too (ibid., p. 25). In addition, the lack of access and quality of public healthcare systems made the situation worse, in particular for these groups of populations (ibid., p. 25).

In most countries of Latin America, aside from lockdowns, the governments implemented economic measures and social programs that included monetary transfers, medicines and assistance for poorer and vulnerable groups (Schulte, 2022). However, these measures weren't enough to stop the increasing gap between rich and poor (ibid., p. 32). By 2020 the GINI-Index, that measures the income inequality of the population, increased to 5.6% compared to 2019 (ECLAC, 2021). With respect to the poverty rate, this increased from 30.3% in 2019 to 37.3% in 2020, and the extreme poverty rate from 11.2% to 15.6% in 2020 (Carosio, 2022). Even though there were improvements in previous social indicators by 2022, which suggests recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, the region still faces low growth and persistent high levels of poverty and inequality that make their eradication difficult (ECLAC, 2024).

The acceleration of policies related to digital transformation was also noticeable in Latin America amid the COVID-19 pandemic (CIDH & OEA, n.d.). Given the measures of isolation, governments needed to accelerate the universal internet connectivity by broadening the essential infrastructure and providing digital equipment and promoting digital literacy (ibid., p. 2). The internet became a crucial tool to foster the quality of life of people during the pandemic making possible decentralized interactions and without barriers of borders (ibid., p. 2). Moreover, the digital network turned into a space in which people could compensate to a certain degree the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic to exercise fundamental human rights such as the right to information, rights to assembly and association, right to education, to health, to participate in cultural activities, among others (ibid., p. 2).

According to the Latin America Digital Transformation Report, internet penetration in this region jumped from 43% to 78% in the last decade (ATLANTICO, 2023). Furthermore, digital trends have emerged post COVID-19 pandemic and they continue

speeding up (vantiva, 2024). These trends include widespread of remote working among both small and large organizations, the increasing digital consumer engagement through online-business models, the provision of services that still use the internet for their delivery such as healthcare and education, the significant growth of online banking through the use of cellphones or the internet, the increasing use of artificial intelligence applications and the significant presence of Latin America in various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok as well as a fast-growth for streaming services (ibid.). This last aspect highlights the cultural preference of the region for diverse forms of storytelling and its enthusiastic engagement with digital media (ibid).

The digital boost has transcended the COVID-19 crisis generating new forms of consumption and production and giving new meanings to growth and development (ECLAC, 2022a). It appears more evident that a digital society is not only more productive and dynamic but also more resilient to respond to crises (ibid., p. 9). However, the digital shift isn't only about technology but empowering people (vantiva, 2024).

The digital transformation brings challenges and risks (ECLAC, 2022a). Latin America and the Caribbean's policies have achieved significant advances in connectivity, as well as in programs for the digitalization of education, health, and e-government services; however, there are persistent digital gaps in access and use with respect to more advanced economies, as well as within the region and between countries (ibid., p. 9).

1.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY

This research presents Colombia as a distinctive case within Latin America and the Caribbean. The intensification of multiple and prolonged crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, triggered massive protests across the country in 2020 and 2021. These events culminated in what became known as the 2021 Colombian social outcry (in Spanish *estallido social*). These protests combined street demonstrations with online mobilization. Although the non-governmental sector did not participate directly in the social outcry, NGOs played a significant role in advocating for the civil and political

rights of the protesters. Many of the demonstrators were part of NGOs' target populations (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.1).

Given the crucial role of CSOs, including NGOs, in responding to multiple crises, and the intensified use of ICTs during the COVID-19 pandemic, this research selected a case study focusing on an online mobilization initiated and led by Colombian NGOs in 2020.

The online mobilization began with a petition signed by 256 NGOs. It was followed by a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter/X, featuring around 620 posts that addressed the uncertainty and disruptions the non-governmental sector experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. A detailed description of the instrumental case study follows:

In order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Colombian government declared a national economic, social and ecological emergency on March 17th, 2020 promulgating the Decree No. 417 of 2020. With this declaration, the president at the time, Iván Duque, had the authority to issue the necessary decrees to protect the country from the consequences of the emergency, without requiring prior approval from the national parliament (SWI-SwissInfo, 2020). Several measures were adopted to mitigate the crisis. They included economic benefits, subsidies, and general support. The non-governmental sector was not initially included in these measures, which targeted vulnerable populations and enterprises, but not non-profit organizations. NGOs were concerned by the implications of this crisis on their actions at the time and in future.

At the end of April 2020, a group of four national NGOs, namely Fundación Techo Colombia, Confederación Colombiana de ONG, Fundación Probono and Corporación Reconciliación Colombia established a working group aimed at discussing the situation and looking for strategies to cope with it. Even though the fields of work and target populations of these NGOs differ from each other, ranging from social services, peace building, legal advice and political advocacy, they were determined to mobilize as a sector. The executive directors of these NGOs held regular meetings, firstly in-person, but after the first lockdown, they were online. In one of these meetings, they decided to work jointly on a petition.

The petition is a three-page document (see Appendix 1) that lays out the contributions of the non-governmental sector to Colombia's social transformation, provides information on the consequences of the pandemic on the activities of the non-governmental sector and proposals to tackle the emergency.

In the joint petition, NGOs indicate that the emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the country's inequalities and has affected several organizational and social processes led by social organizations, many of which are in the most remote and vulnerable regions of Colombia (Agencia de Desarrollo Local de Nariño et. al, 2020). In addition, the petition points out that the non-governmental sector is in a state of high vulnerability as the pandemic develops (ibid., p. 1) This is not only because of the inherent risks of the populations NGOs work with, but also because of the unexpected changes that their agreements with the government, development aid agencies and the private sector might have (ibid., p. 2). Furthermore, the joint petition points out that it is predictable that the state of vulnerability will prevail considering that the recovery from the consequences of the pandemic will occur in the medium term (ibid., p.2).

The joint petition includes seven proposals:

1. To include the NGOs as actors and beneficiaries of the measures adopted in the framework of the state of emergency
2. To increase the incentives for the private sector to maintain their donations
3. If necessary, to facilitate the renegotiation and adjustment of contracts and agreements that can be affected by the pandemic in terms of outcomes and methods.
4. To promote public-private and community partnerships.
5. To ensure institutional processes that make effective the right of access to public information and the promotion of public policy dialogue effective.
6. To contribute to the non-governmental sector sustainability and to strengthen its value by acknowledging and supporting its good practices, systematizing and escalating its results, methodologies, instruments, lessons learned and impacts.
7. To attract the attention of donors and contributors to NGOs' relevant role beyond the COVID-19 pandemic in order to keep fostering projects that address the social, economic and institutional development challenges of the country.

Once the joint petition was written, directors shared it with their board members, partners, and networks inviting them to subscribe to it. A total of 256 non-governmental organizations from different regions of the country had subscribed to it by May 5th, 2020. The petition was sent to the national government on this date. It was also

addressed to development aid agencies, embassies and the private sector in Colombia.

For the second stage of this online mobilization, the working group proposed involving their communications teams to develop a social media campaign aimed at promoting the contents of the joint petition and raising awareness of the key role of the non-governmental sector in addressing the crisis. A communications committee, composed of the heads of communication from the four NGOs in the working group, was formed. This committee was responsible for developing and coordinating the campaign, involving the organizations that had signed the joint petition. The online campaign took place from May 21 to June 6, 2020 and was carried out on Facebook and Twitter under the hashtags #KeyPieceforColombia and #AnNGOis (in Spanish, #PiezaClaveparaColombia and #UnaONGes). The communications committee created all related materials for the social media campaign, including a concept note and a dissemination kit. According to the records of tweets and Facebook posts, 55 NGOs that had signed the petition participated in the social media campaign. Additionally, 24 NGOs that had not signed the petition still helped to promote it on social media.

The joint petition followed by the online social media campaign was a unique online mobilization during the COVID-19 pandemic on behalf of the Colombian non-governmental sector. NGOs with diverse fields of work, sizes or location mobilized jointly in order to have one voice regarding the implications the COVID-19 crisis was having on their operations and presenting their claims and proposals to managing the disruptions. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that even though Colombian NGOs employ networking, this is the first time such a large number of diverse NGOs mobilized online with a common goal in a very short period of time.

Even though the target populations did not participate directly in the online mobilization, this study could identify the need of NGOs to maintain relationships with their target populations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in particular to advance capacity building, which shifted from an in-person to an online modality because of the physical distancing measures and mobility restrictions. At this point the case study expanded their boundaries to include the target populations of the non-governmental sector in the study. Target populations of the NGOs that participated in the online

mobilization were approached in order to explore the online communication employed for the capacity building courses they were involved during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3. RESEARCH GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research pursues the goal of examining the increasing online communication and mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target populations triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in order to establish how these communication developments shape transformative action in a country affected by multiple crises.

In line with the research goal, the main research question and sub-questions which guided this research are:

How might online communication and mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic shape transformative action in the country?

SQ1 How did the COVID-19 pandemic trigger online mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector via the joint petition and social media campaign #PiezaClaveparaColombia?

SQ2 How did NGOs and their target populations use online communication during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain their relationships with each other and facilitate capacity building?

The methodological chapter provides the operationalization of the research questions pointing out the concepts, the methods and data collection techniques that were employed to answer them.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

This doctoral dissertation consists of eight chapters. The first chapter corresponds to the introductory chapter. This is the current chapter, which gives an overview of the dissertation. For this, key facts of Latin America's context during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a description of the digital boost that occurred in this region during this period are introduced. Moreover, the instrumental case study, which is the methodological approach of this research, main objective and research questions that guide the study are also outlined in this chapter.

The second chapter corresponds to the state of the art of this research. A literature review offers an overview of the main stream of studies that have been conducted

since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. Furthermore, this chapter reveals literature gaps that the current study attempts to fill.

The third chapter contextualizes the study by providing an outline of the historical, socio-political and technological aspects necessary to situate the case study. The first section explores the development, functions, and challenges of the non-governmental sector in Latin America and particularly Colombia, highlighting its role in addressing multiple crises and its institutional vulnerabilities. The second section focuses on Colombia's situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, framing it as part of a broader, prolonged crisis that culminated in the 2021 Colombian social outcry (in Spanish *estallido social*). This was a series of street and online demonstrations in the main cities of the country triggered by the interconnection of health, economic, social, and political crises. The chapter describes the social outcry and briefly discusses NGOs' roles during this period. The final section examines Colombia's digital infrastructure and connectivity in order to understand under what conditions this digital shift occurred.

The fourth chapter looks at the conceptual considerations of the study and it concludes by visualizing the conceptual framework. Situating this research under the field of reflexive and critical development studies, the first section of this chapter elaborates on the concept of civil society and situates civil society organizations and Latin America and the Caribbean in the development debate. A second section of this chapter explains the three conceptual pillars that this study draws on, namely networks for transformation, development communication and transformative action. These concepts are used to develop the instrumental case study and serve as components of the conceptual framework. At the end of the chapter a diagram illustrates how the conceptual pillars are related guiding the data analysis.

The fifth chapter explains in detail the methodology of the study, namely a qualitative case study approach. For this, the chapter elaborates on how the study emerged in the context of COVID-19. The first section of this chapter addresses the case study approach explaining its main foundations and going through each of its elements, namely research questions, selection of the case, case study type, data collection techniques and data analysis. The chapter finishes with a discussion of my positionality and other ethical considerations.

The sixth and seventh chapters introduce the first and second empirical parts of the study. Each chapter addresses one of the sub-questions of this research. Chapter 6 examines the online mobilization carried out by the Colombian non-governmental sector in 2020 amid the uncertainty and disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to their work. I employed Qualitative Network Analysis (QNA) to study this collective action process. The analysis, as well as the structure of the chapter, is guided by the following categories, which influence the formation and level of integration of the network: actors, resources, coordination and timing, organizational learning, and identity linkages.

In the seventh chapter, I look at the (online) communication between NGOs and their target populations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The empirical data presented in this chapter describe and reflect on how the online communication between NGOs and their target populations occurred based on the implementation of (online) capacity building courses and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentation and analysis of the empirical data is based on the core components of the development communication approach, namely participation and interaction, adequacy of ICTs and appropriation of the (online) communication process.

The eighth chapter is the concluding chapter of the dissertation. In this chapter, I discuss the main findings of the study as well as the concluding remarks. The main findings are summarized based on the two empirical chapters. With respect to the discussion, the chapter elaborates on the opportunities and pitfalls of an online modality of communication and mobilization to shape transformative action in a country that faces multiple crises. The chapter includes a broader discussion on the linkages between the 2021 social outcry, the results of the 2022 presidential elections in Colombia, and the role of the country's non-governmental sector. At the end of the chapter, contributions and limitations of the study as well as further research recommendations are outlined.

2. COVID-19 AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS' PERFORMANCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I engage with the body of literature that has addressed the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the performance of civil society organizations (CSOs), including non-governmental organizations. In doing so, I present an overview of the main streams of studies conducted since the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020. The findings of these studies facilitate the analysis of what has happened with the mobilization and performance capacity of these organizations throughout the pandemic. In particular, they show both the disruptions and the transformations of CSOs as they sought to continue engaging with their target populations in transformative action.

The literature review will be presented according to three streams of literature. Each stream follows a descriptive, theoretical, and critical approach, respectively. With regard to the first stream, publications consist of surveys and assessments that collected quantitative data on the challenges faced by CSOs due to the Covid-19 mobility restrictions. The second stream of literature includes research papers and initiatives that address the responses of CSOs to overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. These papers increasingly employ theoretical frameworks and qualitative data collection methods, which will be summarized in this section. The third stream of literature consists of studies conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a particular focus on Colombia. Finally, the literature review highlights the research gaps identified within each stream, which this study seeks to address.

The revision of the body of literature evidences that research increased gradually once the COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. A peak of research papers was reached between mid-2020 to mid-2022. After this period, there have been a few new studies. The studies focus on the COVID-19 crisis and its general implications on CSOs management and operations.

2.1. First stream of literature: a descriptive approach

The first stream of literature consists of the initial exploratory studies conducted with CSOs during the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies facilitated the generation of information about the working conditions of CSOs under the implementation of lockdowns. This information was used for their mobilization campaigns to make visible their needs and contributions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and it served to

develop their adaptation measures. Moreover, these studies became the starting point for further research that explored the responses of these organizations to the COVID-19 crisis, including the present study. A detailed description of the most relevant publications follows:

The Charities Aid Foundation¹ was one of the first organizations that conducted a series of surveys in order to “chronicle the impact of the crisis on non-profit organizations worldwide and help donors develop data-driven giving strategies” (CAF, 2024b, para. 1). In total, eight surveys were conducted, beginning in March 2020 and concluding in August 2021. The title of the report series presenting the survey findings is “The Voice of Charities Facing COVID-19”. Seven reports describe the impacts of the crisis on non-profit organizations worldwide and one addresses how philanthropy organizations responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue providing their grants and donations. Approximately 3,500 respondent organizations were involved in the series of surveys with an average of 500 organizations per survey. With respect to the field of work, according to the reports, the majority of them are dedicated to social services, education, and healthcare, and they cover target populations such as children and youth, disabled populations, the elderly, and the unemployed.

Since the number of organizations and their countries of activity varied across surveys, I calculated the overall total of countries in which the respondent organizations are active. Altogether, the organizations work in 108 countries. At the regional level, North America and Europe account for the largest share of organizational activity, followed by Southern and Eastern Asia, and then Africa. Organizations working in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America represent approximately 11% of all respondent organizations.

As for Colombia, the disaggregated data was specifically requested by the CAF Foundation. According to the CAF, Colombian respondent organizations participated in five of the eight surveys. In general, there was a low participation of organizations in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean compared to the other regions. The same was true for Colombia, with an average of five (5) organizations responding to

¹ With offices in the United States, Canada and Great Britain, but operating globally, the Charity Aid Foundation advises donors on how to provide effective and strategic donations and support charitable organizations or social enterprises to become more resilient (CAF, 2024a).

the surveys. Nevertheless, it is relevant that Colombia was considered in the study and participated in this global report.

According to the main findings of the eight (8) reports, 96.50% of the respondent organizations reported being negatively impacted by the coronavirus global pandemic in March 2020. The negative impact remained high (more than 90%) over the course of the following surveys. Moreover, according to the survey applied a year later in April 2021 “more than 67% of respondents indicate that the challenges presented by the pandemic have increased over time, while 22% have experienced an easing burden” (CAF, 2021a, p. 6).

With respect to the areas that were most affected because of the global pandemic, in the second survey conducted from April 30th to May 6th, 2020, organizations reported that reduced contributions (72.59%), travel restrictions (70.45%) and client relations (41.58%) were the three major affected areas. In regard to the continuation of their operations, 92.47% of the respondents were able to maintain operations and 7.53% closed down according to the third survey conducted from May 28th to June 3rd, 2020. These figures improved in the fifth survey conducted from August 25th to September 2nd reaching 97.16% and 2.84% respectively. However, the report acknowledges that “the organizations that had to close down during the past months are poorly represented among current respondents” (CAF, 2020b, p. 7) . The two main reasons given for the suspension of operations were: services/programs cannot be provided online (73.17%) and we are a volunteer-based organization which lost volunteers due to COVID-19 restrictions (34.15%). To the question to what extent your operations are limited, 53.16% indicated they were providing only limited services/programs and 57.22% pointed out they were providing new services/programs to respond to COVID-19 related needs.

The research conducted by the CAF foundation also revealed six (6) strategic areas for non-profit organizations to tackle the disruption faced by COVID-19 and any future challenges (CAF, 2021b). They are technology, communication, finance, fundraising, leadership and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

With respect to technology, respondent organizations agreed that they had to adapt to online operations that might remain post-pandemic (CAF, 2021b). Therefore, access to technology and the ability to move operations online was key to continuing

their operations (CAF, 2020c). According to the sixth survey conducted from December 2nd to December 16th, technology was included as a vital component of their programs with 73.94% adapting programming to the digital realm (CAF, 2020a). Organizations shifted to an online approach to organize internal meetings and events (84.39%), increase their online presence through their websites, social media or applications (78.20%), to provide programs/services online (65.55%), and to run digital fundraising campaigns (46.30%) (ibid., p. 6).

In the area of communication, the reports acknowledge the key role of communication in the social sector to stay connected with communities and all the other stakeholders (CAF, 2020a). According to the findings, during the COVID-19 pandemic, “amid such uncertainty, communication has assumed a new level of importance” (CAF, 2020b, p. 18). Organizations expressed their interest in strengthening communication in order to have more effective fundraising and resource mobilization (71.05%), to be able to meet the needs of their non-digital stakeholders (53.60%) and connect with all the stakeholders (52.09%) (CAF, 2020a). Moreover, the results show that the three most challenging stakeholders to engage are beneficiaries (77.65%), donors (65.77%) and volunteers (48.02%) (ibid., p. 7).

In the areas of finance and fundraising, respondent organizations of the second survey conducted from April 30th to May 6th, 2020, indicated that reducing operational costs beyond general administrative costs (60.51%) and creating new fundraising campaigns (60.26%) were the two most employed measures to mitigate the negative financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (CAF, 2020c). According to the survey applied in December 2020, rethinking fundraising strategies remained a key measure with nearly 68% launching new fundraising initiatives (CAF, 2020a). Moreover, 59.82% of the organizations were effectively using digital technology for the new fundraising campaigns (ibid., p. 9). However, the report points out that small organizations face fundraising challenges because the members of these organizations are all addressing the target populations and they cannot employ their resources to develop new fundraising initiatives (ibid., p. 9). The last CAF report emphasizes the critical function for non-profit organizations to build and sustain financial reserves, develop strategic and contingency planning and create a risk management framework in order to overcome external disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic (CAF, 2021b).

With respect to leadership, even though 77.90% of the organizations consider their leaders were well equipped to navigate the crisis throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, only 26.10% had a recovery plan in place by December 2020 (CAF, 2020a). This indicates the need to further strengthen leaders' strategic planning and change management skills (ibid., p. 10).

Finally, 13.06% referred to the implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies in the report conducted in April 2021 as a new strategy introduced since the beginning of the pandemic that will be maintained post-pandemic (CAF, 2021a). The CAF foundation agrees that the pandemic revealed and increased the structural inequalities of societies (CAF, 2020a). That is why a commitment to social justice and DEI is important for funders and should be assumed by non-profit organizations as well (ibid., p. 11). According to them, social progress relies on the practice of DEI policies which contribute to the generation of more effective outcomes (CAF, 2021b).

With respect to surveys targeting the Global South, the report "The Impact of COVID-19 on African Civil Society Organizations" constitutes an important contribution. Conducted by @AfricanNGOs and EPIC-Africa², the survey (29 April–15 May 2020) aimed to assess the pandemic's effects on African CSOs' funding and operations, document coping strategies, highlight CSOs' role in national COVID-19 responses, and identify emerging opportunities (epicafrica & @AfricanNGOs, 2020) . In total, 1,015 CSOs across 44 African countries participated in the survey, most prominently South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Togo, and Eswatini (ibid., p. 6). The study revealed that 98% of the respondent organizations experienced operational disruptions, 55.7% had already lost funding, 66.5% expected further losses, and 77.9% feared devastating impacts on their sustainability (ibid., p. 4, 6, 11). Respondent organizations are active in diverse fields, notably community development (38.9%), education (34.1%), children (33.3%), human rights (31.1%), health (29.1%), and youth (27.5%) (ibid., p. 6). Operationally, 69.3% reduced or cancelled activities, 73.9% faced restrictions on staff mobility, and 79.4% lost community contact (ibid., p. 10). Yet 84.8% introduced new program activities that included emergency relief, advocacy, and coordination (ibid., p. 16).

² @AfricanNGOs is a Twitter-based platform sharing news and analysis about African NGOs, moderated by development consultant David Barnard. EPIC-Africa is a Senegal-based pan-African organization, founded in 2015 that strengthens African philanthropy and civil society through data-driven tools and capacity building (epicafrica & @AfricanNGOs, 2020).

While 77.2% saw themselves as critical actors in national responses, 71.6% felt governments failed to recognize their contributions (ibid., p. 19). Despite these setbacks, 45% believed the crisis would make the sector more agile and resilient, with opportunities in digital transformation, domestic funding, and strengthened advocacy (ibid., p. 20-22).

Another survey that can be listed in the first stream of publications was conducted by the Maecenta foundation with civil society actors in Germany during the Coronavirus' second wave from November 25th to December 10th, 2020. A total of 282 organizations participated in the survey, of which 278 were considered for the results. The study was published as a working paper in an open access repository and provides an overview of the needs, challenges, but also capabilities of these organizations one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondent organizations belong to the following area of activities: (social) services, advocacy, watchdogs, intermediaries, self-help/support, community building, and political co-creation. Even though the Maecenta's study did not include organizations active in the Global South, its findings point to comparable repercussions and challenges faced in the Global South in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Maecenta Foundation's survey, 32% of the organizations reported being affected strongly by the COVID-19 crisis (Schrader, 2021). With respect to the repercussions, the three most important indicated by the CSOs were changes in the deployment of employees (62%), cancellation or reduction in the provision of services (50%) and aggravated working conditions (43.17%) (ibid., p. 8). Moreover, 37.05% of the respondents pointed out that the lack of digital readiness caused them very serious to serious difficulties during the pandemic (ibid., p. 8). With respect to the financial development of these CSOs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the results show a deterioration in financial revenues (ibid., p. 10). Despite previous effects, this study also portrayed the contributions made by CSOs to tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and which areas can develop further. With respect to the scope of work and activities of the respondent organizations, they have increased as a result of the crisis. In fact, 64% reported the expansion of their activities (ibid., p. 29). The demand for care and social services rose significantly (ibid., p. 12). Moreover, new topic areas were established due to the pandemic such as the implementation of hygienic concepts and the adoption of digital channels and formats (ibid., p. 19). With regard to the digital

shift, 65% of respondents reported that one of the greatest challenges is reaching target groups through digital formats (ibid., p. 26). Networking also played an important role during the crisis with an increase in the number of partnerships with other actors (28.06%) (ibid., p. 30).

This stream of publications also includes a journal article by researchers from the Poznań University of Economics and Business, which examined the anticipated consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for Polish NGOs over four- and eight-week periods. The study also identified the differences of the COVID-19 effects according to the areas of work of NGOs. 115 NGOs' representatives, most of them board members, replied to an open-ended questionnaire in the period of April-May 2020. According to the results, 36.4% of the NGOs indicated that having problems with financing the costs of remuneration within the next four weeks was a situation rather likely to occur (Mikołajczak et al., 2022). When observing this financial implication according to the area of work, representatives of NGOs active in art and culture as well as in local development in the social and material dimension were the most concerned about remuneration issues with 100% and 85.7% respectively (ibid., p. 338). In contrast, representatives of NGOs in the areas of upbringing and education as well as in the area of sports, tourism, recreation and hobbies considered that situation unlikely with 60.0% and 53.3% respectively (ibid., p. 338). The same results with slight differences were obtained for the anticipated consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the respondent organizations over a period of eight weeks. To the question which negative consequences of the COVID-19 were Polish NGOs more afraid of, 65.8% of the NGOs indicated they were rather or very much afraid of the delay in awarding subsidies for the activity or project implementation and 58.5% were concerned about a decrease in funds obtained from collections or donations (ibid., p. 340). Furthermore, 47.6% of the NGOs' representatives were afraid of losing revenue from fees due to the cancellation of an event or program, followed by other fears (42.2%) and almost 40% feared the lack of reimbursement due to the non-eligibility of expenditure under projects implemented from public funds (ibid., p. 340). With respect to the changes they have experienced in the delivery of services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, first place is occupied by 'cancelled, suspended or closed facilities' with 64.4% followed by 'transferred work and activities online' with 32.2% (ibid., p. 342). The authors noted in their conclusions that most research on the impacts of COVID-

19 on non-profit organizations focuses on the situation of organizations in the US, which differs substantially from the context in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe (ibid., p. 346). Consequently, the study conducted in Poland helps to address this gap (ibid., p. 346).

Finally, two additional assessments of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on civil society organizations' operations were identified within the first stream of literature. These were published as a knowledge brief and an action brief, respectively. The knowledge brief was developed in the framework of the G20 Civil Society 20 (C20) Summit, held virtually due to pandemic restrictions in advance of the 2020 G20 Leaders' Summit in Saudi Arabia. The action brief was published by UN Women. Although both assessments provide general figures on the effects of COVID-19 on CSOs without further detail, they constitute part of the first exploratory publications.

In the knowledge brief, 100 CSOs worldwide were surveyed in April 2020. The findings revealed four important trends. Firstly, 56% of the respondents indicated there was an increase in demand for their services (Civil 20, 2020). Secondly, 50% pointed out a lack of funding for their operations, services and activities (ibid.). Thirdly, 65% of the respondents reported difficulties with adjusting to working remotely (ibid.). These results highlight the financial, operational and IT-related challenges that were making it difficult to accomplish their work (ibid.). In particular, CSOs in the Global South had internet connection problems and couldn't afford technological tools for the online modality of work (ibid.). The last aspect of the brief detailed the measures adopted by these organizations to continue with their work: 44% cancelled or limited their activities and services, 30% introduced budget cuts, and 18% were planning to expand their services to respond to the communities' needs emerging from the crisis (ibid.).

With regard to the action brief published by UN Women, 100 Women's CSOs in Asia and the Pacific were surveyed in the form of a rapid assessment in the first half of April 2020. The main areas of work of the respondent organizations were violence against women, women migrant work, and domestic work. According to the findings, 71% of CSOs were being affected somewhat negatively and very negatively due to the COVID-19 pandemic impact (UN Women Asia and the Pacific, 2020). Some of the impacts they mentioned included the reduction of staff on-site, an inability to fully provide services for survivors of violence, lack of funding and closing offices (ibid., p.

1). The assessment also highlights the use of technology to reach out to target groups, with 71% of organizations using digital means to continue reaching women (ibid., p. 2). According to the report, some of the advantages when employing technology include saving travel costs, being fast and more convenient for the constituents who feel comfortable texting or calling over the phone compared to meeting in person (ibid., p. 2). However, there are also concerns about the use of technology such as limited access to the internet or poor connectivity, low response rates, lack of familiarity with platforms, and lack of personal devices (ibid., p. 2). The assessment reveals the mitigation measures employed by the CSOs to adapt and continue providing their services. Flexible working hours (89%), restructure work plans (66%), and remote support for women (52%) were mentioned as the most employed mitigation measures (ibid., p. 2). Figures follow on the changes in violence against women and more specifically against women migrant workers as part of COVID-19 confinement measures. The figures show that violence against women increased 42% by family members and 37% against women migrant workers by their employers (ibid., p. 3). In addition, the participation of CSOs in shaping the government COVID-19 responses was assessed in a positive way at the end of the report. According to the findings, 60% of the CSOs have contributed to different actions such as discussions with local authorities, participation in a coalition platform, development of a COVID-19 response plan, writing of petitions and letters to the government and sharing of information about their target groups (ibid., p. 3). The assessment concludes by mentioning recommendations for governments, aid agencies and donors oriented to prioritizing the key role of CSOs during emergencies such as the COVID-19 (ibid., p. 4).

Even though publications within the first stream of literature were key to building information worldwide about the conditions of CSOs during the COVID-19 pandemic and their initial responses to the emerging crisis, their focus lies primarily on presenting survey results. Quantitative methods of data collection prevailed over qualitative approaches in 2020 and 2021, which might have excluded the narratives of civil society actors during the initial and middle phases of the pandemic. During these phases, CSOs lost contact with their target populations due to the isolation and mobility restrictions. This situation pushed them to develop new methods of communication and mobilization employing ICTs. The studies discussed in the first stream of literature highlight the digital transition experienced by CSOs; however, they

do not further examine which methods of online communication were employed, how these forms of communication evolved, or what opportunities and challenges they created for NGOs and their target populations. In addition, the inclusion of Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly Colombia is very limited. These gaps are precisely what the current study seeks to address.

2.2. Second stream of literature: towards analytical frameworks

A second stream of literature addresses the responses of CSOs to getting through the COVID-19 crisis, which include humanitarian and collective actions, digital transitions and innovations, and best practices. When compared to the first stream of literature, these publications employ a greater level of analysis in which theoretical frameworks are applied to study CSOs responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The publications in this literature stream range from initiatives that civil society organizations employed to tackle the COVID-19 crisis to research papers that analyze the CSOs' responses drawing on crisis management, resilience, resources dependency theory, digital innovation, among other conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

With respect to the initiatives, there is a collection of stories gathered by the European and Economic Committee (EESC)³ that illustrates the actions taken by the members of this committee as well as the CSOs they represent to mitigate the crisis (European Economic and Social Committee, n.d.-a). The stories are presented in a personal way portraying the different ways in which members are dealing with COVID-19 (ibid.). The initiatives can be accessed according to the following population groups and areas of work of the organized civil society: Workers, enterprises, social and solidarity economy; agriculture and food chains; health and education; transport, mobility and innovative solutions; environment and sustainable development; consumers and voluntary sector; equal rights, gender, people with disabilities and minorities; youth, family and elderly. The committee uses the stories to acknowledge the role of organized civil society as a key player at fighting against the pandemic and to make a call for greater solidarity and joint action during the crisis (ibid.).

³ "The EESC is a consultative body of the European Union that gives representatives of Europe's socio-occupational interest groups and others a formal platform to express their points of view on EU issues" (European Economic and Social Committee, n.d.-b, *Workings of the EESC* section). The committee has currently 329 members who make up the following three groups: employers through employers' associations, workers through trade unions, and civil society organizations. Members of the Committee are elected for a period of five years on a proposal by EU Member States (ibid).

Another initiative is the one proposed by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data⁴ consisting of an open platform for civil society, communities, and activists that aimed to generate inclusive COVID-19 data. One of its main goals was to “strengthen recognition of the value of data generated by civil society by global and national leaders and increase willingness to collaborate around gathering, sharing and using data on the situation of marginalized groups” (Global Partnership for Sustainable Development data, 2022, para. 4), in particular throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the data resources that can be accessed. The observatory “tracks the public policies that the 33 countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region are implementing to limit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and offers analyzes of the economic and social impacts that these policies will have at the national and sectoral levels” (ECLAC, 2022b, *Heading* section).

With respect to the research papers, they consist of studies, which employ different level of analysis in order to portray the strategies that CSOs, including the group of NGOs developed to continue providing services to their target groups.

At an initial level of analysis, two qualitative studies conducted with NGOs in Iran and China can be identified. Their key findings are summarized as follows, while studies with more complex levels of analysis will be discussed in the next subsection.

In the study conducted with Iranian NGOs, Vameghi et al. (2022) conducted individual interviews in Tehran from June to September, 2020 with 33 managers and experts of 24 active NGOs providing services to vulnerable groups and a member of an NGO network. The method of analysis employed was conventional qualitative content analysis. According to the results two main themes of NGOs’ initiatives were identified, namely “service initiatives to protect the target population against COVID-19 infection and its aftermath and management initiatives to retain staff, finance, and adapt the organization to crisis situations” (Vameghi et al., 2022, p. 1). In the group of service initiatives there were five categories: health services, education, livelihoods, employment, and leisure. With respect to the group of management initiatives, they

⁴ The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data is a “network of over 700 private sector, academic and civil society organizations, and governments [whose] aim is to ensure that data can be put to good use to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” (Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, 2022, *At a glance* section).

were classified into human resources management, financial management and communication with organizations. Each category also included subthemes extracted from the analysis of the interviews. To mention two examples of subthemes, the category education included the subthemes virtual teaching education and careful face-to-face training while the category human resources management included distance employment (telecommuting), staff care and using the capacity of peers. According to the discussion section of this publication, the NGOs' initiatives can be summarized in the following three groups: protecting the target community and responding to changing needs, using the capacity of cyberspace and the formation of cooperation and synergy (ibid., p. 7, 8).

With respect to the study conducted in China, Daolei (2024) analyzes the strategies adopted by small and medium-sized NGOs to cope with COVID-19 under the authoritarian regime of China. The study examines small and medium NGOs considering them as the vast majority of NGOs. According to the study, these NGOs consist of teams between 10 to 30 people and in comparison to large NGOs, they were close to bankruptcy during the pandemic and they had to implement survival strategies (Daolei, 2024). Based on field observations collected during three years in six major cities in China, this paper divided NGOs' survival strategies into general and differentiated strategies. In the group of general strategies, the study classified them into passive strategies aimed at reducing operational costs and active strategies aimed at increasing revenue (ibid., p. 317). Passive strategies included reducing physical office space, reducing the salaries of the employees and laying off employees who didn't belong to the core team members (ibid., p. 317-318). Among the active strategies the following should be mentioned: establishing new channels of fundraising, adjusting the scope of their business, and participating actively in social governance (ibid., p. 318-319). According to the study, one might assume that the general strategies of NGOs are the same applied by businesses (ibid., p. 319). These strategies might apply in particular to large NGOs, but medium and small NGOs had to apply not only general but also differentiated strategies, which are unique and were adopted according to their level of competitiveness and main business scope (ibid., 320). In turn, the study classifies NGOs in China into market-oriented NGOs, social-oriented NGOs, dependent and independent NGOs. Market oriented NGOs have a high level of competitiveness and autonomy from the government forming a hybrid

between NGOs and businesses (ibid., p. 321). Their strategies included changing their mind-set to attract empathy of potential clients in the middle of the pandemic, enhancing their project capabilities to engage in more difficult projects and strengthening team building (ibid., p. 321-322). Social-oriented NGOs handle social issues such as drug and therapeutic care and participate in local governance (ibid., p. 322). During the pandemic they offered online services, identified new channels of fundraising aside from the funds from government and foundations and enhance their specialties (ibid., p. 323-324). Independent NGOs work on influencing the implementation of government policies (ibid., p. 325). These organizations were very affected during the pandemic because of the exacerbated control exercised by the government (ibid., p. 325). As a strategy they had to move gradually from the policy advocacy to the public service field (ibid., p. 325). Moreover, they intensified their social relationships and promoted more self-organization in the communities (ibid., p. 326). Finally, dependent NGOs in China were hardly affected by the pandemic (ibid., p. 327). These NGOs legitimize the government's policies and implement their instructions in the corresponding industries (ibid., p. 326). That's why their strategy was as simple as to seek the help of the government and reduce the membership fees for their members (ibid., p. 327).

The second stream of literature also includes research papers which employ more complex conceptual and theoretical frameworks to analyze the responses of CSOs to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of them were published during mid-2020 and 2021 in journals dedicated to non-profit and public management. Appendix 2 shows a table listing 12 of these studies. The table summarizes following aspects of the research papers: assumptions and facts, theories and methods employed, findings and conclusions and recommendations for further research. Even though additional research papers can be found departing from these research papers, the studies listed here offer a good overview of the most common assumptions, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and findings obtained.

In general, the empirical studies assume that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all dimensions of life exposing fractures in the social fabric of societies and exacerbating the levels of inequality (Gkeredakis et al., 2021). Moreover, the responses introduced to tackle the pandemic completely changed the use of space and time, the models of mobility and the way of interacting, studying and working (Zilber & Goodman, 2021).

For CSO, including NGOs, this wasn't a typical emergency, it was a shock that altered their operations and at the same time their target populations (Shi et al., 2020). Indeed, vulnerable and marginalized groups were more susceptible to the pandemic because of their socio-economic conditions (Sevelius et al., 2020). According to most of the studies, it was urgent that non-profit organizations implemented or accelerated innovations, most of them in the digital sphere, in order to assure continuity and knowledge exchange (Gkeredakis et al., 2021). Such innovations are key for the sustainability of the organizations in particular during an event such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Lee & Trimi, 2021). However, even though digital infrastructures matter and the area of digital innovation became crucial, the use of new technologies became a contested topic throughout the pandemic, because of issues such as the digital divide, the dependency that technology might generate, and how technologies shape or constitute social structures (Gkeredakis et al., 2021).

Moving to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed to address previous assumptions, the most common are crisis management, resource dependency theory, and organizational theory. From the approach of crisis management, the concept of crisis as an opportunity to innovate, gain resilience and implement effective responses stands out from the studies.

With respect to crisis responses, the studies come up with different models applied to the non-profit sector. A summary with the most important aspects of these models follows:

The study of Shi et al. (2020) proposes a model that understands and assesses how non-profit organizations in the field of social services deliver their programs and respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This model includes four dimensions, namely disruptions, ambiguities, innovations and challenges (ibid., 875). The DAIC model works as a flowchart in which the main issues of any crisis are described at a specific stage according to the previous dimensions (ibid., p. 878). The order of the dimensions can also be altered to analyze the decision-making process during a crisis (ibid., p. 878). In this case, dimensions will be arranged as ACID (ambiguities, challenges, innovations and disruptions) (ibid., p. 878). From the flowchart model it could be established that the long history of service of the non-profit organizations is key to adapting and innovating during a crisis (ibid., p. 879). Moreover,

permanent communication reduces ambiguities and disruption means reaction instead of distraction (ibid., p. 879).

Another model is the one proposed by the study of McMullin & Raggo (2020). This model analyzes how the pandemic has impacted the activities of leadership and management of non-profit boards under four different governance configurations. The model proposes that there are shifts within the management and leadership activities of board members for each governance configuration throughout the different stages of the COVID-19 crisis (shock, adaptation, recovery and “new normal”) (ibid., p. 1183). With respect to the governance configurations, they draw on contingency governance approaches, which suggest that there is no ‘best’ governance structure, but this should be defined according to the external context and the internal conditions of the organizations (ibid., p. 1185). Based on how complex the environment of an organization is and the level of environmental turbulence, there might be the following governance configurations: policy, constituency/representative, entrepreneurial/corporate, and emergent cellular (ibid., p. 1185). Policy governance is the most formalized and traditional governance configuration, followed by constituency/representative which offers a more decentralized structure, entrepreneurial/corporate focuses on effectiveness and emerging planning, and finally cellular governance is the most flexible and decentralized (ibid., p. 1185). According to the study, policy and constituency governance configurations suit boards and organizations that are configured for stable environments while entrepreneurial and cellular are configurations for boards prone to turbulent or uncertain environments (ibid., p. 1186). According to the findings, boards with stable governance configurations experience greater shifts between management and leadership activities as they move through the stages of the COVID-19 crisis, while the other two configurations experience less disruptions (ibid., p. 1187).

With respect to innovation, the study of Lee & Trimi (2021) proposes the concept of convergence innovation as a novel approach for organizations in the digital age. According to the study, it is crucial for organizations to innovate in order to assure their sustainability (ibid., p. 15). Convergence innovation refers to innovation in the digital age (ibid., p. 20). More specifically, it describes the capability of bringing together different or unrelated objects, technologies, disciplines, companies, industries, or talented people to advance the shared purpose of the greater good (ibid., p. 19-20).

The authors propose in their publication a convergence innovation ecosystem in which different stakeholders, advanced technologies, and activities come together to create value and a smart future (ibid., p.17). The arrangement of the ecosystem should lead to self-management and autonomous decision making (ibid., p. 21).

Based on the resources dependency theory applied to NGOs, the study of Nemțeanu & Dabija (2020) identifies and evaluates best practices of NGOs in the fields of healthcare, social care and philanthropy in Romania to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study departs from the fact that NGOs often lack sufficient resources to achieve their mission due to structural limitations (ibid., p. 627). However, it also acknowledges the management and resource strategies that NGOs have developed to access and maintain these resources (ibid., p. 627). The findings indicate that NGOs attracted resources during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to support public hospitals and support the community. Other initiatives were used to generate public information on COVID-19 and provide information on their accountability (ibid., p. 631). With respect to the means of resource attraction, NGOs did it through fundraising campaigns and volunteering (ibid., p. 631). Online donations followed by SMSs were the most used payment methods (ibid., p. 631). With respect to the volunteers, NGOs reported recruiting them through social media, their own and third-party websites (ibid., p. 631). In regard to management strategies, the study mentions as best practice rapid reactions during the COVID-19 pandemic, permanent communication of the mission of the NGOs' and the generation and distribution of the necessary resources to various stakeholders (ibid., p. 632).

The initiatives and studies included in the second stream of literature do not delve into specific barriers faced by CSOs during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as communication gaps between NGOs and their target populations, nor do they involve target populations as study participants. Although the level of analysis advanced through the use of theoretical frameworks and crisis response models, their scope remains limited to strategies for responding to the pandemic. The present research seeks to address these gaps. First, both NGOs and their target populations are included as participants, a novel and challenging approach that may foster the horizontal co-production of knowledge, an essential element in critical development studies. In addition, the design of the instrumental case study, grounded in critical development studies, makes it possible to broaden the research scope beyond a

managerial perspective to one that incorporates conceptual pillars such as networks for transformation, development communication, and transformative action.

2.3. Third stream of literature: towards critical development research in the region of Latin America and Colombia

When zooming in on the region of Latin America and Colombia, six (6) studies were found and classified in the third stream of literature. The studies have in common that they begin to move away from an NGO managerial standpoint to involve grassroots and communities facing the COVID-19 pandemic. This bottom-up approach is indeed the orientation that this research aims to pursue. An overview of the most important features of these studies follows:

The study of Córdoba et al. (2021) entitled “Shaping alternatives to development: Solidarity and reciprocity in the Andes during COVID-19” explores two case studies with grassroots organizations in Colombia and Ecuador, namely the Cauca Regional Indigenous Council in Colombia (CRIC) and the National Campesino (Peasant) Movement (FECAOL) in Ecuador. The study argues that “the COVID-19 pandemic has functioned to amplify culturally available practices based in reciprocity in the Northern Andean region” (ibid., p. 2). During this process, new articulations towards alternatives to development have been promoted (ibid., p. 2). According to the study, the state responses to COVID-19 have been inadequate at tackling the social and economic implications of the pandemic (ibid., p. 2). In contrast, COVID-19 has intensified the vulnerabilities of the capitalism system (ibid., p. 2). Under these conditions, community and neighborhood organizations have come up with reciprocal practices based on solidarity to offer the necessary support to people who don’t have access to resources needed to cope with the national lockdowns (ibid., p. 2). The study points out that expressions of reciprocity represent the exchange of food, goods and labor in symmetrical or asymmetrical ways (ibid., p. 2). These scholars employed the term hybrid forms of reciprocity practices to indicate that “these activities combine Andean worldviews, market and non-market motivations (e.g. social provisioning), and political claims against the state” (ibid., p. 2). Based on an online methodology, the study mapped three different reciprocity practices of the organizations involved in the case study, namely barter, gifts or donations, and fair-markets. The study concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic made non-capitalist practices visible, which in turn mobilize the collective identity of indigenous and peasants’ organizations (ibid., p. 8).

Secondly, the pandemic acted as a trigger to recognizing the long-standing processes and claims of grassroots organizations in the Colombian and Ecuadorian Andes (ibid., p. 8). Finally, these practices shouldn't be considered as exclusive anti-capitalist, but as a possibility to transform the economy into one in which market and reciprocity are inter-dependent and support each other (ibid., p. 9).

The study of Tiftonell et al. (2021) explores the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspectives of family farming and the agro-ecology movement in Latin America and the Caribbean. Based on a mix-method methodology that included more than 150 informal consultations, an online survey with 125 respondents, and four regional case studies, the study identifies early initiatives implemented in food production and consumption in countries within the region. Most of the respondents come from Argentina and Brazil, followed by respondents in Colombia, Ecuador and Chile. There were also a few respondents from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay. Even though, diverse results were obtained by the different data collection methods, a general conclusion is that "family agriculture supported by governments and by non-governmental organizations (i.e., the agroecology movement) exhibited resilience and adaptability in the face of COVID-19" (ibid., p. 13). Local food systems demonstrated crucial characteristics to overcoming crises such as the functioning of alternative market channels, the use of social networks and online tools to connect producers to consumers, the increasing awareness and involvement of urban consumers in local food systems and the participation of municipal and national governments that supported initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic initiatives that they considered before unconventional and challenging to their views and policies (ibid., p. 14).

The study entitled "Mapping repertoires of collective action facing the COVID-19 pandemic in informal settlements in Latin American cities" of Duque Franco et al. (2020) mapped and characterized citizen initiatives in informal communities that tackled the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper emerges from the campaign Synergies for Solidarity, which was an alliance between different partner organizations in order to visualize and map the different initiatives (ibid., p. 528). Based on direct contact, an online survey and virtual ethnography, a repertoire of collective action measures was identified and analyzed into two different ways. Firstly, a spatial correlation was made among practices, informal settlements, and the spread of COVID-19 in Latin America

(ibid., p. 529). Secondly, the initiatives were coded by exploring aspects such as promoters, purpose, scale and scope, and means and resources and according to the main spheres of informality: housing, income generation, public health, food security, infrastructure, public security and political participation in issues related to habitat (ibid., p. 530). According to the main findings, most of the citizen initiatives were related to food security and public health. With respect to food security, the two most common initiatives were the delivery of food through food baskets and the support of communal kitchens implemented by NGOs and academic networks (ibid., p. 535). In regard to public health, mobilization took place through hygiene and prevention campaigns (ibid., p. 536). The campaigns employed social media to reach many people but also traditional media such as pamphlets, posters, and murals at neighborhood levels (ibid., p. 536). Beyond information campaigns, there were also city health brigades and volunteer programs to clean and disinfect public spaces (ibid., p. 536). There were also spheres not covered by the initiatives because of a lack of capacity and resources such as human security, waste collection and citizen participation (ibid., p. 538). The study acknowledges the importance of social media and the internet during the confinement to expand the reach and speed of the collective action repertoire, but it also points to the deep digital divide in the region (ibid., p. 541). Finally, the initiatives implemented alleviated short-term needs but it is not clear if they can be durable and contribute to long-term transformations (ibid., p. 541).

With respect to single-country studies conducted in Colombia, two publications are relevant to summarize. One is an assessment report of the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in fragile contexts and another is a research paper that analyzes the discourses of a feminist NGO during the COVID-19 pandemic on social media. An overview of each of them follows:

The study entitled “COVID-19 in Chocó, Colombia: Learning from Grassroot Responses to the Pandemic” is a policy brief by Gillies et al. (2021) that introduces the lessons learned from the responses of grassroots of the Diocese of Quibdó in the framework of the program funded by the Global Challenges COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund created by the Scottish Funding Council. The Diocese response was developed in partnership with the University of Glasgow and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) (ibid.p. 3). According to the policy brief, COVID-19 intertwined in Chocó with widespread fragilities such as poverty, informal health care

systems, armed conflict, and socio-environmental crisis (ibid., p. 6). This background made it challenging to develop the response, while the national policies to mitigate the crisis appear helpless in this region (ibid., p. 6). Despite the complex context, interventions were formulated combining academic and clinical expertise with the traditional knowledge of the communities on health and well-being (ibid., p. 7). Central to this process was the principle of community consultation, which ensured that the interventions reflected the communities' needs and socio-cultural practices (ibid., p. 7). The four areas of early response that were implemented were: public health communications campaign, humanitarian packs, traditional medicines and psychosocial support. As part of the project's participatory action-research approach, online surveys, focus group discussions with community members, and in-depth interviews were conducted both to develop and to assess the Chocó response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study identified several lessons applicable to future planning in Chocó and other fragile contexts: interventions must be tailored to the specific challenges of fragile contexts; they should be grounded in the expertise of trusted local actors and informed by close consultation with communities; interventions must respect local socio-cultural practices; donor flexibility is crucial to support local partners through the crisis; and efforts are needed to understand and address the long-term effects of COVID-19 in fragile contexts (ibid., p. 1).

González-Malabet et al. (2023) conducted a study that employs topic modelling and critical discourse analysis in order to identify the most significant topics of discussion associated with the NGO Sisma Mujer during the COVID-19 pandemic on Twitter. This feminist NGO has had a key role in Colombia through its advocacy work but also because of its capacity to articulate social movement networks with their supporters (ibid., p. 9) and this was confirmed through the study. According to the results, the most relevant topic categories associated with the discourse on twitter were gender-based violence, women in peacebuilding, women's human rights, gender equality, and social protest (ibid., p. 8). As a limitation of the study, they refer to the singular case selection arguing that for future studies they would like to include other feminist organizations and ethnically diverse movements (ibid., p. 9).

The studies conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean involve the active participation of grassroots, local NGOs and communities. However, they do not examine NGOs as a sector, and target populations are addressed as distinct groups,

such as indigenous communities, Afro-Colombians, or women. The present research acknowledges the heterogeneity of the civil society actors but emphasizes the importance of including them within the same study to explore their relationships and interactions.

Furthermore, this research expands the geographical scope of existing studies on the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for CSOs by incorporating Colombia as a relevant case in the Latin American context. Colombia's interconnected crises, combined with the critical role of civil society actors in advancing peacebuilding and sustainable development, underscore its significance as a research case.

Finally, this is the only study conducted so far in Colombia that delves into the digital transition faced by the non-governmental sector and their target populations through two key developments, namely (online) mobilization and (online) capacity building, both of which are central to shaping transformative action.

3. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation the instrumental case study that this research investigates was presented: a joint petition signed by 256 Colombian NGOs in May 2020, followed by the social media campaign #PiezaClaveParaColombia (in English #aKeyPieceforColombia) on Twitter/X and Facebook. This campaign illustrates how the NGO sector increasingly turned to online communication and digital mobilization in response to COVID-19-related restrictions, using ICTs to continue their work amid limitations on physical interaction.

This chapter presents the information required to understand the background and the boundaries in which the (case) study is embedded. It consists of three main sections. The first section will examine the development of NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Colombia, detailing their main functions, areas of work, target populations, and collaborative practices. It also highlights the Colombian NGO sector's contributions in driving social change, while emphasizing the internal and external challenges it faces.

The second section will focus on the context of Colombia during the COVID-19 pandemic. It presents the pandemic as one dimension of a set of overlapping crises (health, economic, social, and political) that were intensified during this period and culminated in the 2021 social outcry. A subsection briefly discusses the interconnection of these crises and the role NGOs played in responding to them. Another subsection examines the specific disruptions the pandemic caused for the NGO sector in Colombia.

The last section of this chapter will address the digital connectivity capacity and infrastructure of the country. The most important policies and statistics related to Colombia's digital transformation will be summarized here. This is in order to understand under which conditions the transition from in-person to online communication was implemented.

3.1. EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are a specific set of civil society organizations (ACCION & Mesa de Articulación, 2014). They form part of what is called the third sector, social sector or non-profit sector (Pérez Ortega et al., 2011).

The non-profit sector is made of a plethora of civil society organizations with different interests but one common element, their non-profit character (ibid., p. 244). With respect to the NGOs, their emphasis is on their shared interests (ACCION & Mesa de Articulación, 2014). Accordingly, NGOs define themselves in relation to the interests of others, usually those who have a subordinated position in society (ibid., p. 8).

In this study, the non-governmental organizations referred to as the non-governmental sector, were considered exclusively. This takes into account the following aspects. Firstly, it's the most representative subgroup of the non-profit sector in Colombia. Secondly, these organizations pursue collective interests over the interests of their members playing a key role in advancing social, political and development transformation. Thirdly, NGOs have been through a process of professionalization and specialization that has positively influenced their effectiveness (ibid., p. 38).

This research doesn't explore other organizations from the non-profit sector nor the perspectives of the public and private sector on the non-governmental sector, but it encourages further research into their relationships and conflicts involved in the social, political and economic transformation of the country. Indeed, according to the empirical data of this study, the non-governmental sector intends to strengthen its work with the other subgroups of organizations that make up the non-profit sector as well as with the public and private sector.

The development of the non-governmental sector in Colombia can be seen as part of a broader, parallel process across Latin America and the Caribbean. Therefore, this section first examines its emergence and evolution from a regional perspective before addressing its specific features at the national level.

The history of the NGOs in this region might have started in the second half of the 20th century framed by issues such as the complexity and critics of the development processes occurring at that time, the democratization processes and human rights institutionalization in the region, the development of the theoretical and practical foundations of the social sciences, the expansion of the civil society with new forms of organization and mobilization and a new cultural and spiritual sensitiveness (ACCION & Mesa de Articulación, 2014).

In particular, the Cuban revolution (1953-1959) is considered a breaking point in the history of the region not only because of its radical proposal of and influence on the formation of guerrilla groups trying to replicate it, but also due to its realignment effect on crucial topics of the region (ibid., p. 9). Firstly, it influenced the position towards the idea of development that passed from being understood as mere growth to being considered a component of a bigger process that included breaking down with the idea of dependence and domination (ibid., p. 9). Secondly, the idea of the (Cuban) revolution went against traditional and institutionalized forms of politics and thirdly, it brought cultural changes that involved intellectual, artistic, and religious aspects (ibid., p. 9, 12). Furthermore, even though the states extended the coverage of social and economic rights, political regimes that dominated were unstable, authoritarian and repressive. This context created a public, political and socio-cultural space, but not governmental, in which non-Governmental organizations and other forms of Civil Society Organizations began to grow (ibid., p. 9).

With respect to the religious aspects, the role of the Catholic Church in the development of the NGO sector in the region should be acknowledged, in particular in the 1950s to 1970s. The Catholic Church role was similar in different countries thanks to its renovation process and engagement with the poorest sectors of society (ibid., p.11). During this time NGOs were created with the support of the human and financial resources of the Catholic Church and they had a charitable nature (Toro et al., 1992). At the same time, other organizations were created which looked at mobilizing resources to cover basic needs and went beyond traditional charity work (ACCION - Mesa de Articulación, 2014).

In the 1960s it's important to highlight the creation of community radio stations, most of which were supported by the Catholic Church (ibid., p. 9, 11). There are examples of their creation in almost every country of the region. In Colombia, Radio Sutatenza, a community radio station created to improve the life of farmers, appeared at the beginning of the 1950s as a project founded by a Catholic priest and as a component of an NGO⁵ program (Banco de la República - Red Cultural, 2022). During the 1960s, NGOs were also created with the support of the Alliance for Progress, program fostered by the United States as a renovated vision of development (ACCION - Mesa

⁵ This NGO, namely the ACPO Foundation (Fundación Acción Popular ACPO), continues operating and participated in this study.

de Articulación, 2014). These NGOs were created to serve the purposes of this alliance which attempted to implement political, economic and social reform measures and contain the revolutionary processes that emerged in various countries of the region (ibid., p. 10).

From the beginning of the 1970s other institutional actors such as other churches, universities, social organizations and political parties supported the creation of NGOs (ibid. p. 10). Moreover, NGOs arose from the burgeoning relationships with development agencies and NGOs from the North (ibid., p. 11). These relationships aimed not only to channel financial resources but also to establish a common vision on Latin America (ibid., p. 11). Furthermore, the 1970s was marked by an increase in social mobilization, in particular of trade unions, farmers and students (ibid., p. 11). NGOs participated directly in these movements aligning their actions and discourse with them (ibid., p. 12). Some of their strategies included contributing to the training of leaders and supporting mobilization (ibid., p. 12). It can be said that even though each country had thematic and social priorities, the NGOs created during the 1960s and 1970s focused on implementing projects towards popular education and communication, rural development, the trade unions' organization and the critical thinking of the corresponding national realities (ibid., p. 11).

In the 1980s, NGOs responded to the social and economic crisis that the region went through. This decade is known as “the Lost Decade” (in Spanish *Década Pérdida*) as the reforms applied to alleviate the exaggerated external debt of the region didn't contribute to economic growth but brought social and economic setbacks (ibid., p. 13). As a result, NGOs' agendas had to include measures to respond to the crisis (ibid., p. 14). For instance, those working in rural development had to deliver food aid, those in urban areas looked for new forms of organization within the informal spaces and community kitchens (ibid., p. 14). NGOs' actions included responding to structural problems such as unemployment, economies of survival, displacement, internal and international migration and deterioration of the basic services (ibid., p.14). Moreover, the 1980s saw the emergence and consolidation of human rights organizations in the region (ibid., p. 14), driven by widespread violations linked to social disputes and counterinsurgency strategies. These conditions spurred the formation of human rights committees and prompted international organizations to engage in the armed conflicts, often in coordination with NGOs (ibid., pp. 14–15).

Another important fact of the 1980s is the greater role that the feminist movement and feminist organizations played. Even though the feminist movement had already begun in the 1970s, it consolidated its own agenda in this decade that included topics arising from the current crisis such as redefinition of the woman's role in families and couples, the care economy, private and political violence (ibid., p. 15). This fostered the creation of feminist organizations and the emergence of leaders (ibid., p. 15). In general, it can be said that NGOs had a greater political role from the 1980s onwards (ibid., p. 15). In this sense, NGOs gained more visibility thanks mainly to two aspects. Firstly, because of the increase of international cooperation resources (bilateral and multilateral) employed in their interventions and programs and secondly, due to the weakening of traditional historical organizations and the crisis of popular political figures that opened new spaces for them to present critics and proposals addressing the region's realities (ibid., p.15).

At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s there was a key milestone that influenced the creation and evolution of NGOs in the region, namely the approval of the United Nations Declaration on Right to Development (1986). During this period, official cooperation became a public topic subject to examination in official media and in posterior debates the 0.7%⁶ as a "duty to cooperate" was approved (ibid., p. 17). With respect to private cooperation, aid agencies and NGOs of the north increased the rigorousness of the use of funds (ibid., p. 17). This meant a process of professionalization, specialization and strategic planning of the NGOs' teams in the region (ibid., p. 17). Furthermore, new NGOs appeared in these two decades in addition to those NGOs that had been already created because of the financing avenues that aid agencies like USAID and the World Bank opened (ibid., p. 16). These programs aimed to alleviate poverty and contribute to the eradication and replacement of coca plantations in particular in the Andean region (ibid., p. 16).

In the middle of the 1990s and beginning of the new century each country lived a very particular history but there was a common trend related to the exercise of citizen participation (ibid., p. 17, 18). A trend emerged, namely that the processes of change occurred through movements and citizens instead of appealing to political parties and

⁶ This is a well-known target in international aid according to which donors countries should provide official development assistance (ODA) of 0.7% of their national income to developing countries (OECD, n.d.).

social classes (ibid., p. 17). In this sense, citizen or popular participation became a central topic in the agenda of NGOs (ibid., p. 19). NGOs accompanied the emergence of these new social actors functioning as spaces for the construction of new leaderships and as small 'labs' to innovate their programs (ibid., p. 18). In the 1990s the region also experienced the expansion and specialization of the human rights discourse that acquired an ethical approach (ibid., p. 19, 20). This facilitated the dialogue with other political discourses and perspectives such as environmentalism, feminism and indigenism (ibid., p. 20).

In the first decade of the new century, the NGOs' interventions started to incorporate in their agendas topics such as environment, climate change, extractive industries, fair trade, external debt as well as intercultural approaches addressing education, justice and political participation (ibid., p. 20). Moreover, there was an increase in intervention in healthcare, many of them financed by the Global Fund against AIDS, tuberculosis (TBC) and malaria (ibid., p. 21). There was also a globalization or at least regionalization of the NGOs' agendas, CSOs and their networks (ibid., p. 21). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness that took place in Busan, Korea in 2011. Here, the role and participation of an organized civil society in the processes of development were highlighted (ibid, p.17). The declaration resulting from it established the basis for an effective global alliance on aid effectiveness that brought a series of changes for the NGOs such as the incorporation of indicators, logical frameworks and other measures established by the aid agencies programs in each country (ibid., p. 21).

This research couldn't find any other studies on the development of the non-governmental sector in the region of Latin-America during the 21st century nor their current dimensions. However, the previous summary provides a rich description of the most important regional aspects of its emergence, history, and evolution till the middle of the XX century.

3.1.1. THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR IN COLOMBIA: ORIGINS, EVOLUTION AND DIMENSIONS AT A GLANCE

This section presents an overview of the emergence and evolution of the Colombian non-governmental sector at a country level after having addressed it from a regional perspective.

According to Villar and CCONG (2001) in their study “The third sector in Colombia: evolution, dimension and tendencies” (in Spanish: “El tercer sector en Colombia: evolución, dimensión y tendencias”), the non-profit sector is diverse, heterogeneous and with multiple perspectives, values and interests. According to this, even though these organizations have a working structure that can be comparable and a common logic of work based on the voluntary association towards social values and ideologies, no political consensus, equal functions and values can be supposed (ibid., p. 16).

With respect to the NGOs’ subgroup, the focus of this study, most of the Colombian NGOs were created between 1956 and 1985. The same study indicates that their origins are rooted in different social groups and diverse social and political perspectives (ibid., p. 69). The referred study differentiates the following social groups: a big group of NGOs developed because of the changes and church openness in the 1960s (ibid., p. 69). During this period, support from national and international churches, NGOs of the global north and the European and North American development aid agencies was crucial (ibid., p. 71). Other NGOs were created by professionals engaged in left political initiatives who were disappointed with the structural and revolutionary change (ibid., p. 69). A third group were activists from social movements that supported grass-root organizations and participated in the creation of NGOs (ibid., p. 69). The last group were community leaders and professionals working for private companies that also fostered the creation of these organizations (ibid., p. 69).

Regarding NGOs’ functions, the referred study highlights they have been evolving over the years (ibid., p. 70). In this process, the functions related to the assistance, intervention and provision of services decreased in their initial period and they moved onto the promotion of alternative development based on the organization of the communities and the promotion of democracy (ibid., p. 70). Topics that were not in the state development agenda at that time became relevant such as human rights, gender, environment, housing, creation of microenterprises, and promotion of folk culture (ibid., p. 72).

The referred study also makes it clear that with the enforcement of the Constitution of 1991, NGOs did play a more relevant role in the public sphere taking into account the different participative councils that were created to discuss public policies (ibid., p. 79).

According to the study, with the enforcement of the Constitution of 1991, there was an increase in the number of afro-Colombian organizations in particular, as well as indigenous organizations which achieved notorious representation in the Constituent Assembly of 1991 (ibid., p. 85). The legislative changes that the new constitution brought allowed new configurations in the relationship between the state and the NGO sector (ibid., p. 70). Accordingly, the reforms brought new opportunities for NGOs and non-profit organizations in their advocacy and representation, as well as in influencing public policies and providing services with public funds (ibid., p. 81). Nowadays, they combine the provision of social services and the implementation of development programs with political action that includes the mobilization of social perspectives, public policy advocacy, and advocacy on issues of collective interest (ibid., p. 122).

The Confederación Colombiana de ONG – CCONG has identified 16 subgroups of non-profit organizations, including the subgroup of NGOs (see Appendix 3). In 2016, the organization estimated that Colombia had around 200,000 non-profit organizations. The most recent update, published by CCONG in 2021 (see Appendix 4), reported a total of 208,240 non-profit organizations. Of this number, 68,297 can be classified as NGOs. This subgroup, referred to in this study as the non-governmental sector, corresponds in Colombia to the legal typologies of foundations, corporations, associations and federations (in Spanish fundaciones, corporaciones, asociaciones y federaciones) and they can also be identified according to their areas of work, population groups and regions where they operate (CCONG, 2020). The second biggest group of non-profit organizations is the communal movement with 63,722 Juntas de Acción Comunal⁷ -JAC (in English translated as Community Action Boards). Solidarity economy organizations follow with 12,608 and organizations with a religious affiliation occupy next position with 8919.

The Single Business and Social Registry (in Spanish Registro Único Empresarial y Social - RUES) constitutes another key source of information on the number of non-profit organizations in Colombia. It consolidates business and non-profit registration data nationwide through an online platform administered by the Chambers of

⁷ In accordance with the Law 743, 2002 a Junta de Acción Comunal (JAC), translated in English by Cubides et al. (2018) as community action board, is a civic, social and community-based organization with a non-governmental, non-profit and solidarity character that has its own legal status and assets. It is composed of the residents of a place who join forces and pull resources together voluntarily in order to find a comprehensive sustainable development (Función Pública, 2002, *Artículo 8*).

Commerce. For non-profit organizations, registration and annual renewal are mandatory to maintain legal recognition. According to figures published on the portal, 113,046 non-profit organizations had registered and renewed their RUES by 2024 (RUES, n.d.). It is important to note that Community Action Boards (in Spanish Juntas de Acción Comunal – JAC) are not included in this report. Additionally, the types of legal organization of non-profit organizations are grouped differently from the subgroups proposed by CCONG.

The RUES portal was recently updated to enhance public access to information on the number, type, and legal status of registered entities. However, Colombia doesn't have a unified information system of registration, regulation and control of the non-profit sector (CCONG, 2020). This brings difficulties in having precise data on their number taking into account that each source has different criteria to register such kind of organizations and that these organizations appear, change, merge and disappear easily (Gómez-Quintero, 2014).

It is also possible to indicate the number of non-profit organizations with tax obligations, including those within the NGO subgroup. This information is provided by the National Directorate of Taxes and Customs (in Spanish Dirección de Impuestos y Aduanas Nacionales – DIAN). According to DIAN, 170,000 non-profit organizations were subject to taxation by 2016 (Confederación Colombiana de ONG - CCONG, 2020b). Although the figures reported by CCONG and DIAN differ, they generally fall within the range of 170,000 to 200,000 non-profit organizations as of 2021. However, the most recent data from RUES indicate a significant decline in the number of non-profit organizations in the country.

With respect to other dimensions of the non-governmental sector, NGOs have implemented mechanisms to build information on their work and be accountable to their stakeholders. One such mechanism is the public social accountability report (in Spanish Rendición Social Pública de Cuentas - RSPC) led by the Confederación Colombiana de ONG (CCONG) and their federations. Every year since 2010 NGOs report the dimensions of their work and their contributions to development. One of their reports reflects on their advancement in their processes of social accountability and transparency. It compares information about their work collected in the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. 264 NGOs participated in 2019 by reporting on their activities

in 2018. Even though this is not published in any academic journal, it is conducted systematically and it provides the most recent information on the general dimensions of the non-governmental sector.

According to the most relevant results of this report, 42.8% of NGOs develop activities that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal⁸ 3: good health and well-being, 36.4% contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal 1: end poverty, 35.6% to the Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality education and 33.2% to the Sustainable Development Goal 5: gender equality (CCONG, 2019).

With respect to the target groups, 64% of the NGOs address women and girls, 52% provide services to other organizations, 51% to ethnic groups, especially the indigenous population and Afro-Colombians, 30% to victims of the armed conflict, and 28% to the vulnerable population (ibid., p.14). The same report indicates that most of them (99%) provide services and 51% produce also goods as a fundamental goal. The most significant services are provision of training (92%), technical assistance (59%), and influence on public policies (49%) (ibid., p. 15).

Moreover, the NGO sector recognizes the relevance of working together by building networks and alliances between them and with other actors such as the government, private sector, and academia, as well as the key role of establishing transparency and governance best practices within their activities (CCONG, 2017). According to the report, 86% of the NGOs in 2018 had partnerships at a local level, 53% at a national level, 33% at an international level and 55% with the media (CCONG, 2019).

As a conclusion of this subsection, it can be established that academic literature on the non-governmental sector in Colombia as well as in Latin America is narrow. According to the Asociación Chilena de Organismos no Gubernamentales - ACCION et al. (2014), the capacities of analysis of the NGOs have weakened because of resource limitations of the last few years. NGOs need to recover their participative research dimension to re-connect with and understand the complexities of the civil societies in Latin America and the Caribbean (ibid., p. 37). Indeed, civil society

⁸ The Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs form part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. This is an endorsed international commitment adopted in September 2015 by 193 United Nations' Member States that envisages the advancement of social inclusion, economic growth and environmental protection fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies through a new global partnership that aims to reach 17 interconnected and indivisible SDGs by 2030 (United Nations System Staff College, 2017).

organizations, including NGOs, continue evolving as societal changes occur (CNVOS et al., 2018). Considering that the NGOs have difficulties in conducting research by themselves, joint research should be carried out, namely through NGO networks as well as in partnership with other institutions such as universities (ibid., p. 37). This might facilitate comparative research among countries of the region and at a global level fostering knowledge production and critical exchange on issues such as the dimensions, contributions and limitations of the Latin American non-governmental and non-profit sector.

3.1.2. CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF THE COLOMBIAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

This subsection explores further the main contributions as well as challenges that the non-governmental sector faces in a country like Colombia whose complex interconnected crises have shaped its work. Considering that there are few academic studies addressing these aspects of the Colombian NGOs, this research used the empirical evidence to broaden these aspects as contextual information of Colombian NGOs.

According to the International Center for Non-Profit Law⁹ – ICNL, CSOs have evolved in the context of, and directly in response to, the armed conflict that has defined Colombia’s political, social, and economic landscape (ICNL, 2024b). As a result, there are robust, sophisticated and capable CSOs in the country that range from human rights organizations, peacebuilding entities, community strengthening initiatives to women’s rights groups, and academic and research centers (ibid). Among CSO, institutionalized Non-Governmental organizations connected to international organizations play an important role in the country, but there are also community-based organizations, social movements and informal platforms (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a).

CSOs contributions have been key in the field of public policies, peacebuilding and development (ICNL, 2024b). However, violence and the shrinking of civic space have also affected the organization and engagement within civil society (BTI Transformation

⁹ The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) was founded in 1992 as one of the first organizations that addresses the legal environment aspect of the civic space. Since then, they work to “improve the legal environment for civil society, philanthropy, and public participation around the world” (ICNL, 2024a, *About Us* section).

Index, 2024a). The sector faces significant challenges, including violence, shrinking civic space, and targeted attacks against social leaders and human rights defenders, along with the criminalization of protests and use of excessive force (ibid., p. 32).

In Colombia, the non-governmental sector neither replaces the state, competes with the private sector, nor acts as a mere benefactor (CCONG, 2020a). The Confederación Colombiana de ONG – CCONG enumerates its main contributions to development as follows (taken from CCONG, 2020a):

1. NGOs aim at transforming realities, ending asymmetries and incorporating innovative practices focusing on the growing populations that suffer more inequality, exclusion and marginalization despite of the reduction of public and development aid resources.
2. NGOs defend the right to life of all social leaders, human right defenders, journalists and every citizen that demands the fulfilment of their rights.
3. NGOs strengthen and build capacities of the target groups they work with. This contributes to closing the gaps of a traditional education model that concentrates on technical contents leaving behind the changing realities of the regions and new generations.
4. NGOs provide technical assistance and support strengthening values such as solidarity and encouraging knowledge exchange.
5. NGOs influence the public policies as a reaction to: social and economic inequalities, lack of legally binding participation, corruption and lack of transparency in the public sector.
6. NGOs conduct research despite the lack of resources and the limitations imposed by the government that doesn't consider non-academic knowledge or knowledge that doesn't comply with the requirements of the Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology.
7. NGOs establish mechanisms of financial and technical sustainability responding to practices such as individuality, unfair competition, forced adoption of technologies and poor acknowledgement of the citizens' knowledge in Colombian regions.

8. NGOs employ ICTs in a timely manner to reach population groups left behind such as youth, farmers, and indigenous peoples and to innovate in the training processes to exercise their social and political roles.
9. NGOs participate strategically in the spaces created in the framework of a participatory democracy
10. NGOs participate in the accountability processes carried out by the government in order to foster political dialogue on topics such as public resources and policies fulfilment.

During the empirical field research, NGOs' directors referred also to the main contributions and challenges of this sector:

The coordinator of research and systematization of the Corporación Educativa Combos - Comunidades Educativas de Base explained that NGOs have fulfilled a social function in a country like Colombia. To quote her: "I think that NGOs have maintained the social development for too long and they have prevented more pauperization of the population, they have avoided human rights violations. Without NGOs, we would be worse than we are" (G. M. Bustamante, personal communication, 19 October 2021). This director considers that more representation and pressure to be acknowledged as social capital of the country are still missing.

Another contribution of the non-governmental sector mentioned by the director of the Federación Antioqueña de ONGs – FAONG is: "Through these organizations, especially during the pandemic, the humanitarian action could be provided effectively, since they knew where and how to reach the vulnerable populations" (C. Monsalve, personal communication, 6 November 2021). For this, they have trustworthy databases, Carlos specified.

On the other hand, the director of the Comité de Rehabilitación explained: "The social sector isn't recognized as a partner or an ally, it's seen as an operator" (S. Gallardo, personal communication, 8 November 2021). Sonia explained further: "As long as the public sector doesn't treat us as a partner, as the petition stated, as that partner that has the contact with the regions, as the partner that has the experience to provide attention, as the partner with the required knowledge, but as an operator to which a contract is thrown and after that an array of things are demanded, the impact and what an organization does or what a group of social organizations does to benefit the

community isn't going to be understood" (ibid.). According to previous quote, there are specific conditions that need to be fulfilled in order to safeguard and foster the work of the non-governmental sector and in general of the non-profit sector. One of them is its recognition as an ally or partner in transformation processes.

The conducive conditions to operate have been framed in what is known as an enabling environment. An enabling environment includes legal and policy conditions that recognize civil society as an autonomous and empowered actor providing opportunities to collaborate with the government (OECD, 2022). Moreover, an enabling environment accounts for its heterogeneity and expands its operational and political scope of action (VENRO, 2015).

During the online semi-structured interviews with directors and coordinators of NGOs' participants of the study, challenges in the enabling environment were also identified and can be enumerated as follows¹⁰:

1. Better and clearer legislation that acknowledges the non-profit sector, including the subgroup of NGOs as an autonomous sector without resembling and comparing it with the private and public sectors is missing. This includes issuing a national public policy that strengthens and fosters its growth and not just its regulation.
2. Public, private and development aid actors downplay the role of the non-governmental sector when they don't recognize its autonomy, and its social, political and development role. At the same time, there are social organizations that pretend to fulfil and assume the role of the state, the private sector or the aid development sector. It's key to assume and respect the functions that each actor has to be able to work collaboratively complementing each other's work.
3. NGOs, their members as well as members of other civil society organizations suffer from criminalization and stigmatization. In particular, leaders from social and environmental organizations live under a constant threatening situation.
4. There are bad conditions surrounding contracts with the state which affects the sustainability of the organizations or forces them to use bad practices in order

¹⁰ The enumerated enabling environment limitations are a collection of perspectives presented by diverse directors and coordinators of NGOs during the online interviews that took place between February 2021 and January 2022. No direct quotation was made but the author acknowledges the interviewees' authorship.

to be able to execute the contracts. The state pushes the organizations to compete against one another. Its rationality of work is not about facilitating their work, about making them come together but triggering their competition. This sense of unfair competition has increased in the non-governmental sector supported also by some donors and aid development agencies whose calls for applications imply competition within the sector.

5. There are limitations in access to resources of international development aid, as well as in receiving private donations. Indeed, there was a tax reform in 2016 that implemented measures such as a 30% match, which is difficult to cover by local, small and medium-sized NGOs and it also discouraged private donations with its special regulations. With the new tax reform, the organizations had to invest financial and human resources to understand and implement the reform measures as well as to update their legal status (CCONG, 2020b).

However, there are also internal weaknesses that need to be addressed by the non-profit sector, including the non-governmental sector's ability to strengthen its role in transformation processes.

Firstly, there is a lack of both cooperation work and positioning of the sector because of its diverse and heterogeneous nature. With respect to collaborative work, the director of the Confederación Colombiana de ONGs, Liliana Rodríguez, indicates: "This is a sector that acts independently, it acts on own interests and not by collective interests. To consolidate the sector, Liliana continues, "the sector should defend its collective interests despite having its own interests" (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 8 November 2021). Moreover, this director considers that the sector isn't autonomous when it depends on what other sectors want it to do. Liliana adds: "This sector complains about the ways the government and other actors act, but we don't realize how we replicate the same forms of acting. We are a sector that boasts about human rights, but we replicate practices of division and confrontation, we foster corrupting actions, because there are organizations that do anything to get money" (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 8 November 2021). To address this situation, Liliana highlights the need for a profound cultural change within both organizations and other actors, aimed at transforming the public perception of the non-governmental sector.

As for the positioning, David Martinez the director of the Federación de ONG de Caldas – Fedecaldas stated: “It’s vital to understand what the non-profit sector is, which organizations form part of it, and which functions and roles each subgroup of organizations plays in order to make visible their role in fostering development, in protecting human rights or the environment, in contributing to the SDGs” (D. Martinez, personal communication, 9 April 2021). To quote also the director of ASOMUÑA, Walter Ocampo: “Beyond taxation, these organizations don’t know where they belong. They are very diverse and this means an enormous conceptual limitation” (W. Ocampo, personal communication, 14 October 2021). This conceptual limitation hinders the development and potential of the sector as well as its academic study. Additionally, the director of the Fundación Coprous, Margarita Macías Ramos, highlights the relevance of systematizing and making visible their work. For her, the organizations concentrate on their humanitarian and social labor and forget these fundamental aspects of systematizing and making visible their work to the point that other actors can take as their own their contributions (M. Macías Ramos, personal communication, 29 November 2021).

Secondly, the non-governmental sector lacks financial sustainability. In this regard, various interpretations of sustainability emerge. For the Fedecaldas director, David Martinez, “NGOs need to find a business-model based on social entrepreneurship that doesn’t depend exclusively on the project’s execution but at the same time a model that protects their social and advocacy purpose” (D. Martinez, personal communication, 9 April 2021). For the Programs’ Advisor of Corporación Red Somos, Damary Martinez, “the development aid provided by the development aid agencies is only emergency aid” (D. Martinez Torres, personal communication, 12 November 2021). For Damary, “it’s key to have a constant provision of services in which we can finance services ourselves” (ibid.). For the director of the Confederación Colombiana de ONGs – CCONG, Liliana Rodríguez, “there are organizations that sit in public spaces of planning or participation which ask for money instead of defending the social organizations” (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 8 November 2021). Liliana considers that “due to the need for access to resources, many NGOs have also adjusted their structures and agendas exclusively to execute resources and numerous projects instead of processes translated into lasting programs that consolidate their

value proposition¹¹. This has made them lose confidence in the eyes of their peers, lack autonomy generating dependencies and relegating their knowledge and methodologies” (CCONG, 2017).

Finally, the legal figure, known in Colombia as the non-profit organization (in Spanish *entidad sin ánimo de lucro*) has been used to syphon illegal public resources or to carry out money laundering from resources coming from illegal industries, especially from drug smuggling (Red de ONG por la Transparencia & Confederación Colombiana de ONG - CCONG, 2009). This situation has had different implications such as the lack of trust of grassroots groups and citizens in the non-governmental sector. It has also influenced the statements of some public officers who make generalizations about the corruption cases creating a scenario of stigmatization for the non-governmental sector.

The first section of this chapter has provided information on the background of the study by situating the non-governmental sector in the region of Latin American and the Caribbean and in Colombia from a historical perspective. Besides, the main dimensions related to its fields of work, target populations, and ways of cooperation were explained in the previous section as well as its contributions and limitations in the arena of sustainable development. The next section will go deeper into Colombia’s context during the COVID-19 pandemic by describing key aspects of the social, economic and political situation during this period and by giving a special focus to the disruptions faced by the non-governmental sector. Furthermore, a strategic outlook of the country post COVID-19 pandemic is included. The section concludes with an overview of key policies and statistics related to the digital connectivity in the country.

3.2. COLOMBIA’S CONTEXT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

With a population of approximately 51.9 million in 2022, Colombia is the third most populous country in Latin America and the Caribbean, following Brazil and Mexico (Statista Research Department, 2024a). In terms of land area, it ranks fifth in the region with over 1.13 million square kilometers after Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Peru

¹¹ From a business perspective, the value proposition is a statement that represents the core strategy and describes the distinctive competitive advantage of a firm (Frow et al., 2014). In the case of the non-profit sector, the term is used to transmit the value of this kind of organizations. It involves the contributions that these organizations make to society and what makes them unique in their field of work. A NGO value proposition communicates clearly the problems, solutions, and impact that the organization addresses in order to generate trust and support (Andrades, 2023).

(Statista Research Department, 2024b). Socioeconomically, Colombia is classified by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income country, with a per capita GDP (PPP) of \$16,819 in 2021 (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). However, its human development remains uneven, ranking 88th out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index¹² in 2021, with a score of 0.752—its lowest since 2014 (ibid., p. 18).

Colombia's diverse topography and equatorial location give rise to varied climates, ecosystems, and natural resources, including rich biodiversity, fertile agricultural lands, and reserves of gold, coal, and petroleum (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). However, the control and exploitation of these resources, both legal and illegal, have been closely linked to the country's armed conflict, considered one of the longest-running internal conflicts globally (ESOC, n.d.; Lavaux, 2006; Pardo Ibarra, 2022).

The last report published about Colombia by the Bertelsmann Stiftung¹³ indicates that “there are multiple sources of political, social and economic conflict in the country, and their dynamics have evolved in recent years” (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a, p. 3). This report revises the social and political transformation of the country from February 1st, 2021 to January 31st, 2023, in which the country was fighting against the multifaceted effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid., p. 3). According to the status index provided by this report, the state of political and economic transformation achieved by Colombia during the study period was limited (BTI Transformation Index, 2024b). The following are the main findings of the report which describe Colombia's context with a special focus on the COVID-19 pandemic:

At the political level, the report acknowledges that Colombia's state capacity and functions are undermined by corruption, clientelism and patronage (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). In addition, other aspects such as the impact of the armed conflict, inadequate infrastructure and lack of technical and managerial

¹² The Human Development Index (HDI) records the average values of a country in basic areas of human development. These include, for example, life expectancy at birth, the level of education and per capita income. A ranking list is calculated from a large number of such individual indicators. This makes it possible to derive the average level of development of a country (BMZ, n.d.).

¹³ The Bertelsmann Stiftung is a German foundation established in 1977 with offices in Berlin, Gütersloh, Madrid, Barcelona and Washington. The foundation carries out events, studies and projects in order to promote debate and provide impetus for social change (BertelsmannStiftung, n.d.). The report presented here is part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2024 which “analyzes transformation processes toward democracy and a market economy in international comparison and identifies successful strategies for peaceful change”(BTI Transformation Index, n.d.-b, *Heading* section). For the current study 137 countries participated.

expertise also affect the state's functioning (ibid., p. 7). In the report, two corruption scandals that occurred during 2022 were mentioned, one of them related to a large contract issued by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (in Spanish Ministerio de las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación – MinTic) for internet provision to 15,000 rural communities and another scandal involves the misappropriation of funds allocated for the implementation of the peace accord (ibid., p. 14). With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, not only inequality but also corruption within the country was witnessed (Agencia de Desarrollo Local de Nariño et. al, 2020). NGOs also expressed their concerns on the high levels of poverty and the fragility of the health system to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, as well as the lack of transparency in the award of public contracts to address the crisis (Transparencia por Colombia, 2020).

The report highlights the 2022 presidential elections as a major milestone in Colombia's political history, emphasizing the significance of electing Gustavo Petro, a former M-19 guerrilla member, and Francia Márquez, an Afro-Colombian human rights defender, given the country's long-standing exclusion of leftist leaders and marginalized minorities from political power (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). According to the report, the current government has an ambitious agenda of complex reforms (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). In some policy areas, it has reached agreements with opposing actors (ibid., p. 42). For instance, the pension reform was approved by the Colombian congress in June 2024. Other reforms haven't received political consensus (ibid., p 26). This is the case with the health, energy transition and education reforms. According to the strategic outlook proposed by the Bertelsmann Foundation, the next two years will be key for the government's agenda in order to build the foundations for sustainable transformation without the exacerbation of conflicts (ibid., p. 42). If the government fails to accomplish its promises related to the overall peace strategy, economic restructure and a clear map of energy transition, citizen discontent and institution distrust will increase as well as there will be an escalation of violence and insecurity (ibid., p. 42).

At the social level, the report refers to the armed conflict that the country underwent for over 60 years. In 2016, the national government signed a peace agreement with the FARC guerrilla, which created new ways of political participation and the promotion

of peacebuilding (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). However, the prolonged nature of the conflict means that various forms of violence and different violent actors continue active (ibid., p. 32). Violence has escalated in some regions of the country through a wide range of groups, drug trafficking organizations, successor paramilitary groups, left-wing guerrillas, and dissident and rearmed factions of the former FARC (ibid., p. 32). The principal targets of these groups are human rights advocates, grassroots social leaders and former FARC fighters (ibid., p. 32). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation of activists and human rights defenders was a matter of concern as, under lockdown measures, they couldn't abandon their place of residence becoming easier targets for armed gangs (BBC News, 2020)

At the economic level, the report indicates that “while Colombia has experienced notable progress in the provision of public goods and poverty reduction, the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 meant a significant setback to the country’s socioeconomic development” (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). In the most acute stages of the pandemic during 2020, indicators such as employment, poverty, income and production had setbacks reflected in lower welfare conditions compared to 2019 and even similar to 2010 (PNUD Colombia, 2021). According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s report, monetary poverty and extreme poverty reached severe rates (39.3% and 12.2%, respectively) in 2021 (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). These percentages haven’t returned to pre-pandemic rates (ibid., p. 3). With respect to multidimensional poverty¹⁴ of the population, it has declined from 18.1% in 2020 to 12.9% in 2022, but the same indicator when comparing rural and urban areas remain a matter of concern (ibid., p. 19). According to the report, in 2021, multidimensional poverty was 11.5% in urban areas and 31.1% in rural environments (ibid., p. 19). This relates with the persisting wide gaps in socioeconomic conditions between rural and urban areas (ibid., p. 19). With respect to the informal economy, it accounted for 63.2% of total employment in 2021 (ibid., p. 21). The report emphasizes that “inequality, poverty, unemployment and informality remain the most concerning issues at the economic level” in the country (ibid., p. 4).

¹⁴Multidimensional poverty is defined as “being deprived in a range of health, education and living standards indicators” (Our World in Data, n.d., *Heading* section).

3.2.1. A SOCIAL OUTCRY TRIGGERED BY COLOMBIA'S INTERCONNECTED CRISES

COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated and made evident other crises in the country leading to what has been called the 2021 Colombian social outcry.

According to Avendaño (2019), a social outcry can be understood as “the result of a series of unresolved tensions that shape a real ‘integral crisis’ [...] expressed through structural factors, rooted both in the economic-social and political-institutional spheres” of a country (p. 105). Furthermore, “it often manifests through protests, social media campaigns, and other forms of activism that seek to hold authorities accountable and promote change” (Fiveable Inc., 2025, *Definition* section) Taking into account that this event constitutes a precedent in the Colombian social mobilization because of its strength, intensity and duration (Rojas, 2022) and that population groups belonging to the non-governmental sector mobilized, this research addresses the social outcry as contextual background of the study.

While protests had already occurred in 2019 and 2020, the demonstrations in 2021 were notably more intense, with around 1.5 million people from both rural and urban areas participating in a national strike against the government from April to June (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). These mobilizations, however, persisted throughout the rest of the year (ibid., p. 3). Cali was considered one of the epicenters of these demonstrations (Rojas, 2022). Located in the south-west of Colombia, Cali is known as the symbolic capital of the pacific region with the highest number of Afro-Colombian population in the country (ibid., p. 164). There were also massive mobilizations in other cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Bucaramanga and Pasto (Señal Colombia, 2025).

According to Restrepo-Sanin (2022) the mobilization of 2021 was the result of three interconnected crises: the health crisis, the socio-economic crisis and the governability crisis. With respect to the health crisis, this scholar refers to the highest peak of infections reached in January 2021 that left the intensive care units with 90% occupancy and around 400 COVID-19 deaths per day (ibid., p. 258). Furthermore, Restrepo-Sanin highlights the weaknesses of the national vaccination plan and other policies that overlooked the pandemic's impact on vulnerable groups. These communities have limited healthcare access and depend on informal work, which requires which often requires the use of public transportation and makes it difficult for them to remain at home (ibid., 261). In general, the low distribution of vaccines and

the insufficiency of the programs implemented by the government to assist the most affected by the pandemic increased the social discontent of the population (ibid., p. 263). At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened Colombia's inequalities impacting in particular those on a lower income, women and younger people (ibid., p. 263). Unemployment rates remained high peaking at 17.3% in January of 2021 and a subsequent slight decrease to 14% (ibid., 263). With respect to the levels of poverty, it increased to 42.5% of households, more than 500,000 small businesses closed and the middle class reduced to 25% (Muñoz & Pachón, 2021). Under this panorama of economic crisis, the government expanded its conditional cash transfer programs targeting low income families with their children, young and elderly populations, and it created a special program for informal workers (Restrepo-Sanin, 2022). However, these measures weren't sufficient to cover the entire affected population (ibid., p. 263).

In parallel, the government presented the draft of a tax reform to the national parliament on April 15th, 2021, which tried to increase the government's revenue so it could alleviate the pandemic (ibid., p. 264). Even though the reform included measures to expand the subsidiary programs, reduce public debt and support lower- and middle-income families, its sources of revenue came from 66% of the population (ibid., p. 264). Specifically, the reform included increasing income taxes, taxes on certain goods and services, taxes on gasoline and diesel and creating a new tax for single use plastics (ibid., p. 264). The proposed tax reform, designed to aid in particular lower- and middle- income earners, was the trigger that led to the third interconnected crisis, namely the governability crisis (ibid., p. 264). This crisis was already evident in the country in 2020 but it became severe in 2021 (ibid., p. 265). According to a survey conducted by the National Consulting Center in March 2021, Colombians considered the administration of President Duque as disastrous (33% of the respondents) and 50% of the respondents assessed his image as unfavorable. His government was increasingly considered illegitimate and ineffective in acute topics such as the pandemic's economic and social implications, high rates of crime and insecurity, and the implementation of the peace agreement (Restrepo-Sanin, 2022). The convergence of the health, socio-economic and governability crisis together with the willingness of citizens to demand restoration of their rights led to the 2021 national strike (ibid., p. 266), described in this study as social outcry.

NGOs' participants of this study contribute to understand the nature and implications of what occurred and as they have done it before, they have played an important role acting as a bridge between the state and the social outcry actors. Among the main activities they carried out during the social outcry were fostering mediation, creating spaces for dialogue, advocating for citizens' civil and political rights, and providing humanitarian assistance to protesters.

Among the participants of this study, there is an organization that also proposed an interconnected crisis explanation to the 2021 social outcry. This is the Programs' Director of the Sistema Nacional de Pastoral Social¹⁵ (SNPS), Rosa Inés Floriano, who referred to five (5) interconnected crises that triggered a social outcry whose main peak of confrontation of violence was in April 2021, but that according to her, had already experienced episodes in 2019 and 2020 (R. I. Floriano, personal communication, 14 October 2021) as it was mentioned at the beginning of this subsection. This director as well as the director of the Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Tolima – Tolipaz, Hugo Rincón, highlighted two important characteristics of these mobilizations. First, they moved from rural to urban areas and secondly, they consolidated young people as political actors. For the SNPS Programs' Director, Colombia has experienced a transition of peace and security topics as well as social mobilizations since 2016. Rosa indicated: "The pandemic broke out and exacerbated five (5) acute and detonating issues that make Colombia's crises very complex and prolonged" (R. I. Floriano, personal communication, 14 October 2021). A summary of her interconnected crises approach of this social outcry follows:

The first crisis mentioned by the SNPS director is the social crisis, driven by the Colombian state's failure to address the consequences of the pandemic, corruption scandals, and the resurgence of violence. Similarly, the director of Tolipaz observed a general feeling of social indignation caused by public policies that have acted against the interests of the popular sectors (H. Rincón, personal communication, 19 October 2021). According to the SNPS Programs Director, this social crisis has led to a serious political crisis in which institutions have lost their legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. Rosa explains that there are also powerful political elites rooted in their positions that

¹⁵ Even though the Sistema Nacional de Pastoral Social (SNPS) is an ecclesiastical non-profit organization, it was considered in the study because of their capacity to connect with grassroots groups, NGOs and vulnerable populations in distant regions, their strong legitimacy and relevant role in Colombian humanitarian and conflict crises.

do anything possible to remain there, including false judicial proceedings sending participants of the protests to jail, in particular young people. This has led to a third crisis, namely a crisis in security. In the security crisis, it's possible to identify the resurgence of violence in different regions where human rights defenders and signatories of the peace agreement have been killed. Moreover, there was civil violence during the protests due to the high levels of aggression between the protesters and police, including the abuse of police power, disappearances, sexual abuse and in general human rights violations. Another issue influencing the security crisis was the percentage of people without employment. As mentioned previously, the unemployment rate remained high at 17.3% in January of 2021

Unemployment is a key aspect of the economic crisis, which is closely linked to the migration crisis caused by internal displacement and the dramatic situation of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. According to the UN Refugee Agency, 1.7 million Venezuelans had settled in Colombia by January 2021.(UNHCR, 2021). Venezuelans arrived in Colombia requiring different services such as legal and financial assistance and with the peculiarity that they do not qualify for help from the health system (D. Martinez Torres, personal communication, 12 November 2021; M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022).

Even though the NGOs interviewed for this study didn't directly influence the organization and development of the demonstrations, they play a relevant role in understanding this unprecedented social mobilization and contributing to fostering dialogue among its actors. NGOs acknowledge this was a key mobilization toward the political transformation of the country. That's why some of them continue engaging in spaces and initiatives of dialogue with the different social outcry actors.

3.2.2. DISRUPTIONS FACED BY COLOMBIAN NGOs DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the target populations of the non-governmental sector were particularly affected due to their vulnerability factors, while NGOs themselves also experienced significant disruptions. The Colombian non-governmental sector responded in a timely and creative manner, providing humanitarian aid during the most acute phases of the pandemic and accelerating changes in how they operated and engaged with their target populations. However,

restrictions on mobility and physical contact severely disrupted their work in both rural and urban areas, as well as their overall sustainability.

Empirical evidence collected in this study follows in order to introduce the disruptions faced by the Colombian NGO sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In this respect, the emergence of the virus was unprecedented in Colombia as it was worldwide. Therefore, there were initially no academic studies on the disruptions that affected the Colombian NGO sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the studies started to be published with an exploratory focus six months to one year after the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. Few studies addressed the disruptions of the non-governmental sector in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and limited addressed the disruptions in Colombia (see Chapter 2). That is why, the empirical evidence collected through online semi-structured interviews with NGO directors and coordinators will be employed in this section to mention the main disruptions they had.

According to the empirical findings, the Colombian non-governmental sector faced principally operational, financial and communication burdens.

With respect to the operational burdens, the findings show that NGOs faced challenges in adapting to a new way of work that included working from home, suspending the use of their headquarters as well as the trips to the field or on-site work. Additionally, changing methods of interaction, namely how to work as a team and how to manage the personnel from an online approach, was challenging. NGOs also had to cancel or suspend contracts or agreements with funding institutions. This last aspect led in particular to financial implications.

With respect to the financial implications, NGOs had to re-structure their revenue and expenses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic including a shortage of salaries, obligatory holidays, unpaid leaves, bank loans and other austerity measures in order to tackle the budgetary deficit. In addition, NGOs also had to spend more money on biosafety materials, digital equipment as well as mobile data. In the most difficult cases, NGOs had to close indefinitely.

The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that there were NGOs which operated because of the economic and technical support of other NGOs, funding entities, or because of partnerships, but they didn't have a structured strategy for sustainability and self-management. Furthermore, the findings of this research reveal that the priorities of the funding agencies and private sector changed during the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on humanitarian aid, biosafety materials and health. This brought a reduction in the donations and relevant changes in the calls for proposals that make it difficult to apply for funding. As a result, NGOs faced limitations to accessing resources.

Furthermore, it became difficult to meet possible donors in person to raise funds, instead e-mails or video calls were used, which didn't work as efficiently as in-person meetings. As a consequence, the financial sustainability of NGOs was threatened. In any case, NGOs directors agreed that conditions were already complex before the COVID-19 pandemic and they will remain the same or even worsen afterwards.

With respect to the communication disruption, the findings of this research indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic had a distancing effect between NGOs and their target populations, resulting in a significant communication breakdown. NGOs described what occurred as a time of a lot of uncertainty in which they lost interaction with their communities. During this period, NGOs had to leave the regions in which they worked, they faced difficulties in reaching their target populations or they lost contact with partner organizations due to the implementation of physical distancing measures and mobility restrictions. NGOs directors and communication coordinators explained during the interviews that they themselves had to realize themselves there are regions in Colombia in which it is extremely difficult to establish communication. Based on the data collected in this study, there were communities which remained isolated in the most acute phases of the pandemic without access to food, health, internet and other public services. The evidence also shows that those NGOs who could maintain relationships and provide attention to their target populations based on online communication, realized that having in-person interactions is crucial because of their nature as social organizations. Despite this, a strange phenomenon occurred in the communities, namely that local NGOs established new forms of online networking and coordination with national organizations and target populations had to become more autonomous in their social processes. Furthermore, online communication provided

new tools to interact and learn. Empirical findings suggest that the loss of contact forced both NGOs and target populations to increase the use of ICTs for their mobilization and communication.

The previous burdens experienced by the Colombian non-governmental sector are the starting point of this study, particularly, the communication barriers, which cut across all NGOs functional areas, fields of work and target populations. NGOs and target populations had to shift from mainly in-person communication used to build relationships and exchanges to a new communication dynamic that uses especially but not exclusively online tools. This research acknowledges the importance of communication for NGOs and target populations because it is through communication that NGOs contact their target populations, create bonds of trust, get to know the needs of communities, raise their voice and get to know the regions where the target populations and communities live.

Based on the case study this research examines the increasing use of online communication and mobilization throughout the COVID-19 pandemic among NGOs and between NGOs and their target populations arguing that these communication developments might shape transformative action in a country that experiences multiple crises.

3.3. DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IN COLOMBIA

The last section of the contextual chapter presents a summary of Colombia's digital connectivity capacity and related policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has motivated reflection and debate regarding diverse social inequalities that even though were not new, invaded the public agendas (Centro María Sibylla et al., 2021). The unequal access and use of the internet is one of these debates considering that the lockdown measures implemented by governments increasingly demanded the employment of the internet for activities such as remote work, entertainment, commerce, and education (Feldmann et al., 2020). This study investigates how the communication barriers brought about the pandemic triggered the use of online communication among NGOs and with their target groups. That's why it's important to understand under which conditions the digital transition occurred.

In Colombia, there has been progress on the use of ICTs in specific areas such as digital government and in some sectors of businesses (OECD, 2019). However, many

people in the country still have no access to the internet because of low income and high inequality (ibid., p. 56). According to the digital development dashboard developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in 2018 only 16% of Colombian households in rural areas had internet access at home compared to 63% in urban areas (ITU, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database). This indicator confirms that there are still wide disparities in internet access in Colombia between rural and urban areas. Besides, 37% of households had a computer at home by 2019 (ITU, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database). In this sense, if Colombia wants to employ digital technologies in order to integrate communities and territories, it still needs to expand access to and use of them (OECD, 2019).

With respect to the percentage of the population using the internet, 70% did in 2020 with 84% of 15 to 24 years olds, 62% of 25 to 74 years olds, 11% of over 75s and 60% under 15s (ITU, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database). As for ICT skills, which are considered the most important asset to employing digital technologies effectively (OECD, 2019), in 2019, 31% of individuals possessed basic skills, 22% standard skills and 5% advanced skills¹⁶ (ITU, World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database).

Furthermore, it's important to mention that the use of mobile communication services has brought about an increase in Colombia's connectivity in recent years (OECD, 2019). Subscriptions to mobile broadband grew from 13.7% in 2012 to 52.1% per 100 inhabitants in 2018 (ibid., p. 34). Of these subscriptions, 98.5% correspond to voice and data subscriptions (ibid., p. 34).

According to OECD's review of digital transformation in Colombia, the country's digitalization policies over the past decade have been structured around three main components (OECD, 2019). Firstly, Law 1341 issued in 2009 that created the Information Technologies and Communication Fund in order to finance plans, programs and projects that facilitate universal access and service (ibid., p. 21). Secondly, the National Development Plans (in Spanish Planes Nacionales de Desarrollo - PND) that are the legal road maps issued by each government every four

¹⁶ According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), specialized United Nations agency for information and communication technologies and official source for global ICT statistics, "basic skills are relatively simple tasks, such as moving a file or folder, or sending an e-mail with an attachment. Standard skills include working with spreadsheets, creating electronic presentations or installing and configuring software. Advanced skills are being able to program or code" (cited in OECD, 2023, p. 26).

years with the goals, programs and investments for their administration including the objectives and main targets for the digital transformation of Colombia (ibid., p. 22). The third mechanism corresponds to the strategic sectoral plans of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (in Spanish Ministerio de las Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación – MinTic) (ibid., p. 22). These plans establish and implement the specific measures to reach the digital transformation goals set by each government. A brief description of the last three plans with their achievements and assessments follows.

Between 2010 and 2014, the “Live Digital” plan (in Spanish Vive Digital) aimed to expand internet infrastructure and access across Colombia, leading to the creation of around 900 public ICT centers—Puntos Vive Digital in urban areas and Kioskos Vive Digital in rural ones (OECD, 2019). These centers supported digital inclusion through public access, training, and skill development, particularly in poor communities. However, their effectiveness depends on proper maintenance and local staffing, and their relevance is challenged by the growing use of mobile internet and increased home connectivity (ibid., pp. 58–59). Despite this, they remain important for regions where internet access is still limited and costly, requiring targeted investment while adjusting funding if usage declines due to market alternatives (ibid., p. 58).

From 2014 to 2018, the plan “Live Digital for the People” (in Spanish Vive Digital para la gente) was implemented (ibid., p. 58). The plan aimed to enhance government transparency and efficiency through digital tools, while also positioning Colombia as a global leader in developing applications for poverty reduction and job creation (ibid., p. 58). It targeted households, firms, and the government as the main beneficiaries of the program (ibid., p. 58).

From 2018 to 2022, the “Digital Future is for All” (El futuro digital es de todos) plan aimed to expand internet connectivity across Colombia, particularly in rural areas, which became especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid., p. 22). A major initiative under this plan was the “Digital Centers for Rural Areas” (Centros Digitales para Zonas Rurales), the largest internet connectivity project in Colombia’s history, connecting 10,000 rural communities by 2030 (Ministerio TIC Colombia, 2020). The project, involving the installation of 14,745 digital centers, had an investment exceeding 2.1 billion Colombian pesos (Alcaldía de Caldas - Antioquia Colombia,

2022). Each center provides two Wi-Fi connection points: one inside rural schools for educational use and one external point for the surrounding community to access online services, communication, and business resources (ibid.). The project was implemented by two operators, Comcel S.A. for Region A and Centros Poblados Colombia for Region B, both selected in a 2020 bidding process (ibid.).

In 2021, a corruption scandal emerged when Centros Poblados Operator, lacking the necessary experience, submitted false bank guarantees and misused a 70 million Colombian pesos advance (about 18 million USD), leading to delays in the contract (Deutsche Welle, 2021). As a result, Minister Karen Abudinen and other officials resigned. A new operator, a merger of ETB Net Colombia Conectada and Sky Net, took over the project in region B, with legal efforts underway to recover the funds (ibid.). The "Digital Centers" project continues under the administration of President Gustavo Petro (2022-2026), with Julián Molina as the current ICT Minister.

This chapter outlined the key contextual elements of the instrumental case study, including the development, roles, and challenges of the NGO sector in Latin America and Colombia. It examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 social outcry as part of interconnected crises. It also addressed the shift to digital communication during the pandemic, shaped by Colombia's digital infrastructure and related policies.

4. CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the conceptual considerations of the study based on a review of academic literature.

The overall umbrella of this research is the field of reflexive and critical development studies. In this growing interdisciplinary field, the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) approaches of development have contributed significantly to shaping the development debate whilst the role of civil society has been crucial to it. Based on this, the first section of this chapter will define civil society and contextualize the development debate from a LAC perspective. The related subsections will provide a historical overview of development theories and outline the role of civil society in this debate.

The second section of this chapter will follow by presenting three conceptual pillars that this study draws on in order to develop the instrumental case study of this research, namely networks for transformation, development communication and transformative action. These conceptual pillars are the components of the conceptual framework.

The chapter concludes by presenting a visual representation of the conceptual framework of the study, which illustrates how the concepts and conceptual pillars relate to one another and guide the analysis of the empirical data based on the theoretical foundations.

4.1. CIVIL SOCIETY AS FORMS, NORMS AND SPACES FOR PARTICIPATION

According to Edwards (2011) “civil society is a composite of forms, norms, and spaces between the individual and the state” (p. 13). This definition has its foundations in the one proposed by Michael Walzer (1998) of civil society as “uncoerced human association”.

From the perspective of forms of civil society, Edwards (2011) refers to the different kinds of voluntary associations. According to this, a physical infrastructure is required to express citizen action, participation, and deliberation (ibid., p. 7). That’s why, there are different kinds of civil society organizations that combine norms and achievements that they need to generate (ibid., p. 7). According to Edwards (20211) “civil society

organizations cover a huge range of entities of different types, sizes, purposes, and levels of formality, including community or grassroots associations, social movements, labor unions, professional groups, advocacy and development NGOs, formally registered non-profits, social enterprises, and many others” (ibid., p. 7). Their relevance goes beyond their individual existence, identity or operations, and considers also the way they interact with each other and with the state and markets’ institutions in complex civil society assemblages or ecosystems (ibid., p. 8). According to this, the over reliance on a particular form over others threatens the existence of the assemblage or ecosystem taking into account that, as in a biological ecosystem, strength comes from the diversity that each element generates in the system (ibid., p. 8). The assemblage thinking offers a relational view of the world, which is made up of associations of human and non-human elements (Müller & Schurr, 2016). These scholars define assemblages as “a collection of relations between heterogeneous entities to work together for some time” (p. 219). However, assemblages are more than this (ibid., p. 219). Müller and Schurr highlight their fluidity, ephemerality, unpredictability, and affective qualities, which reveal the constantly shifting nature of assemblages (ibid., p. 219).

With respect to the definition of civil society from a normative perspective, Edwards, (2011) refers to a kind of society that is marked out by certain social norms. From this perspective, people expect to live in a “positive, good, or civil” society characterized by strong voluntary associations measured in terms of positive social norms such as trust, tolerance, and cooperation and in terms of achievements to tackle problems such as poverty, inequality or discrimination (ibid., p. 8-9). However, this approach has been criticized since there have been voluntary associations playing roles contradicting these norms, values and achievements (ibid., p. 9). This occurs since the meaning of “positive” differs according to each society, context and the relationship with the state and market institutions (ibid., p. 8). That’s why the proposal is to understand civil society from its core values such as civility, diversity and equality (ibid., p. 9). Even though these values can also be contested in terms of meaning and how different groups attach to them, they are essential to assuring collective action, participation and deliberation (ibid., p. 9).

The definition of civil society, from the perspective of the spaces where citizens interact with each other and with state and market institutions, focuses on two aspects. First, the processes of citizen participation that occur in the public sphere; and second, the structural conditions that shape, facilitate, or hinder these processes for different groups at different times, aiming to overcome barriers imposed by power relations and politics. According to this definition, the spaces are emphasized rather than the forms or norms of these associations (ibid., p. 10). Thanks to these spaces, differences between different associations and their agendas can be also contested, and in some cases, they are solved producing a new public interest (ibid., p. 10). The spaces approach also considers the opportunities for citizen engagement that new innovations such as information technologies, community media, or public journalism offer without ignoring the fact that the virtual communication may be less effective in confronting politics and power relations (ibid., p 11). In addition, the public sphere is in decline due to various threats, including the privatization and commercialization of human activities in market-based societies (ibid., p. 11). For example, the shift from public to private education, the privatization of healthcare services, and the conversion of public spaces into private areas. Moreover, there is a lack of education on civic knowledge and government repression of citizens' mobilizations, advocacy, and protests (ibid., p. 11).

According to Edwards (2011) understanding civil society as forms, norms and spaces contributes to analyzing what fosters or hinders its achievements. Understanding its forms helps to identify which forms of collective action are more relevant for determined contexts and which gaps in the associational ecosystem need to be addressed (ibid., p. 12). Understanding the norms highlights which values, beliefs and ideologies are behind citizen action and can lead to social change (ibid., p. 12). Finally, understanding its spaces facilitates the debate on the contestation or consensus of these norms as well as contributing to the task of reshaping or contesting power relations that account for effective social action (ibid., p. 12).

Non-Governmental Organizations are part of the broader category of civil society organizations (Salamon & Anheier, 1992). "Non-" refers to their private nature emerging by civil society initiatives and pursuing immaterial and not-for-profit goals (Frantz & Martens, 2006) "Non-" combined with "Governmental" means that even though they are politically active in order to influence public policies, they don't secure

any political power or positions in parliaments or any other public institutions (Glassner, 1998). The term “organization” refers to the organizational structure of an NGO that can also be minimal (Frantz & Martens, 2006). Other scholars connect the organizational criterion with an acknowledged legal status conferred in the country they are active (ibid., p. 29).

Regarding NGOs activities, three key functions can be highlighted: advocacy, service provision, and regulation (Beer et al., 2012). Additionally, NGOs operate and interact across multiple levels, each with varying resources and power (ibid., p. 326). In this context, the relationship between local, domestic, and transnational NGOs has become a significant focus of study (ibid., p. 326).

According to Sankey and Munck (2016), local non-governmental organizations emerge from grassroots initiatives and are primarily led and operated by members of the local community. In particular, local NGOs are aware of the social, cultural, and economic peculiarities of their area of operation and they are committed to address the underlying causes of the communities’ problems (ibid., p. 152). In contrast, international and transnational non-governmental organizations operate across national borders (ibid., p. 151). Some examples of transnational NGOs are Amnesty International, Oxfam, Green Peace and Doctors without Borders.

This research addresses national and local Colombian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). They are regarded as a form of civil society organization marked out with norms, beliefs and ideologies committed to defend the public welfare in the complex Colombian context. However, the Colombian non-governmental sector faces internal weaknesses and there are still limitations in the enabling environment for their effective work (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.2).

4.2.DEVELOPMENT FROM A LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE

The field of reflexive and critical development studies is very much related to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) considering that the concept of development, along with the goals that development pursues and its means have been constantly under

debate by different scholars, policy makers, development practitioners and civil society organizations of diverse countries in this region (Gudynas, 2013; Sankey & Munck, 2016; Youkhana et al., 2021). LAC has actively engaged in the global discussion of (sustainable) development and has pioneered different experiences, narratives and approaches in order to understand “human progress” based on alternative paths (Campodónico et al., 2017).

In a historical context, the establishment of development discourses and practices began in the early post-World War II era (Escobar, 2012). In 1949, Harry Truman’s inaugural address as President of the United States marked the beginning of a new era in how world affairs were understood and managed (ibid., p. 3). The world was divided into developed and underdeveloped nations, with developed countries assuming the role of lifting underdeveloped nations out of poverty (Youkhana et al., 2021). According to Truman’s vision, this could be achieved through a program of development, the application of modern scientific and technical knowledge and the investment of capital (Escobar, 2012). The United States was not alone in envisioning this goal; within a few years, it became a universal aspiration among those in power (ibid., p. 4).

In this context, until the late 1970s, debates surrounding Asia, Africa, and Latin America primarily revolved around the nature of development (Escobar, 2012). The main concern of theorists and politicians was to determine the types of development needed to overcome the social and economic challenges faced by these regions (ibid., p. 5). In Escobar’s words: “Wherever one looked, one found the repetitive and omnipresent reality of development: governments designing and implementing ambitious development plans, institutions carrying out development programs in city and countryside alike [...]” (ibid., p. 5). Development emerged as a new domain of thought and experience resulting in a new strategy to deal with what was perceived as poverty and backwardness in these countries (ibid., p. 6).

Instead of fulfilling its promise of ending social injustice, development, however, reproduced colonial practices causing disenchantment and critics in the Global South, (Youkhana et al., 2021). Even though, since the middle of the 20th century, areas such as transportation, electrical energy, some national industries and communication have

faced modernization processes, cultural forms also broke down and the relationship between society and nature became disconnected (ibid., p. 20).

LAC has internalized the critiques on development contributing to the development debate by elaborating theories such as the dependency paradigm¹⁷ in the 1960s and, conceiving in recent decades, development alternatives¹⁸ as well as alternatives to development.

According to Gudynas (2013) “development alternatives” and “alternatives to development” should be differentiated. The former emphasizes the need to “rectifying, repairing or modifying contemporary development” without changing the conceptual foundations but looking for the best strategies to continue with the development processes (ibid., p. 29). In contrast, “alternatives to development” aim is to “produce conceptual frameworks that are not based on those ideological foundations. This implies exploring social, economic and political orders different to what we have been calling development” (ibid., p. 30).

When addressing alternatives to development, sometimes discussed within post-development debates, this research refers to a “constellation of network alternatives to strip the development project from social imaginaries and practices” (Youkhana et al., 2021, p. 22). In the 1980s this approach criticized “the exclusion in decision making, progress metrics and unique ways of conceiving well-being” presenting in turn, a proposal of “reaffirming the local and the autonomous, the community-based and autogenesis” (ibid., p.22). More recently, alternatives to development have been consolidated as “a heterogeneous and diverse set of processes, concepts and experiences that escape the homogenizing matrix” (Youkhana et al., 2021, p. 24).

¹⁷ According to the dependency theory, underdevelopment of the third world wasn't caused by internal but external factors and because of the way the former colonies were integrated in the world economy (Waisbord, 2020). For these theorists development is a process that has to be analyzed from a relational approach between central and peripheral countries (Servaes & Rico, 2020). According to them, underdevelopment isn't a stage to reaching development but a necessary periphery that could sustain a developed center (ibid., p. 18).

¹⁸ According to Pieterse (1998) 'alternative' involves three different aspects of development, namely agents, methods and objectives or values. With respect to agents, Pieterse refers to the sphere of citizens. Regarding methods, this scholar refers to a bottom-up orientation, starting with the local and grassroots points of view. With respect to the goals, he introduced a shift from understanding development as growth based on Gross Domestic Product - GDP to assume human development as an appropriate development goal and measure.

Examples of these views can be found in local or regional experiences that merge the Global South perspectives with critical development approaches such as de-growth, post-growth and post-extractivism (ibid., p. 24).

For Kaiser (2020) “whether it is ‘development’, ‘alternatives to development’, ‘alternative development’, or ‘reflexive development’, the need and importance of bottom-up elements have been recognized” (p. 96). Well known scholars of this region such as Gustavo Esteva from Mexico (1992) and Arturo Escobar from Colombia (1995, 2005) have also acknowledged the relevance of elements such as local culture, local knowledge, local initiatives and participation of grassroots and social movements to realize (post) development. Furthermore, from a bottom-up approach any development project should be people-centered and promote accountability, feedback and transparency to succeed (ibid., p. 99). This research adopted this bottom-up or from below approach to address development acknowledging NGOs and their target populations as agents of change.

4.3. CIVIL SOCIETY ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

NGOs and civil society organizations have played a significant role in the development debate from the beginning. Any discussion of poverty, inequality, or development is incomplete without recognizing their bottom-up roles in integrating grassroots and local actors into decision-making processes and the implementation of development programs (Kaiser, 2020). In particular, their promotion of alternative development approaches and their acceptance in remote areas position them as key bottom-up institutions that are essential to any development paradigm (ibid, p. 99).

Civil society role in leading social, political and economic transformations was first recognized by scholars and policy makers in the 1980s and the 1990s after new organizations and social movements emerged at the end of the 1960s and 1970s in order to challenge “paternalistic welfare states” and “reconstitute a pluralistic public realm” (Grzegorz, 2019). A vibrant civil society was conceived as the remedy against political and social illnesses and as a precondition for a democratic system to function (ibid., p. 151). That’s why its promotion and building was fostered at domestic and international policy levels, in particular as a crucial aspect of foreign aid with the aim of supporting countries that have recovered from civil wars, countries that were under authoritarian regimes for decades or to reform inefficient welfare systems (ibid., p.

152). Since the 1990s this support has increased expanding the role and functions of non-governmental organizations, establishing partnerships between civil society organizations and the state and recognizing transnational NGOs with consultative status (ibid., p. 152).

The role of civil society in generating political and economic outcomes is a relevant field of study (Grzegorz, 2019). Nowadays, civil society and the organizations in it are considered important agents of change (OECD, 2020). CSOs have been portrayed as “schools of democracy that strengthen democratic institutions, foster community development, and encourage citizens to respect the state and positively engage with it, protect the rule of law, and increase accountability” (Grzegorz, 2019, p. 155). However, civil society cannot always be related with the promotion of democratic outcomes (ibid., p. 155). Research has showed this depends on the relationship between civil societies and the states, which is complex, and based on context and specific time (ibid., p. 155). Grzegorz (2019) argues that the actual interaction between states and civil societies is constituted according to inherited and emerging forms of association that respond to changing state policies, institutional incentives and historical conditions (ibid., p. 155).

Civil society organization’s role in development-cooperation as both independent development actors and partners for implementing programs has also been acknowledged by multilateral organizations (OECD, 2020). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD (2020), CSOs “provide a means for people’s expression, enable people to claim their rights and promote rights-based approaches, shape and oversee development policies, and provide services complementary to those provided by government” (p. 26). Besides, international commitments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁹ recognize the importance of all development actors, including the CSOs, to monitor and implement the sustainable development goals (ibid., p. 16). In particular, “their connections to people on the frontlines of poverty, inequality and vulnerability, and

¹⁹ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs is an international commitment adopted in September 2015 by 193 United Nations’ Member States that envisages the advancement of social inclusion, economic growth and environmental protection fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies through a new global partnership (United Nations System Staff College, 2017).

their ability to channel these voices into development processes, are considered a critical asset to help meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (ibid., p. 26, based on Bushan, S. et al., 2018).

Scholars and practitioners have paid increasing attention to civil society actors and their bottom-up strategies to advance (post-) development processes. It is therefore essential to examine how different forms of civil society engage in mutual interaction and communication to foster transformative action. This research analyzes how NGOs in Colombia mobilized collectively and sustained their relationships with target populations during a particularly challenging context—namely, the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic triggered significant changes in their communication processes and infrastructures, accelerating the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to replace face-to-face interactions due to unforeseen physical distancing and mobility restrictions.

Drawing on the previous bottom-up approach of development and conceptualization of civil society, this research proposes three conceptual pillars to develop the case study of this research. These conceptual pillars form together the conceptual framework of the study, but they can also be considered individually. Each of them will be explained in the upcoming section and at the end of the chapter a consolidated conceptual framework will be described and visualized.

4.4. CONCEPTUAL PILLARS OF THE STUDY

This study employs three conceptual pillars to address the instrumental case study. The first conceptual pillar “Networks for transformation” is based on Manuel Castell’s network society taking into account that this scholar is a pioneer in this field linking concepts such as networks, civil society and collective action from a global perspective and with the key relevance of the use of ICTs. The second conceptual pillar, “Development Communication”, refers to this approach that conceptualizes what communication means for development processes and social changes focusing on the participants and their communication process. Here a description of the theoretical and practical existence of this approach in the LAC region will be provided. Finally, the third conceptual pillar “Transformative Action” addresses this recent concept in development studies in which awareness, knowledge, individual and collective agency play a key role in transformative action(s).

4.4.1. PILLAR I: NETWORKS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Since the 1990s, but more notoriously from 2000, Manuel Castells has studied the interlinkages between civil society, communication and networking, and the role they play in engaging in transformative action, particularly in a globalized world. These are the same concepts that this study addresses but applied from a local perspective. That's why I would like now to refer to Castells' main contributions for social and development studies, particularly considering those applied to the civil society domain.

Castells studied initially the relationships between economy, technology and society and how they were reflected in the urban structure (Anttiroiko, 2015). After this, he expanded his work with his ground-breaking trilogy "The Information Age" published in three volumes in the latter half of the 1990s, namely *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), *The Power of Identity* (1997), and *End of Millennium* (1998) (ibid., p. 5). In his trilogy Castells "introduced a long awaited social theoretical perspective on the understanding of the trends and challenges of global transformation" (ibid., p. 13). According to his theory, "networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture" (Castells, 1996, p. 469). For Castells, "all the core economic, communicative, and cultural activities are globalized. That is they are dependent on strategic nodes connected around the world" (Castells, 2008, p. 81). In this sense, Castells argues that "the networking logic explains the features of the process of globalization" (Castells, 2004, p. 222).

Castells refers to "the resurgence of networks" that has occurred because of the current technological advancements (Castells, 1996, p. 496). For him, networks have already existed as a form of social organization in other times and spaces, but the technological paradigm allows their inevitable expansion throughout the entire social structure (ibid., p. 469). He points out that "only under the electronics based technological paradigm can networks reconfigure themselves in real time, on a global–local scale, and permeate all domains of social life" (Castells, 2004, p. 221). However, Castells acknowledges this is a mere technological deterministic and reductionist approach of society (ibid., p. 222). Instead of this, Castells refers to characterizing society appropriately (ibid., p. 222). This is "in terms of its specific social structure: networks powered by microelectronics and software-based information and communication technologies" (ibid., p. 222).

With respect to the conceptualization of networks, Castells used networks in his society network theory “as the basic category of the analysis of the capitalist system” (Anttiroiko, 2015, p. 7). Some networks examples in his first book are the global financial network, the governance network of the European Union or the global network of media (Castells, 1996). In his later book titled “The Internet Galaxy”, Castells defines a network as follows:

A network is a set of interconnected nodes. Networks are very old forms of human practice, but they have taken a on a new life in our time by becoming information networks, powered by the Internet. Networks have extraordinary advantages as organizing tools because of their inherent flexibility and adaptability [...]. However, [...] they have had considerable difficulty in coordinating functions, [...] in accomplishing a given task, beyond a certain size and complexity of the network. [...] Now, however, the introduction of computer-based information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, enables networks to deploy their flexibility and adaptability, thus asserting their evolutionary nature. (Castells, 2003, p. 1-2).

Furthermore, Castells refers to networking as the “flexible, interactive, borderless form of structuration of whatever activity in whatever domain” (Castells, 2008, p. 81). This definition is given when Castells refers to the organizational capacity of the globalization process (ibid., p. 81).

Castells enumerates the consequences of the network society according to an increasing body of research (Castells, 2004). For civil society, focus of this study, it means a new public sphere²⁰ organized on the basis of media communication networks (Castells, 2008). Both mass media (television, radio, and the printed press) and internet and wireless communication networks are included here considering the digital era (McChesney, 2007).

According to Stewart (2001), it’s through this public sphere, that different forms of civil society stimulate public debates which manage to influence the decisions of the state. On the other hand, it depends on the constitutional rules of the political institutions as to how productive and organized the debate can be (Castells, 2008). Indeed, the

²⁰ Castells defines public sphere as “the space of communication of ideas and projects that emerge from society and are addressed to the decision makers in the institutions of society” (Castells, 2008, p. 78). In other words, “a space where people come together as citizens and articulate their autonomous views to influence the political institutions of society” (ibid., p. 78).

relationships between government and civil society and their interaction communicating through the public sphere define the polity of society (ibid., p. 80). However, Castells also points out, that nowadays the civil society can exist independently from political institutions and mass media thanks to technological means (ibid., p. 86). Castells refers to a global/local communication media system that he also calls “mass self-communication” defined as “networks of communication that relate many-to-many in the sending and receiving of messages in a multimodal form of communication that bypasses mass media and often escapes government control” (ibid., p. 90, based on Castells, 2007).

Internet and wireless communication have turned into a necessary and valuable infrastructure for the development and organization of civil society modifying how the political systems work in many countries (Howard, 2010). They are global and horizontal networks of communication to debate, engage in dialogue, and make decisions collectively (Castells, 2008). Castells moves forward and indicates that it’s through this media communication system that non-state actors influence people’s minds and foster social change (ibid., p. 90). Castells indicates that organizations such as NGOs use media politics strategically to mobilize people and obtain support for their causes (ibid., p. 85). However, he also points out, that media enterprises as well as traditional politics are also using this communication space (Castells, 2007). That’s why, Castells argues that “the media have become the social space where power is decided” (ibid., p. 242).

In his book *Communication Power* (2009), Castells addresses more closely societal changes and power structures relations (Anttiroiko, 2015). With respect to this, Castells applies a more robust psychological foundation to understanding social action and concentrates on the power problems of internal networks (ibid., p.12). In the network society of Castells, “power does not reside in institutions, not even in the state or in large corporations. It is located in the networks that structure society” (Castells, 2004, p. 224). That’s why alternative networks should be incorporated in order to counter and disrupt established networks of power and their connections (ibid., p. 224). For this purpose, civil society acts as a counterforce to those instrumental networks employing horizontal communication networks to reconnect political institutions with civil society (ibid., p. 224).

The current study considers Castells work as a very important reference to connect the concepts that this research addresses. Therefore, it applies his conceptualization of networks and networking as well as the relationship between civil society and new communication technologies to engage in transformative action. However, it also regards Castell's shortcomings. Even though Castells' network society or information age theory has been acclaimed worldwide as a masterpiece, it's also open for criticism and dispute (Dijk, 1999). For Anttiroiko (2015), Castells shows low interest in studying "how networks come into being, how they evolve, the nature of given network ties, or even how the information networks really function" (p. 18). This scholar also indicates that Castells work disregards "the actual penetration, use, and significance of ICTs in the given real-life setting" (ibid., p. 18).

In this research, communication is addressed as a holistic process in which the infrastructures used are just one component of the communication process. In order to overcome Castell's shortcomings, this research explores not only the communication network infrastructures but it also focuses on the communication process including all participants of the case study. For this purpose, the research addresses the communication, relationships and affiliations of the Colombian non-governmental sector and its target populations from a qualitative approach during a temporal situation, namely the acute and post-acute phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4.2. PILLAR II: DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

With respect to the second conceptual pillar of this this research, namely development communication, it can be also found in the literature as communication for development (C4D), social and behavior change communication (SBCC) and more recently communication for social change (C4SC). In this study, the terms will be used interchangeably, even though some scholars have differentiated them from historical and reasoning perspectives. Different debates about development communication have emerged over different periods of time as well as with development theories. Taking into account that the field continues evolving, this research proposes integrating the different approaches under the term development communication. This study will address development communication as the "strategic application or integration of communication technologies and processes to promote social change" (Kishore, 2020, *Lecture*).

Foundations and components:

Development communication as a field of study addresses the question of how communication and information technologies can be so implemented that they promote a positive development in terms of societal change processes (Hamidi & Mielke Möglich, 2021). The authors refer to positive development in order to avoid understanding development through the traditional Western conception, which favors technology and Western ideals as the principal means of transforming and strengthening society (ibid, p. 569). From the perspective of development communication, the role of media and communication is crucial in processes of social transformation. However, the approach of development communication “emphasizes communication processes and outcomes over the application of media and technologies” (Servaes & Rico, 2020, p. 48).

Development communication studies what communication means for development processes (Barranquero, 2007). According to this premise, it’s an approach that uses communication as a necessary instrument to establishing social development (Brito et al., 2021). In other words, it is the “process of using communication to achieve changes in society” (CIVICUS, n.d., p. 10) . As for the definition of communication in this research, it refers to “a phenomenon in which those involved construct meanings in interaction” (Servaes & Rico, 2020, p. 45, based on Leeuwis & Aarts, 2011).

There are two dominant models of development communication that can be identified from the literature. According to Servaes (2020a), the emergence of these models has been shaped by the development paradigms²¹. The first one corresponds to a top-down communication model. According to this model “communication was understood as a straight line that goes from the developed “source” to the underdeveloped “receiver” (ibid., p. 19). In this model, that is consistent with the modernity paradigm, communication is considered a form of one-way persuasion that employs mass media to implement strategies of behavior and attitude change that target “underdeveloped

²¹ Servaes refers to three development paradigms: modernization, dependency and multiplicity (Servaes, 2020a). Development in the modernization paradigm refers to “the state of being or becoming ‘westernized’” (ibid., p. 17). In the dependency paradigm, “development and underdevelopment must be understood in the context of the world system [...] in terms of relations between the regions, central and peripheral” (ibid., p. 18). In the multiplicity paradigm, “development must be conceived as an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process which can differ from one country to another. In other words, every society must define development for itself and find its own strategy” (ibid., p. 18).

peoples” (ibid., p. 19). Later on, bi-directional communication models were included as well as strategies like feedback to make the message more effective (ibid., p. 20).

The second model of development communication is a participatory or bottom-up model. This model came about in the 1980s and 1990s when participation became a key component of the development sector (Servaes & Rico, 2020). According to this model, “people [are] the controlling actors or participants for development” (Servaes, 2020b, p. 20). Under this model, human groups reach a consensus on who they are, what their interests, needs, aspirations and capacities are, what they want to change and how they can do it collectively (Servaes & Malikhao, 2020). This takes place through a participatory, autonomous and dialogic process that generates knowledge and action (Barranquero, 2007). From this perspective, development communication should be also contextual and based on planning. Contextual means that the cultural, social and economic context must be considered in order to select the techniques and channels that work better under specific circumstances (Balit & Acunzo, 2020). With respect to planning, it refers to the intentional and systematic character of the communication processes (Barranquero, 2007). This means, that specific changes at various levels of society and institutions are expected to play a key role in the quality of life, well-being, public services, and democracy (Alfaro Moreno, 1993).

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has contributed to shape the development communication approach based on a participatory and community model by generating critical thinking as well as diverse experiences and practices at local, regional and national levels (Gumucio Dagron, 2007). Among the most relevant scholars of this region are Luis Ramiro Beltrán, Alfonso Gumucio Dagron and Rosa Alfaro Moreno, who have reclaimed another communication for another development (Gumucio Dagron, 2012). Based on this participatory perspective, development communication is understood as “a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change” (FAO et al., 2007, p. XXXIII). The participatory approach of development communication aligns with the work of two other prominent scholars from Latin America: Paulo Freire with his concept of popular

education, and Orlando Fals Borda with his Participatory-Action Research (see section 4.4.3).

For Alfonso Gumucio Dagron, the approach of communication for social change is characterized by five main premises or strengths (Gumucio Dagron, 2011). According to him, these elements give a strategic emphasis to the communication process passing from a short term to a long term process that contributes to sustainable development and social change (Gumucio Dagron, 2012). Gumucio Dagron (2011) summarizes the main premises as follows:

- a. Sustainability of social change is possible when affected communities take ownership of the communicational process. This means that communities must be agents of their own change and managers of their own communication.
- b. Rather than focusing on persuasion and information dissemination, communication for social change encourages dialogue, debate and negotiation.
- c. The results of the communication process must go beyond individual behavior and take into account social norms, current policies, culture and the context of development.
- d. Communication seeks to strengthen cultural identity, trust, commitment and overall community empowerment.
- e. It rejects the linear model of information transmission and encourages a process of interactions that facilitate shared knowledge and collective action.

Related to the appropriation/ownership of the communicational process, the development communication approach acknowledges the relevance of generating local contents and emphasizes the need to use adequate communication technology (Gumucio Dagron, 2012). According to Gumucio Dagron, even though there is nowadays an increasing fascination towards the new information and communication technologies, the communication development approach points out that any technology should be adequate to the real needs of the communities and their ownership/appropriation potential (*ibid.*, p. 42).

Based on previous premises, this research identified the following aspects as core components of the Development Communication approach: participation and interaction, adequacy of ICTs and ownership/appropriation of the communicational

process. Each of these components have shaped the communication process between NGOs and their target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic and will be explored further in the second empirical chapter of the dissertation.

Types of communication technologies:

As mentioned previously, the concept of development communication “emphasizes communication processes and outcomes over the application of media and technologies” (Servaes & Rico, 2020, p. 48). However, there is the assumption that combining traditional communication techniques and media that are available and familiar among vulnerable groups, such as in rural populations, with new media can be the most effective way to share information and promote inclusive dialogue (Balit & Acunzo, 2020). Accordingly, all available communication channels, both traditional and modern, must be used in an integrated way (*ibid.*, p. 152). This multimedia approach proposed by the development communication facilitates the interaction among different communication media creating a complex network of communication (Servaes et al., 2012).

This research argues that even though development communication cannot be reduced to the use of communication technologies to foster social transformation leaving aside contextual and societal factors, it cannot be ignored either that “the changes in communication media have altered social processes, relationships and activities as information technology expands to mediate more social situations” (Altheide, 1994, p. 665). This was more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic in which there was a boost in communication technologies, which changed the way social relationships took place. Based on this, communication is studied in this research from a holistic and ecological approach which contributes to avoiding both technological and sociocultural determinisms (Svensson, 2020). This means that media such as ICTs are only one component of the communicative ecology or ecosystem that is understood as a “milieu of agents” that interact through different mediated and unmediated ways of communication along three different layers: technological, social and discursive (Treré & Mattoni, 2016 based on Foth & Hearn, 2007). Technological refers to the media that allows connection and interaction, social refers to the people involved and their ways of organization and discursive refers to the communication content itself (*ibid.*, p. 5).

In order to classify the different communication technologies or media, this research employs the approach of three communication technologies' or media degrees proposed by Jensen (2010). According to him, media comprises in the first degree "human bodies and their extensions in tools" (p. 21). Here, interpersonal or face to face communication without any use of external devices can be included. In fact, tools such as the human voice can be classified as a form of first degree communication technology considering that different tones and rhythms can be used in a speech to make statements more colorful, louder or to add more emphasis (Altheide, 1994). Media in the second degree corresponds to analogue technologies and includes the classical mass media such as print media (books and newspapers) radio and television (Jensen, 2010). Digital technologies correspond to the media in the third degree (ibid., p.21). They include all the innovations in personal computing, internet, and mobile phones (Zemmels, 2012). According to Flew (2010) and Guan (2006), the main characteristics of digital technologies are convergence, interactivity, hypertextuality and virtuality²², which can also be related to the acceleration of globalization processes. Everything from e-mails, webpages, and social network sites to different kinds of software and mobile applications can be included in this category. Digital technologies in comparison with analogue technologies are able to integrate interpersonal and mass-media communication forms in three ways: one-to-one (e-mail), one-to-many (webpage) and many-to-many (social networks) (Liu, 2020). Digital technologies, digital media and Information and Communication Technologies – ICTs will be used interchangeably in this research.

With the previous classification of communication technologies, a distinction between old/traditional and new/modern media was avoided intentionally. This research uses the three media degrees for two reasons. Firstly, it facilitates the application of a horizontal multimedia approach proposed in development communication. From this perspective, there is an integration of multiple communication technologies without

²² Digital or technological convergence refers to "the tendency for technologies that were originally unrelated to become more closely integrated and even unified as they develop and advance" (Wikipedia, 2022, para. 1). In this process, "different forms of information (text, audio, and visual) merge into one single 'system'" (Mburu, 2022).

Interactivity means a "two-way communication form in which consumers and users can be more involved" (Mburu, 2022).

Hyper-textuality is "the extent to which (parts of) messages are linked with each other. On the Web, the linking is done by internal and external hyperlinks" (Mburu, 2022).

Virtuality refers to "immersive and digital environments" (Collins Dictionary, 2022).

establishing hierarchies related to the level of “newness” of the media employed, but how the media employed became the most suitable/adequate for fostering social transformation under certain circumstances or contexts, in the case of this research the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, the adopted classification doesn’t emphasize a separation between online and offline spaces but its coexistence (Dahlberg-Grundberg, 2016). This is very important taking into account that this research applies the ecological feature of communication. According to this, there is an entanglement and coexistence between online and offline dimensions recognizing complex and evolving interconnections between humans, technologies and their practices (Dahlberg-Grundberg, 2016; Treré & Mattoni, 2016).

Digital Divide:

With the spread of digital technologies, especially mobile phones, new possibilities have arisen for the individual, aid agencies and NGOs (Svensson, 2020). Organizations such as the United Nations highlight the potential that this kind of ICT offers to social and economic empowerment (ibid., p. 228).

With respect to the potential of ICTs, ownership of mobile phones in particular have expanded rapidly around the world and in the Global South they represent a high potential for development interventions and social change activities (Servaes & Rico, 2020). For instance, studies point out that radio and mobile phones are the most available and accessible media in rural areas (C. S. Torres & Manyozo, 2020). Mobile phones are also used as “a vehicle for the delivery of financial, agricultural, health, and educational services” (Bosch, 2020, p. 471). Studies explore the use of mobile phones in developing countries to gain timely information, sell products, make digital payments, improve agricultural practices, and establish connections between people such as communication with relatives abroad (Balit & Acunzo, 2020).

However, the United Nations also acknowledges the digital divide that prevails globally. According to a press release of the UN Deputy Secretary “almost half the world’s population, 3.7 billion people, the majority of them women, and most in developing countries, are still offline”.(United Nations Deputy Secretary - General, 2021, para. 5).

Digital divide refers to “the gap between people who do and do not have access to forms of information and communication technology” (Dijk, 2017, p. 1). These forms include, in the first place, internet and computers but also cell phones, smart mobile phones, and other digital software and hardware (ibid., p. 1). When referring to access, it goes beyond physical access (Dijk, 2017). Access to digital technologies was studied by scholars at the beginning merely as having the hardware and software of digital media and a connection to the internet (ibid., p. 1). Correlations were made between physical access and age, income, level of education, age, gender, and race (ibid., p. 2). However, scholars realized that these correlations weren’t sufficient to understand the causes and effects of access to digital technologies (ibid., p. 2). Scholars conclude that the issue of digital inequality does not end with the achievement of physical access; rather, the digital divide truly begins when digital media becomes integrated into everyday life (ibid., p. 2). According to this, there are two other kinds of digital gaps that need to be considered. Firstly, a skills and competencies gap since skills are needed to access and use digital technologies (ibid., p. 7). These skills are also known as media literacy or digital skills (ibid., p. 7). Secondly, there is a usage gap that is related to the number and diversity of applications that are employed, time of use and usage frequency, which differ according to age, education and the gender of digital technologies’ users (ibid., p.7-8). The most remarkable observation is that more educated people use advanced digital media to fulfil work, career, and study endeavors, while those with lower education levels prefer entertainment, commerce and messaging applications (ibid., p. 8).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital technologies, in particular computers and (smart) mobile phones were key communication technologies for NGOs and their target populations in order to maintain relationships among them, mobilize and continue with their development programs. However, physical and usage access to mobile phones with internet connection as well as to other digital technologies cannot be explored without considering the digital divide explained previously.

4.4.3. PILLAR III: TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION

The third conceptual pillar of this research introduces transformative action as a recent concept in the development debate. This study explores its theoretical roots from the field of popular education and participatory action research. Additionally, the UNESCO

framework and program of Education for Sustainable Development will also be considered to address transformative action from a practical approach.

In the field of popular education and participatory action research²³, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire with his work “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, first published in 1968, and the Participatory-Action Research method shaped by the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda in the 1970s, offer a good starting point to situate transformative action within the development debate.

Freire developed the “critical consciousness” concept to explain how to engage with or address social transformation at an individual and social level (Fernández & Aballí, 2020; Merriam & Bierema, 2013). For him, both processes cannot be separated (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Freire focuses particularly on literacy training programs and development programs that are run by different institutions including NGOs.

Critical consciousness builds on “the capacity to critically reflect and act upon one’s oppressive environment” (Jemal, 2017, p. 607). In this sense, it involves two key dimensions. The first dimension, called by some scholars ‘socio-political’ or ‘critical reflection’, is an understanding of the sociocultural conditions that shape one’s life (ibid., p. 6). In order to reach that understanding, a process takes place in which different levels of awareness should be achieved (Fernández & Aballí, 2020).

The second dimension of critical consciousness is called critical or social action or civic engagement and it refers to the individual or collective action to change inequalities (Singh, 2008). According to Freire, social transformation will not occur if one understands oppression alone, critical intervention must occur (Freire, 1996). Indeed, Freire theorizes that once oppressed people began analyzing their social and political conditions, they would feel obliged to act and change them (Freire, 2000). Besides, the relationship between reflection and action is reciprocal (Jemal, 2017). That means that according to the nature of understanding, the nature of action follows

²³ According to Torres (1992) “Popular education and participatory action research are two central traditions of non-formal education in Latin America. Popular education is highly critical of mainstream education, seeking to empower the marginalized, the disenfranchised, and the poor. Participatory action research combines research, educational work, and social action.” (p. 51).

or in other words greater understanding leads to greater action and vice-versa (ibid., p. 7). The key aspect of the critical consciousness process is that participants pass, through dialogue and critical reflection, from a passive condition in which they are objects of oppressive conditions to subjects that can take action on the social and political conditions of their environment for justice (Diemer et al., 2006; Freire, 2000).

With regard to participatory action research (PAR), its initial framework was grounded in the realities and interests of those involved in research or educational projects. The aim was to acquire knowledge and tools that would strengthen their capacity to act upon their own realities, particularly those related to poverty, inequality, and other social struggles. (Torres, 1992).

One of the most important premises of the PAR approach is the participation of the researchers as well as the population being studied in the research process (ibid., p.56, cited in Gajardo, 1982). A result of PAR is to support the systematic movement of consciousness-raising in the population being studied (ibid., p. 56). Other premises of this approach include the participation of popular sectors, the understanding of knowledge as an instrument of social transformation and the incorporation of methods and techniques based on horizontal relationships on the education or research process (ibid., p. 56).

With respect to the framework and program of education for sustainable development, it includes transformative action as one of its core components. According to Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, “education for sustainable development employs action-oriented, innovative pedagogy to enable learners to develop knowledge and awareness and take action to transform society into a more sustainable one” (UNESCO, 2020, p. iii). This framework has defined key aspects for the implementation of transformative action(s). Firstly, there must be a certain degree of disruption that encourages individuals to transform their behavior, attitudes and lifestyles (ibid., p. 58). In this process, there are different levels of transformation that include a stage in which knowledge and information are acquired, a stage of critical analysis following a stage of exposure to understand and go deeper into the complexity of the realities (ibid., p. 58). There is also a stage in which empathy and a compassion mind-set flourish leading to empowerment (ibid., p. 58). According

to this framework, individuals follow these stages in different orders and their duration might vary too (ibid., p. 58). Contextual factors and institutional support are also key to providing an enabling environment to safeguard individual transformation (ibid., p. 58). The final aspect for the implementation of transformative action refers to the importance of the community, which can be defined physically, virtually, politically, socially or culturally. Members of a community build bonds of solidarity toward common values and causes, which facilitate collective actions for transformation and a culture of sustainability (ibid., p. 58).

Drawing on the previous frameworks and academic sources, this research conceptualizes transformative action as both a process and an outcome itself, consisting of two dimensions: A dimension of reflection and learning in which understanding and knowledge of the social reality is (co)created/produced and a dimension of agency in which there is an active involvement at individual and collective level to transform it.

4.5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM

This chapter concludes by visually presenting the pillars and concepts that were addressed in the previous sections and how they relate to each other in order to orientate the data analysis (see Figure 1 on page 88).

The diagram shows the initial issue, namely the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that was declared a national economic, social, and ecological emergency in Colombia in March 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be considered an isolated crisis in the country. Colombia has gone through a number of prolonged crises that are interconnected (in the diagram labelled as Colombia's context). From this standpoint, it can be assumed, that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the complex situation of Colombia.

With respect to the non-governmental sector, the COVID-19 pandemic shook this as well as other sectors of society. The disruptions threatened NGOs' work in rural and urban areas. It generated administrative burdens and financial difficulties. On the other hand, the non-governmental sector reacted to the pandemic as it has done in other

crisis situations; rapidly and unconventionally adjusting its work to the current situation as well as its target populations responding enthusiastically and proactively.

In particular, lockdowns during the pandemic challenged the communication across NGOs and with their target populations. In order to maintain their relationships, mobilize and continue with their work, NGOs had to cope with the disruptions and transform their communication by incorporating or leveraging communication technologies in their communication processes. The use of digital technologies in particular has increased. Applications such as WhatsApp, digital platforms such as Zoom or social media such as Facebook or Twitter became key for their communication. Even though digital technologies have been employed more compared to other communication channels during the acute phases of the pandemic, each component of the communication process has a relevant and irreplaceable role. That's why there should not be hierarchies in the communication nor a separation between online and offline communication. This represents a communication ecosystem and it's marked in the diagram with a dotted circle.

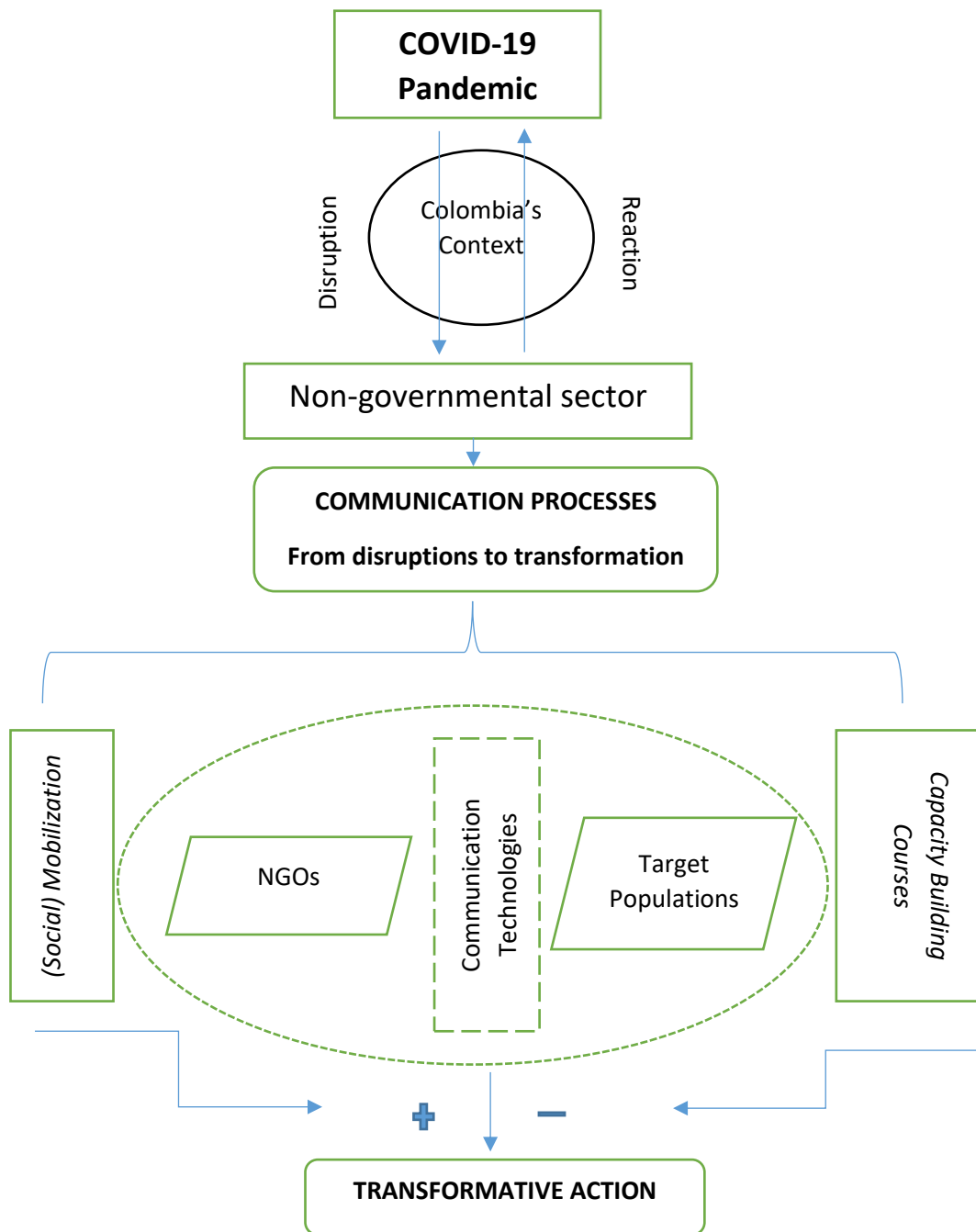
This research studies (online) social mobilization²⁴ and capacity building²⁵ as examples of communication processes fostered by the non-governmental sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. The former is studied by employing a qualitative network analysis and based on the instrumental case study of the research, and the latter is explored through the core components of the development communication approach. I argue that previous communication processes realized by communication technologies might push transformative action at individual and collective levels. Moreover, there are opportunities and pitfalls in an online modality of communication

²⁴ In this research (social) mobilization refers to a collective action process in which “a set of individuals and autonomous actors [...] across space and time can address similar issues with similar demands, and often using similar methods and practices” (Ernstson, 2011, p. 258). Communication plays a crucial role in such processes, activating existing ties that facilitate collective actions (Liu, 2020; Marwell et al., 1988). These actions are organized and coordinated through various forms of communication, including face-to-face interaction, mass media, networked exchanges, and ICTs (Liu, 2020).

²⁵ In this research capacity building consists of “activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities” (*Faith-based Regeneration Network UK, 2006, What are some key definitions* section). These efforts are often embedded in communication practices, including university extension programs, radio, face-to-face dialogue, and the use of ICTs (Romanow & Bruce, 2006).

and mobilization employed by NGOs and target populations to shape transformative action in the country and they will be explored in this research.

Figure 1 Diagram of the conceptual framework



Source: the author's own elaboration.

5. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the emergence, design and implementation of this research which was conducted using a qualitative case study approach during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first section of the chapter provides a detailed account of the case study research methodology. It starts by presenting its main foundations, then outlines the research goal and research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the selection of the case, the type of case study, the data collection techniques, and the data analysis. The chapter concludes with a reflection on my positionality as a former student of a Master's program in non-profit management and later as a practitioner in the non-governmental sector, along with other ethical considerations relevant to the study.

The appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented situation that also altered how to conduct research since lockdown measures hindered the chance to travel to the research regions to apply data collection methods. However, there was a need to continue the research process as PhD students or as full time researchers in order to comply with the expectations related to the work and/or to comply with the research funders (Rahman et al., 2021). In my case, as student of the 2019 cohort of the Bonn International Graduate School for Development Research (BIGS-DR) at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), initial restrictions implemented to mitigate the infections in March 2020 that were later extended for the whole year coincided with the beginning of my fieldwork after the research proposal presentations. That is why I decided together with my first supervisor to be open and flexible to new research practices. I started observing the COVID-19 pandemic phenomenon more closely, with a focus on civil society organizations. Internet research consequently became the first method employed in this research. At this time, the digital sphere started to gain more relevance and more online data were available.

I monitored in particular the decrees that the Colombian government was issuing on the economic, social and ecological national emergency, as well as news on how the civil society was reacting to the implementation of these measures and what the major issues and debates were. Here, I could identify that the use of social media with platforms such as Facebook and Twitter/X as well as the use of other digital platforms such as Zoom was also experiencing a boom in Colombia despite the digital divide

that still prevails. These online platforms facilitated the civil society communication flow in order to surpass the barriers imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. At this point, I decided together with my supervisor to go for a case study in Colombia conducted remotely from Germany responding with flexibility and adaptability to the conditions at that time of the pandemic.

5.1. CASE STUDY: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY

The case study as a research design has evolved over the past six decades, giving rise to different schools of thought. The most prominent among them are those proposed by three influential scholars: Robert K. Yin (2009), Sharan Merriam (1998), and Robert E. Stake (1995) (Mishra, 2021a). Each presents the foundations of case study research according to distinct philosophical orientations and methodological perspectives. Their approaches to defining, designing, and implementing case study research both diverge and converge in ways that complement one another (Yazan, 2015).

All three previous scholars agree that “the case study approach allows for a holistic understanding of a phenomenon within real-life contexts from the perspective of those involved” (Boblin et al., 2013, p. 1268). Other common features of their approaches are as follows. First, the use of research questions before the data collection begins, known as issue questions for Stake, which can change during the research process. Secondly, the application of theoretical foundations, less evident in Stake’s approach but stressed by Yin’s approach, and thirdly, the use of data triangulation understood as the use of different sources of information applied in different ways according to the scholars orientations to prove reliability of the research (Boblin et al., 2013; Mishra, 2021a, 2021b; Yazan, 2015).

The case study research approaches of Stake and Merriam were applied to this investigation. Stake offers a certain degree of flexibility needed for a study in times of a pandemic, which is less evident in Yin’s approach. Merriam provides guidelines for the case study research process, which are practical to follow. Her work for the analysis of the collected data in particular was considered in this study. Taking into account this is my first approach to this methodology, the combination of both approaches was convenient in an attempt to achieve rigorous academic research. A

brief explanation of Yin, Stake and Merriam's' stances follows to enlighten this decision:

Robert K. Yin (2003, 2009, 2018) doesn't expose explicitly what epistemological orientation he employs on addressing case study or general research, but it can be concluded from his work that he emphasizes a positivistic tradition (Yazan, 2015). According to a positivistic orientation, research must be objective, valid and generalizable (Crotty, 1998). From an ontological point of view, Yin assumes reality is objective and predictable (Boblin et al., 2013). From an epistemological approach, Yin sees the relation of the researcher with what has been researched as detached, neutral and independent (ibid., p. 3).

Mishra (2021) summarizes Yin's approach with the following statements. First, Yin's work concentrates on offering a structured process to using case study research that might result in valid and reliable findings. Secondly, Yin highlights that the researcher should prepare a detailed case study design at the beginning of the research and avoid making changes after having begun the data collection. If major changes are necessary, Yin advises rebuilding the design of the research beginning from the conceptualization of the study. Thirdly, case study research proposed by Yin pretends to be conducted in such a way that can be equally rigorous and accepted as quantitative research.

Robert Stake's (1995, 2005) case study research approach diverges completely from the philosophical and methodological stance of Robert Yin. This is because Stake's work maintains a constructivist approach. According to this view, the case study researcher doesn't discover the truth but builds knowledge through social interactions (Yazan, 2015). That means reality isn't an object to be found but it is built with multidimensional perspectives that the case study researcher pretends to understand and give meaning to (ibid., p. 137). Besides, Stake proposes a quite more flexible case study design compared to the detailed structured design of Yin, which allows major changes even after passing from the design to the research implementation (ibid., p. 140). In this respect, Stake adopts the principle of progressive focusing favoring major changes in the case study research design (ibid., p. 141). According to the scholars that proposed this approach "the course of the study cannot be charted in advance"

(Parlett & Hamilton, 1976, p. 20). That's why the researcher and the case study design should be flexible to incorporate changes.

In response to the progressive focus orientation, Stakes makes two main considerations. First, "there is no particular moment when data collection begins" (R. Stake, 1995, p. 49). In this sense, first observations may have been made even before the case study research was expected to be conducted and these account for background, other cases or impressions of the study and will be adjusted or replaced later on (Mishra, 2021a). Secondly, as soon as data collection begins, the researcher starts analyzing in a parallel way, just as is common in qualitative research (Yazan, 2015). With respect to the analysis of data, Stake orientates it on the search of patterns from the data through two, but not exclusively, mechanisms that he calls categorical aggregation and direct interpretation (Mishra, 2021a). According to Yazan (2015), Stakes gives particular relevance to the researcher's intuition and impressions as sources of data and making sense of them as the goal of the analysis stage (*ibid.*, p. 145). This position prevails in his work and he only strays from this when he discusses the importance of the research validation (*ibid.*, p.147).

Merriam's case study approach also follows a qualitative and constructivism orientation. As Stake's understanding of reality, Merriam contends that "one of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 242). For her, the goal of a qualitative case study is to look for understanding and meaning considering the researcher as the instrument to collect data and make analysis, employing an inductive strategy and getting a very descriptive product (Merriam, 2009).

For Merriam the central feature of case study research is the delimitation of the case (Merriam, 1998). Merriam indicates that if the researcher can determine the phenomenon of interest and delimit it according to what is going to be investigated, it can be considered a case (Yazan, 2015). Some examples of these bounded phenomena are a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit (Merriam, 1998). Merriam also advocates flexibility in the research design and simultaneous collection and analysis of data, but she offers in her work a more

comprehensive and detailed mechanism and steps to do it as compared to Stake's approach (Yazan, 2015). Merriam suggests gathering and analyzing data simultaneously in order to collect appropriate data for the study and not fail by collecting unfocused data (Mishra, 2021a). Additionally, Merriam stresses that once the data collection is completed, a more intensive analysis follows instead of finishing with it (Merriam, 1998).

With regard to the case study approach of this research, it follows a qualitative and constructivist orientation. Braun and Clarke (2013) define qualitative research as simple as possible stating that it uses words as data collected and analyzed in different ways. For Merriam and Tisdell (2015) "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p, 6). It is about "uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved" (ibid., p.6). In this study members of NGOs with a leadership role such as directors, coordinators as well as NGOs experts and members of NGOs' target populations present their perspectives and perceptions on how the COVID-19 pandemic measures of physical distancing and mobility restrictions triggered changes in the way they communicate and mobilize incorporating or leveraging existing ICTs.

The following subsection will introduce the goal of the study and research questions with their operationalization followed by the description of the selection of the case. A subsection follows in which two types of case study will be distinguished, namely intrinsic and instrumental case study. Here, it will be explained how in this research an intrinsic case study turned into an instrumental case study. The next subsection introduces the data collection techniques and a last subsection follows in which the data analysis will be explained.

5.1.1. Research goal and research questions

This study considers changes in the communication and mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target populations triggered by the necessity of digitalization during the COVID-19 crisis because of the physical distancing and restrictions to mobility during the pandemic. Accordingly, this research aims to examine the increasing online communication and mobilization of the non-governmental sector and their target populations in Colombia throughout the COVID-

19 pandemic and how these communication developments can shape transformative action in the country. In line with the main goal, the following main research question and sub-questions have been formulated:

How did online communication and mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic shape transformative action in the country?

SQ1 How did the COVID-19 pandemic trigger online mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector via the joint petition and social media campaign #PiezaClaveparaColombia?

- What actors were involved in the organization and development of the campaign?
- Which material and non-material resources were used by the organizers of the campaign to mobilize it?
- How did interactions occur between the different actors?
- How did coordination and organizational learning take place?
- What kind of affiliations and identity linkages were reinforced and also emerged during the online mobilization?
- How did NGOs assess their performance and the performance of this kind of campaign?

SQ2 How did NGOs and their target populations use online communication during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain their relationships with each other and facilitate capacity building?

- Which activities and mechanisms have been employed to maintain their relationships with each other?
- Which online courses have been implemented?
- How participatory has been the (online) communication process involved in the capacity building?
- How adequate have been the ICTs employed for the capacity building courses?
- How have the target populations appropriated the online communication and capacity building?

Table 1 (see next page) presents the operationalization of the main research question through its sub-questions, outlining the key concepts, methods, and data collection techniques employed to address each sub-question.

Table 1 Operationalization of the research questions

Main Research question: <i>How did online communication and mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic shape transformative action in the country?</i>				
Sub-question	Empirical Chapter	Concepts	Method	Data Collection Technique
How did the COVID-19 pandemic trigger online mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector via the joint petition and social media campaign #PiezaClaveparaColombia?	6	Mobilization Networks Collective action ICTs Network's features (actors, resources, coordination and timing, organizational learning, identity linkages)	Qualitative Network Analysis	Desk research Internet research Recall of Tweets with the R package and Facebook posts with the advanced search Online interviews Online survey
How did NGOs and their target populations use online communication during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain their relationships with each other and facilitate capacity building?	7	Relationships Online courses Communication (interaction, adequacy, ownership) ICTs	Qualitative Content analysis	Desk research Online FGD Online interviews Online discussions Online survey

In regard to the first sub-question, this study applies qualitative network analysis (QNA) to examine the NGO online mobilization #PiezaClaveparaColombia.

Network analysis is considered an appropriate and useful conceptual and analytical tool to understand complex interactions within civil society (Marshall & Staeheli, 2015). This study employs this method in order to examine a civil society collective action in which diverse NGOs were involved building an (online) network and interacting through (online) communication. According to Marshall and Staeheli (2015), “[the] interest in applying social network analysis to civil society is to begin to understand the diverse sets of actors that cooperate around a particular issue, the forms of connections they make, and the circulation of knowledge, money, people, and “buzz” through these circuitous connections” (ibid., p. 59). This method enables the research participants to deepen their narratives and networking practices.

Over time, network analysis developed into a quantitative tool to study the characteristics of networks based on formal mathematical and statistical methods

(Marshall & Staeheli, 2015). However, its intrinsic emphasis on relationships between actors, who can be individuals, groups, institutions, or non-human actors, make it difficult to consider it a quantitative tool exclusively (ibid., p. 58). Nowadays, network research is increasingly using qualitative approaches because of the growing need to understand the cultural norms and meanings that facilitate, constrain and/or sustain networks (ibid., p. 58). There is a tendency for more cultural and reflexive approaches while other scholars consider there is potential in the use of hybrid methods to study social networks (Mohr & Duquenne, 1997). I employ network analysis under a qualitative approach given the focus on the (online) interactions, relationships and communication among the network participants.

In order to conduct the QNA, a network representation was visualized and five (5) features (actors, resources, coordination and timing, organizational learning, and identity linkages) were examined and situated in this representation. These features are also the guiding categories of analysis of the network built by the NGOs. They were identified through a combination of deductive and inductive approaches, drawing on both literature on civil society networks and collective action, and empirical evidence from the study's data collection.

With respect to the visualization of the network, this is a key aspect of a quantitative or qualitative network analysis. According to Marshall and Staeheli (2015) “[...] the representation of networks enables the representation of relationships and the ways that various agents express, experience, and remake those relationships“ (p. 57). In the case of the online mobilization, internet research as well as the narratives of the research participants collected through the interviews and informal conversations shaped the network visualization. In addition, the perspectives of the research participants on their assessment of the online mobilization were also considered.

The network representation encouraged and facilitated the conceptual interpretation of the interactions in order to explore and localize each of the network features. This coincides with Marshall and Staeheli (2015) who consider network visualizations as “open spaces for research”. That is why the network diagram illustrated not only the formation and the dynamics of connections but it also inspired the emergence of further inquiries.

With respect to the second sub-question, perspectives from the NGO directors and coordinators, but in particular from the target populations and capacity building facilitators were collected and analyzed through the corresponding interviews and FGDs. The core components of the communication development approach, namely participation and interaction, adequacy of ICTs, and ownership of the communication process were used as guiding categories of analysis within (online) capacity building courses and activities. These courses were implemented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with the target populations.

5.1.2. Case study selection

According to Creswell (2013) another common characteristic in the literature that defines qualitative case studies is that a specific case should be stipulated at the beginning. In the case of this study, the selection of case study research as the methodology and the corresponding case can be justified in the research scope.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing measures and mobility restrictions altered the communication methods and mobilization of NGOs and their target populations. These restrictions prompted them to adopt digital strategies to continue their work. The digital strategies included an increasing use of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter/X, particularly during a time in Colombia of social unrest that the pandemic had exacerbated. In order to illustrate this and analyze it in-depth, the case study research methodology was selected as the most appropriate for the investigation. In this sense, case study research as a methodological approach facilitated the delimitation of a case that involved online communication among NGOs and with their target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The case was selected from the internet research carried out since March 23rd, 2020 when the first general lockdown was declared in Colombia. Three social media campaigns conducted at a national level were identified and followed with the hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia, #RentaBásicaYa and #MatrículaCero (in English #KeyPieceforColombia, #BasicIncomeNow and #ZeroEnrolmentFee respectively). They had in common that they were conceived by NGOs as a response to the implications that the COVID-19 pandemic was having for their activities and target populations. Besides, social networks were used as an online communication tool to raise their voices towards policy holders while complying with the physical

distancing measures and mobility restrictions. Additionally, all of them accompanied their social media campaigns with petitions subscribed to by different actors according to their campaign strategies.

Considering the qualitative nature of the study, the importance of boundaries for the selection of the case, as well as the field of research in non-profit and civil society studies, #PiezaClaveParaColombia was selected as the “case” of the study. In order to provide an extended explanation of the reasons leading to this selection a summary of each social media campaign follows:

#PiezaClaveParaColombia was an initiative of a group of four national NGOs (Fundación Techo Colombia, Fundación Probono, Corporación Reconciliación Colombia and Confederación Colombiana de ONG). The initiative was comprised of two stages. In the first one, a joint petition was written by the working group established by these NGOs (see Appendix 1). This is a three-page document that provides information on the consequences of the pandemic on the activities of the non-governmental sector and proposals to tackle the emergency. By May 5th, 2020, 256 NGOs that work in 23 regions in Colombia had signed it. The petition was sent to the national government on this date. It was also addressed to development aid agencies, embassies and the private sector in Colombia. For the second stage of this initiative, a social media campaign took place from May 21st to June 6th, 2020. From those 256 NGOs, 55 participated in the social media campaign, the other 201 only signed the petition but did not join the social media campaign. Additionally, there were 24 NGOs that did not sign the petition but participated in the social media campaign. The joint petition followed by the online social media campaign was the only one conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic on behalf of the non-governmental sector. No matter the field of work, size or location of the NGO, they communicated with one another regarding the implications the COVID-19 crisis has had on their operations and presenting their claims and proposals to managing the disruptions. This is the first time such a large number of NGOs from different regions have connected online with a common goal in a very short period of time. In total, 545 tweets and 75 Facebook posts were retrieved using the R package and the advanced search, respectively. A sample of the Tweets and Facebook publications can be seen in Appendices 5 and 6.

#RentaBásicaYa began as an initiative of the Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo – Plataforma DHESCA²⁶. They requested the government create a permanent income program for vulnerable families affected by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic such as unemployment, impoverishment and debt (Plataforma PCDHDD, n.d.-b). According to the petition published by Plataforma PCDHDD (2020) on change.org, the proposed program includes better measures compared to the one already implemented by the national government. The petition explains that the basic income would amount to a monthly minimum wage per person per family increasing to a certain percentage according to the number of family members. In 2020, the program “Ingreso Solidario” (in English Solidary Income), established by the national government, amounted monthly to COP160,000 per person (USD39,18) compared to the minimum wage in that year (COP 877,802 in USD 216,29) proposed by the initiative. Additionally, the petition refers to the problems that the program “Solidarity Income” has presented such as lack of coverage, multiple databases and donations in bad conditions. Civil society, academia, labor unions and politicians have joined the petition and social media campaign over time. So far eight legislation proposals have been presented by different groups of politicians within parliament during the pandemic, but none of them has been approved (Plataforma PCDHDD, 2021). The number of tweets from March to July 2020 were approximately 9784.

#MatrículaCero is a campaign fostered initially by the Asociación Colombiana de Representantes Estudiantiles de la Educación Superior (Acreees)²⁷. University students raised their voices to guarantee the right to education throughout the pandemic. Over time other representatives of public universities, teachers, artists, journalists, politicians among others have joined the campaign as with #RentaBásicaYa. According to the petition initiated by Universidades Públicas (2020) on change.org, the government must assign resources that could help to resolve the social and economic crisis of the student population and the university system resulting from the pandemic. Due to COVID-19, the financial viability of public universities could be

²⁶ The Colombian platform of human rights, democracy and development is a network of more than 100 NGOs, social and community organizations that works for the full enjoyment of social rights in Colombia (Plataforma PCDHDD, n.d.-a).

²⁷ The Colombian Association of Student Representatives in Higher Education is a trade union organization whose members are university students representatives. The organization stands for the openness, democracy and the defence of education as a right (Acreees, n.d.).

affected since they wouldn't receive the same financial resources from the students in times a pandemic (Acree, 2020). Besides, universities were reducing their functioning expenditures such as the recruitment of teachers. This affects the education quality. According to the Tweets recall conducted from March to July 2020 (approximately 10067), two features were identified. Firstly, recurrent students' hunger strikes were also launched during this campaign. Secondly, different public universities in the country introduced a zero-enrolment fee gradually to cover the university semesters of 2020-II and 2021-I. From September 2021, the zero enrolment fee became a public policy for vulnerable students belonging to socioeconomic strata 1,2 and 3 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2021).

#PiezaClaveParaColombia offered clear boundaries in terms of number of participants involved (subscribers of the petition and participants of the social media campaign), the very nature of the actors (NGOs), and duration of the initiative (From May to June 2020). The other two online communication campaigns were very broad in scope, comprised of very heterogeneous actors difficult to track and approach remotely. Additionally, even though the initiatives were initially fostered by NGOs and citizens, different politicians joined over time and influenced the course and forms of communication. On this point, #RentaBásicaYa and #MatrículaCero lost their civil society nature and were out of the research scope.

5.1.3. Case study type

With respect to the type of case study, Stake (1995) distinguishes between intrinsic and instrumental case according to the intent of the case analysis (cited in Creswell, 2013). The selected social media campaign was first categorized as intrinsic case. In this type of case study "the focus is on the case itself because it presents an unusual or unique situation" (ibid., p. 95). This means that the case study design aims to depict the case itself with enough details (ibid., p. 94).

Responding to this case study type and the case study research methodology, I formulated the first research questions on the #PiezaClaveParaColombia social media campaign preceded by the joint petition. I closely studied the joint petition and social media campaign on social networks. This I did firstly in real time when the campaign was taking place in 2020 and then through deskwork. As mentioned previously, I could identify the organizations that participated in the social media campaign because I

exported the tweets of the campaign and I already counted with the names of the NGOs that had subscribed to the petition. Additionally, I could have a look at the digital communication materials that were employed.

As the study unfolded, I got closer to the narrative of the COVID-19 crisis for the work of NGOs in Colombia. During exploratory interviews, it was very important for the directors and coordinators to narrate how their organizations were facing the COVID-19 disruptions and which digital strategies or adaptations they have implemented to maintain contact especially with their target populations and communicate inside and outside the organizations with employees, staff, volunteers, board members, and donors. At this point, I realized the case led me to something else to study. The single intrinsic case study had apparently turned into an instrumental case study.

According to Stake (1995) “this is a type of case study with the focus on a specific issue rather than on the case itself. The case then becomes a vehicle to better understand the issue” (cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 97). For this research, the issue refers to the changes in the NGOs communication at NGO level and between NGOs and their target populations influenced by the use of digital technologies to maintain their interactions and their role as facilitators of transformative action. Accordingly, I made reconsiderations on the boundaries of the case. I reformulated the research questions that were mentioned previously, and included other questions in the interview guide. Besides, I reconsidered the theoretical foundations and included target populations of the NGOs participating in the study as participants of the case study.

5.1.4. Data collection techniques

Online data collection was a growing emerging trend due to social distancing measures (Carter et al., 2021) during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, “online research is not a new phenomenon in the social sciences” (Howlett, 2021, p. 388). The use of online data and social media platforms by social science researchers to conduct surveys, content analyzes, digital ethnographic studies, as well as to carry out interviews by phone, Skype and other instant messaging software has been common for a long time, but the COVID-19 pandemic conditions obliged many researchers to quickly make the transition from an immersive approach to a more practical research approach considering that national governments closed borders and implemented

lockdowns to mitigate COVID-19 but the commitments to submit dissertations, publish and accomplish funding deadlines continued (ibid., p. 388). In line with these conditions, data was collected during this study employing internet connection through electronic devices such as computers, smartphones and/or tablets. Internet connection was necessary for the researcher as well as for the study participants to access the web in order to look for information and use e-mail, videoconferencing and survey platforms and social media applications.

This section outlines the data collection techniques employed in this study, comprising two rounds of online interviews, followed by two online focus group discussions (FGDs). Additionally, an online survey was conducted concurrently with the first round of interviews. Data collection was conducted in Spanish, and all quotations presented in this dissertation have been translated into English by the author.

The first round of interviews took place from February to April 2021, ten (10) exploratory semi-structure online interviews²⁸ were conducted with the executive directors or coordinators of the NGOs that signed the joint petition and joined the campaign on social media platforms. During these interviews the directors explained their participation to me and assessed the performance of this initiative. They also showed themselves to be very interested in narrating their experiences managing the ongoing physical distancing and mobility restrictions to mitigate the pandemic. A second round of twenty-one (21) additional online semi-structure interviews²⁹ took place from September 2021 to January 2022 providing a space for NGOs directors, coordinators and an NGO expert to reflect in-depth on the case study issue.

The online survey³⁰ was conducted between February and March 2021, achieving a response rate of 44.7%. It was designed following a descriptive statistical approach and targeted the 201 NGOs that had signed the joint petition but had not participated

²⁸ The online semi-structure interviews were conducted individually with the executive directors or communications coordinators of NGOs that signed the joint petition and mobilized the campaign in social media. The Zoom-Portal of the University of Bonn was employed for their conduction. Each interview lasted approximately from 45 to 60 minutes.

²⁹ The scripts for the 1st and 2nd round of online interviews can be found on the Appendix 7.

³⁰ The online survey's goals were to (i) explore the experience and challenges related to the joint petition and social media campaign launched by the NGO sector as a response to the COVID-19 disruption in its work, (ii) assess the suitability of further social media campaigns as a non-governmental sector initiative and (iii) identify the increase in the use of digital technologies to reach the target groups during the pandemic. Appendix 8 shows the online survey form and appendix 9 a summary in Spanish of the main results elaborated by the Colombian Confederation of NGOs (CCONG).

in the social media campaign. The inclusion of an online survey aligns with the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in case study research, as proposed by Yin (2009). However, the study maintained its overall qualitative character. Given the large number of NGOs that did not engage in the campaign and the constraints imposed by the pandemic, the use of quantitative primary data was considered a practical and valuable complement within the fully online research design.

With respect to the selection of the NGOs to participate in the interviews, the four NGOs that came up with the initiative (Fundación Techo Colombia, Confederación Colombiana de ONG, Fundación Probono and Corporación Reconciliación Colombia) as well as 55 NGOs that signed the petition but also mobilized the campaign in social networks were considered. In order to contact them, a written interview invitation was sent by e-mail to these NGOs considering two criteria. Firstly, the study aimed to address NGOs active in different fields of work and secondly NGOs based in different regions of the country including urban and rural areas. For the fields of work, a categorization was adapted employing the fields of non-profit activity created by the Center of Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins and the proposal of the Confederación Colombiana de ONG to address these fields according to the Sustainable Development Goals. The following nine (9) categories resulted of this adaptation: Education – Health and Well-Being – Environment – Advocacy, justice and peace – Social Services – Economic Development – Culture – Gender Equity – Others.

With the preliminary analysis of these interviews, a last round of data collection took place from March to May 2022. In this period of time, two online focus group discussions (FGDs) were planned, organized and conducted with target populations of the NGOs I have interviewed in the last two rounds of data collection.

For the conduction of the FGDs, an e-mail was firstly sent to eleven (11) NGOs to request the contact details of two (2) members of their target populations in order to invite them to a FGD. These NGOs were selected because they revealed clearly during the online interviews the challenges they have faced to communicate and to maintain their relationship with their target populations. Besides, they described the online tools and methodologies they created and implemented to continue their work depicting opportunities and limitations of the use of digital technologies. In the e-mail

a document in Spanish that included a summary of the first findings of the research as well as an explanation of the reasons why I was inviting their target populations to these online meetings were clarified (see Appendix 10).

The goal of the FGD was to discuss and exchange experiences with the participants on the use of ICTs before and during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of their participation on capacity building courses and activities fostered by the NGO participants of this research, as well as to discuss how they have communicated and related to the NGOs and to others throughout the pandemic. A diverse mix of participants, six (6) in the first FGD and four (4) in the second FGD participated.

The FGDs were conducted on April 12th and May 3rd 2022 respectively. The discussions were divided into two sections. In the first part, general questions were made about the communication between the FGD participants and NGOs throughout the pandemic. I asked them here about the features, advantages and disadvantages of the online capacity building courses and activities they participated in during the pandemic and how the use of social networks have changed during this time. The second section aimed to generate a debate by addressing observations, reflections and preliminary findings that I have collected during the research. These statements were related to the implications of the use of ICTs in the involvement and interaction of target populations with NGOs. Appendix 11 presents the guide used during the FGD.

A total of 31 online interviews with leadership or coordination positions at NGOs, two online focus group discussions with target populations of these organizations, three online discussions with capacity building facilitators and informal online discussions with other NGO workers were conducted using the Zoom communication platform provided by the University of Bonn from February 2021 to May 2022.

Tables 2 and 3 present the participants of the online interviews and FGDs, respectively. For the online interviews, the table includes the name of the NGO, main field of work, region of establishment, interview's date, duration, name of the interviewee and position at the NGO.

Table 2 Participants of the online interviews

Nr	NGO	Main field of work	Region of establishment	Date	Duration	Interviewee	Position
1	Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Bogotá - ACJ	Social services	Cundinamarca	04/11/2021	00:32	Gloria Hidalgo	Executive Director
2	Asociación de Becarios de Casanare - ABC	Environment	Casanare	23/02/2021	00:34	Marcela Vega	Director of the strategic line of Education for Governance
3	Asociación de empresarios de Sibaté, Soacha y sur de Bogotá - ASOMUÑA	Economic Development	Cundinamarca	13/10/2021	00:52	Walter Ocampo	Executive Director
4	Asociación Gota de Leche	Social services	Caldas	10/11/2021	00:36	Sor Ana Judith Salazar	Executive Director
5	Asociación Profamilia	Health and Well-Being	Cundinamarca	04/01/2022	01:20	Marta Royo	Executive Director
6	Centro De Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional - CEPEI	Economic Development	Cundinamarca	09/03/2021	00:44	Phillip Schönrock	Executive Director
7	Confederación Colombiana de ONG - CCONG	Advocacy, peace and justice	Cundinamarca	07/04/2021	01:09	Liliana Rodríguez Burgos	Executive Director
8	Confederación Colombiana de ONG - CCONG	Advocacy, peace and justice	Cundinamarca	29/10/2020	00:59	Liliana Rodríguez Burgos	Executive Director
9	Corporación de profesionales para el desarrollo integral comunitario CORPRODINCO	Economic Development	Norte de Santander	24/02/2021	00:34	María Estela Contreras	Executive Director
10	Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Tolima - TOLIPAZ	Economic Development	Tolima	19/10/2021	00:58	Hugo Rincón	Executive Director

Nr	NGO	Main field of work	Region of establishment	Date	Duration	Interviewee	Position
11	Corporación Educativa Comunidades Educativas de Base - Combos	Education	Antioquia	19/10/2021	00:56	Gloria Bustamante	Systematization and Research Director
12	Corporación Reconciliación Colombia	Advocacy, peace and justice	Cundinamarca	22/02/2021	00:58	Sergio Guarín	Executive Director
13	Corporación Red Somos	Health and Well-Being	Cundinamarca	16/10/2021	00:58	Jhon Fredy Ramírez Correa	Medical Unit Director
14	Corporación Red Somos	Health and Well-Being	Cundinamarca	12/11/2021	00:50	Damary Martinez	Projects' Coordinator
15	El Comité de Rehabilitación de Antioquia	Health and Well-Being	Antioquia	08/11/2021	01:25	Sonia Gallardo	Executive Director
16	Federación Antioqueña de ONG - FAONG	Advocacy, peace and justice	Antioquia	06/11/2021	01:29	Carlos Monsalve	Executive Director
17	Federación ONG de Caldas - FEDECALDAS	Advocacy, peace and justice	Caldas	09/04/2021	01:09	David Ricardo Martinez	Executive Director
18	Fundación Acción Cultural Popular ACPO	Education	Cundinamarca	01/03/2021	00:56	Mariana Córdoba	Executive Director
19	Fundación Cívico Social Pro Cartagena-Caribe FUNCICAR	Advocacy, peace and justice	Bolívar	19/02/2021	01:12	Carolina Calderón	Executive Director
20	Fundación Hablemos	Economic Development	Norte de Santander	14/10/2021	00:59	Arturo Rodríguez	Administrative Director
21	Fundación Natalia Ponce de León	Gender Equity	Cundinamarca	18/11/2021	00:59	Laura Patricia Delgado Puentes	Projects' Coordinator

Nr	NGO	Main field of work	Region of establishment	Date	Duration	Interviewee	Position
22	Fundación para la Cooperación y el Progreso de Usiacuri - COPROUS	Culture	Atlántico	29/11/2021	01:41	Margarita Macías Ramos	Legal Representative
23	Fundación para la Reconciliación	Advocacy, peace and justice	Cundinamarca	17/01/2022	01:26	Angélica María Pérez	Executive Director
24	Fundación Probono	Advocacy, peace and justice	Cundinamarca	10/11/2021	01:05	Ana María Arboleda	Executive Director
25	Fundación Probono	Advocacy, peace and justice	Cundinamarca	30/11/2021	00:49	Jessika Camargo	Communication's Coordinator
26	Fundación Ronald Mc Donald de Colombia	Health and Well-Being	Cundinamarca	17/11/2021	00:56	Diana Peña	Executive Director
27	Fundación Síndrome de Down del Caribe FUNDOWN	Health and Well-Being	Atlántico	26/02/2021	00:49	Claudia Ritzel	Board President
28	Fundación un Techo para mi País– Colombia	Social services	Cundinamarca	24/02/2021	00:54	David Sánchez	Executive Director
29	Fundación Vivir y Aprender con Amor	Social services	Atlántico	11/11/2021	WhatsApp	Rubí Ester Barón	Executive Director
30	Marta Bazzani	-	-	19/11/2021	00:51	Marta Bazzani	NGO Expert and Consultant
31	Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social - Cáritas Colombiana	Economic Development	Cundinamarca	14/10/2021	01:20	Rosa Inés Floriano	Programs' Director

Moreover, a table can be found in Appendix 12 with the complete list of NGOs that subscribed to the petition and mobilized the social media campaign on social networks. NGOs that participated in the online interviews as well as those that didn't participate are included. Even though an online interview was not conducted with all the NGOs, each of them played an important role in the development of the online mobilization. The table in the appendix 12 shows the main characteristics of the organizations, namely the type of NGO according to national legislation, year and region of establishment, fields of work, target populations and number of employees.

For the FGDs, Table 3 includes the number of participants, name of the (online) capacity building course they attended and name of the NGOs they were referred by.

Table 3 Participants of the Focus Group Discussions - FGDs

Participant	Capacity Building Course	Referred by
Participant 1	Stories from the future 2.0	Asociación ABC
Participant 2		
Participant 3	National Youth Network	Asociación Profamilia
Participant 4		
Participant 5		
Participant 6	Advocacy School	Corporación Tolipaz
Participant 7	Protect and Communicate Peace: defending our human right defenders	Fundación ACPO
Participant 8	Digital Literacy: my first steps in the digital life	
Participant 9	Peace from a youth perspective: a legacy for reconciliation and no repetition	Fundación para la Reconciliación
Participant 10	Development of Leadership capacities for advocacy and public awareness	SNPS-Caritas

To conclude with the subsection of data collection techniques employed in this research, it is relevant to stress that the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic made the opportunities and challenges of collecting online data more apparent (Carter et al., 2021). This has opened up space for further reflection on potential and limitations of online data collection methods, considering technical, methodological, and ethical aspects.

5.1.5. Data Analysis

As for the data analysis, this study employs the analysis approach of qualitative case study research proposed by Merriam (1998). For this scholar, "analysis is the process of making sense out of the data" (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). According to her, it involves

three components, namely “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (ibid., p. 178). Merriam adds that “these meanings or understandings constitute the findings of a study” (ibid., p. 178).

Merriam (1998) emphasizes the importance of doing ongoing analysis while collecting the data. In an enlightened scenario, she describes how an investigator should reflect on the purpose of the study and the research questions every time an interview is conducted, or an observation is written in the field notes or a document is collected (ibid., p. 161). For her, each of these reflections, comments, memos, and ideas should be written down and considered in the next data collection activity (ibid., p. 161). In this way, months later when the investigator sits to write down the findings, there will already be tentative categories or themes to work on (ibid., p. 162). Merriam describes this as the process of refining and organizing the data analysis instead of beginning with the analysis (ibid., p. 162). In this research, the simultaneous process of doing analysis and collecting data lead to reformulating the research questions and refining the research design including two rounds of interviews and a round of two focus group discussions.

Furthermore, Merriam's (1998) analysis approach proposes that the researcher thinks about three aspects related to the data analysis, namely technique or strategy of analysis, data management and level of analysis.

With respect to the data analysis strategies, Merriam (1998) distinguishes between ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, the constant comparative method or grounded theory, content analysis and analytic induction analysis. For her, these techniques employed in qualitative research can be applied to case study research, but understanding the case is the central aspect for the analysis of the data in case study research (ibid., p. 193).

This study employs content analysis adopted for a qualitative study. Merriam argues that “all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes and documents that it is analyzed” (Merriam, 1998, p. 160). However, content analysis has historically been considered a quantitative technique (ibid., p. 160). From a quantitative approach, it is understood as standardized units of measurement to characterize and compare documents focusing on the frequency and

variety of messages (ibid., p. 160). From a qualitative perspective, content analysis focuses on the communication of meaning using categories and variables that guide the study from the beginning, but also categories and variables that are expected to emerge during its conduction (cited in Altheide, 1987, p. 68). Taking into account that this study aims to examine the increasing online communication and mobilization of NGOs and target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic exploring the experiences they have had during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to build their relationships, networking and capacity building employing digital technologies, content analysis offers a pertinent qualitative approach for the data analysis.

The content analysis process involves two simultaneous activities: coding of raw data and building categories (Merriam, 1998). The researcher should devise a system of data management in order to organize and manage this process (ibid., p. 164).

According to Reid (1992), data management involves data preparation, data identification and data manipulation. The phase of data preparation refers to entering the data the researcher will work with, that is to transcribe the interviews, type notes or any other activity related to editing or data formatting (Merriam, 1998). The data identification refers to the coding of the data by “dividing the text data into analytically meaningful and easily locatable segments” (Reid, 1992, p. 126). During data manipulation “these segments may be searched for, sorted, retrieved and rearranged” (Merriam, 1998, p. 164).

With respect to coding, it can be defined as “assigning some sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of the data so that the investigator can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 164). Designations can be single words, letters, numbers, and phrases or a combination of these (ibid., p. 164). In the case of categories, they capture relevant characteristics of the documents’ contents and constitute the answers of the research questions (ibid., p. 160, 183). Merriam recommends the use of a coding scheme relevant to the study that facilitates coding the data according to it. This scheme can be very simple in which a theme can be identified and incidents, quotes and so on are assigned to it or it might be very complex including multi-levels of coding (ibid., p. 164). This organizing process can be done by hand, using computer software or a mix of both (ibid., p. 165). This study employed

the software MAXQDA in order to support the data management and qualitative analytical process.

With respect to the data preparation, all the interviews and FGDs were recorded and transcribed. For the first round of interviews, the researcher conducted the transcription in Microsoft Word, for the second round of interviews and FGDs the transcriptions were done by a research assistant and the researcher. In this stage, the transcriptions done by the researcher were directly transcribed into MAXQDA and the others were added as documents. The MAXQDA two-year student license was acquired after a trial period with the financial support of the ZEF Research Institute and DAAD. During the trial period, the researcher familiarized themselves with this primarily qualitative data analysis software and realized it had practical features that could support the research process itself without distancing the researcher from the data. That is why this software was selected to assist with the data management.

With regard to data identification and manipulation, MAXQDA offered a very friendly and intuitive interface that made possible to create a code system, code the raw data inductively and deductively, build the themes or categories, and retrieved the coded segments. Here a key function is to export the coded segments in Microsoft Excel, which facilitates their visualization, rearrangements and the writing up of the empirical chapters and findings. The conceptual and methodological operationalization described above had a central role for the creation and manipulation of the code system.

The following sequence of figures (see pages 112 and 113) visualize the data management steps applied to this research: preparation, identification and manipulation.

Figure 2 Data Identification

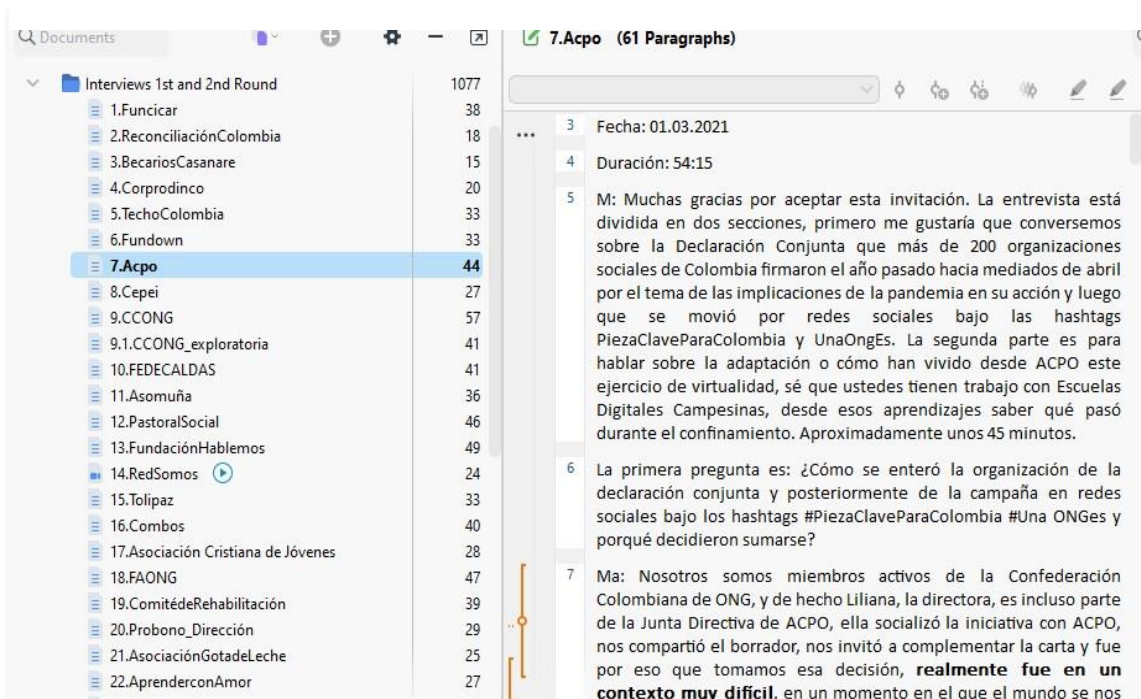


Figure 3 Data Preparation

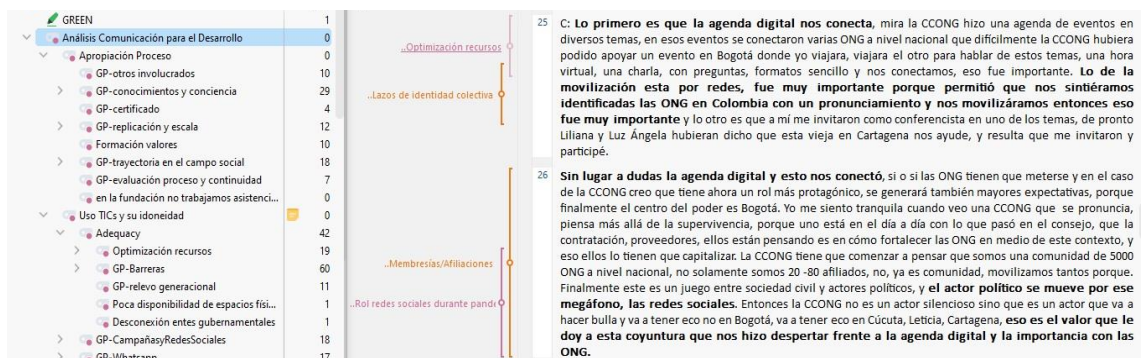
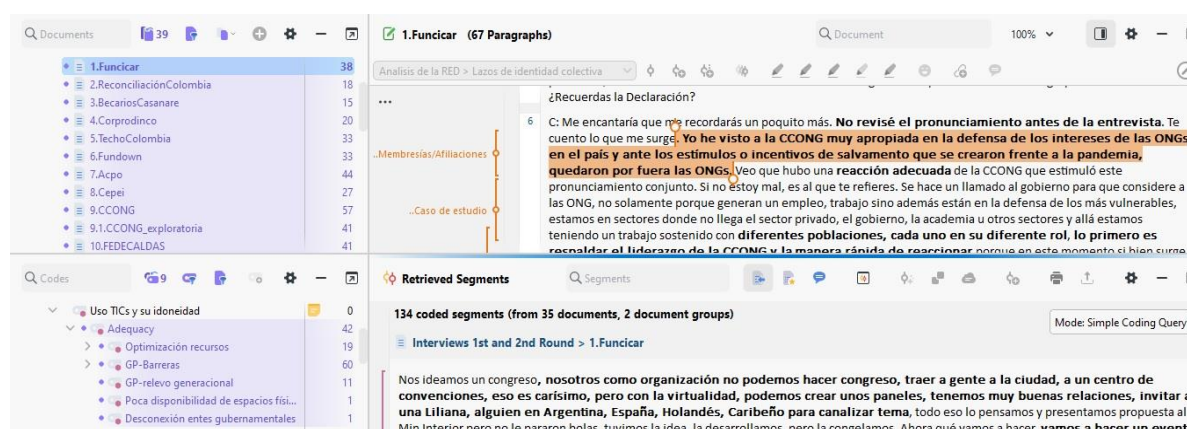


Figure 4 Data Manipulation



Source: Figures 2, 3 and 4 are screenshots taken from MAXQDA 24 Reader.

In regard to the level of analysis, Merriam (1998) explains that the findings of a research can be presented in a descriptive and narrative way, by building themes or categories that intersect the data or in the form of models and theories that explain the data. These three forms constitute three different levels of analysis (ibid., p. 178).

According to Merriam, there are few studies limited to a descriptive analytical level, even though description is a key element in qualitative research (ibid., p. 179). As for category construction, it is a more common level of analysis in which researchers develop categories (p. 192). Merriam describes categories as conceptual concepts indicated by the data, which capture recurring patterns that cut across the data (ibid., p. 179). An intuitive process occurs to generate them but at the same time there is also a systematic and informed process to build them according to the study goals, researchers' knowledge and orientation and the meanings expressed explicitly by the research participants (ibid., 179). Ultimately, categories become the findings of the study and they are the answers to the research questions (ibid., 183). Moreover, categories describe the data, but they also interpret the data to a certain point (ibid., p. 187).

The third level of analysis moves to a more conceptual landscape in which there are high-level abstractions to make inferences, develop models, and generate theory (ibid., p. 187). At this level, the analysis goes toward the development of a theory to explain the data's meaning (ibid., p. 192).

The analytical level of this instrumental case study ranges from category construction to theory building. The research findings are presented in form of conceptual categories throughout the two empirical chapters and discussion chapter. In the first empirical chapter, categories and subcategories related to the qualitative network analysis of the online mobilization were built. On the second empirical chapter, they were generated according to the development communication components.

With respect to the discussion chapter, the researcher attempted to make inferences based on the empirical evidence collected on the use of (online) communication and mobilization to shape transformative action in a country affected by multiple crises. Even though an explanatory approach of transformative action from a bottom-up perspective is presented bringing together the findings of the two empirical chapters and providing examples, other requirements towards theorizing are still not met such as generalization to apply the conceptual model to a wide range of situations.

5.2. POSITIONALITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Finally, I would like to reflect on my positionality and ethical considerations of the study. According to Darwin Holmes (2020) "reflexivity informs positionality" (p. 2). This means that the researcher needs to be self-aware and assess how their views and positions might influence, influence or have influenced directly or indirectly the research process in all its stages, namely design, conduction and interpretation of findings (ibid., p.2).

It's a difficult process for unexperienced researchers to identify and disclose their own positionality since many of them haven't done it before (Darwin Holmes, 2020). However, it is also considered as part of conducting ethical research to be aware of reflexivity, positionality and production of knowledge (Sultana, 2007).

Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) propose three ways a researcher can identify and develop their positionality. I have followed them in order to reflect on my positionality and be able to outline it.

Firstly, the researcher must position themselves about the subject under investigation. Here my former master studies in non-profit management and my work as a project officer at a Colombian NGO might have influenced the research because of my knowledge on the non-governmental sector of Colombia. I know how the non-governmental sector is composed, its work modalities, its strengths and weaknesses. The assumption of understanding the subject background and assuming a certain

degree of expertise might have influenced the research process. However, I have limited years of work experience and I haven't occupied any managerial position at any NGO yet. This could have mitigated the knowledge curse.

Secondly, the researcher must locate themselves about the research participants. Here I would like to refer to the power relations during the research process. The fact that some directors or coordinators that I interviewed knew me previously as a worker of an NGO and I also knew them could have made the research relationship friendlier. This was advantageous for building rapport and trust, but it was disadvantageous in terms of discussions in which they assumed I knew what they were talking about. In these cases, I always asked them to elaborate their answers. Additionally, I would like to highlight that I never had the feeling I was seen as a subaltern or I was in front of a person with a higher position. It seems that a balance in terms of power relations was reached. In the case of the FGDs participants, I was always aware of motivating their participation and fostering collaboration to conduct the research together.

Thirdly, the researcher should locate themselves about the research context and process. In the case of this study, it is clear that COVID-19 influenced the study since the very beginning in terms of research topic, selection of research methods and perceptions of the participants. This is in any case another study produced in times of pandemic but that unveils very important evidence on the opportunities, challenges and limitations of social transformation processes mediated by digital technologies. Additionally, the social outburst in Colombia of 2019, 2020 and 2021 influenced some of the narratives presented in the study and made difficult to collect data especially during the national strike in 2021.

Thanks to this exercise of reflexivity on my positionality I could develop during the research process more awareness on the potential bias and took account of that trying to achieve "empathetic neutrality". This is a term used by Ritchie et al. (2014) that means to "strive to avoid obvious, conscious or systematic bias and to be as neutral as possible in the collection, interpretation and presentation of data" (p. 22) without denying that "all research will be influenced by the researcher and there is no completely neutral or objective knowledge" (p. 23).

With regard to the ethical aspects of online data collection, it is essential, just as in on-site research, to reflect on issues such as participant anonymity, data storage, processing, and reporting. For this study, ethical clearance was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at ZEF, covering these considerations.

In addition, obtaining written and/or verbal consent from participants is required when conducting online research. According to Carter et al. (2021), the processes of obtaining consent can be more complex for online research as there are advantages and disadvantages according to the level of burden for the participants to comply with it. In this study, consent was obtained through two different ways. Firstly, in written form (see Appendix 13). This was used for the interviews with the directors, coordinators or experts of NGOs. Although they had the option to print and scan the consent form, returning it by email often caused delays. Therefore, I obtained verbal consent from some participants at the beginning of the online interview. This consent asked directly if they wanted to disclose the name of the NGO they work for, as well as their names and positions. The second consent was received orally from the capacity building facilitators and participants of the focus group discussions (see Appendix 14). With respect to the participants of the FGDs, most of them wanted to disclose their names. However, one participant preferred not to do so. That is why all names will be anonymized in order to avoid the identification of this participant. However, the project or program they participated in with the NGOs during the pandemic will be mentioned. With verbal consent it was less complicated for them to provide consent. Furthermore, they could raise questions before beginning the online sessions.

6. EMPIRICAL CHAPTER I: QUALITATIVE NETWORK ANALYSIS (QNA) OF THE COLOMBIAN NGO ONLINE MOBILIZATION #PIEZACLAVEPARACOLOMBIA

This chapter looks at the instrumental case study of this research, namely the online mobilization conducted by the Colombian non-governmental sector in 2020 in the middle of the uncertainty and disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to their work. The online mobilization consisted of a joint petition subscribed to by 256 NGOs followed by a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter/X with about 620 publications tagged with the hashtags #PiezaClaveparaColombia (in English #aKeyPieceForColombia) and #UnaONGes (in English #anONGis) (see Chapter 1, section 1.2 for a complete description of the case study). National and local NGOs raised their voices to the national government through the joint petition and social media campaign in order to be acknowledged as a key partner in tackling the crisis during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a unique online mobilization on behalf of the NGO sector in which NGOs of different sizes, fields and regions of work participated.

This chapter addresses the first research question of the dissertation: How did the COVID-19 pandemic trigger online communication and mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector via the joint petition and social media campaign #PiezaClaveparaColombia?. The goal of this chapter is to examine the online mobilization as a form of collective action within the Colombian non-governmental sector employing a qualitative network analysis (QNA).

From a network perspective, the focus in collective action processes lies on the interactions among actors and the structures that emerge from these interactions (Ernstson, 2011). In this view, the central unit of analysis is the relationships between the different components, rather than the individual components themselves or the system as a whole (ibid., p. 259).

Following the network approach, Diani and Bison (2004) distinguish three types of collective action processes: social movements, coalitions, and organizational processes. These are defined by three network dimensions, namely density, identity ties, and mode of agreement. Accordingly, the authors suggest examining whether networks among actors are dense or sparse, the type of identity expressed by the actors, and whether attitudes toward identified opponents or targets are conflictual or consensual (ibid., p. 285).

Based on Diani and Bison (2004) typology and the empirical evidence, the online mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector is classified as a consensual coalition process. In this type of collective action process, strong alliances emerge among actors, but they are not sustained by strong identity ties (ibid., p. 285). Once a common goal is achieved or not, the alliance usually dissolves, as there is little interest in maintaining it beyond the resource exchange that brought it together (ibid., p. 285–286).

In this research, an alliance emerged between the NGOs that drafted the joint petition and those that signed and promoted it on social media. The national government was the primary target of the collective action process. Although initially treated as an opponent for excluding NGOs from the COVID-19 state of emergency, the organizations maintained a consensual stance, acknowledging the government's institutional role and seeking recognition as strategic partners during and after the pandemic.

The online mobilization also involved a strong exchange of resources, particularly among the organizations that initiated the petition and coordinated the social media campaign. A sense of shared identity was expressed through NGO memberships and affiliations, but these ties were relatively weak. No subsequent collective action has followed this single campaign.

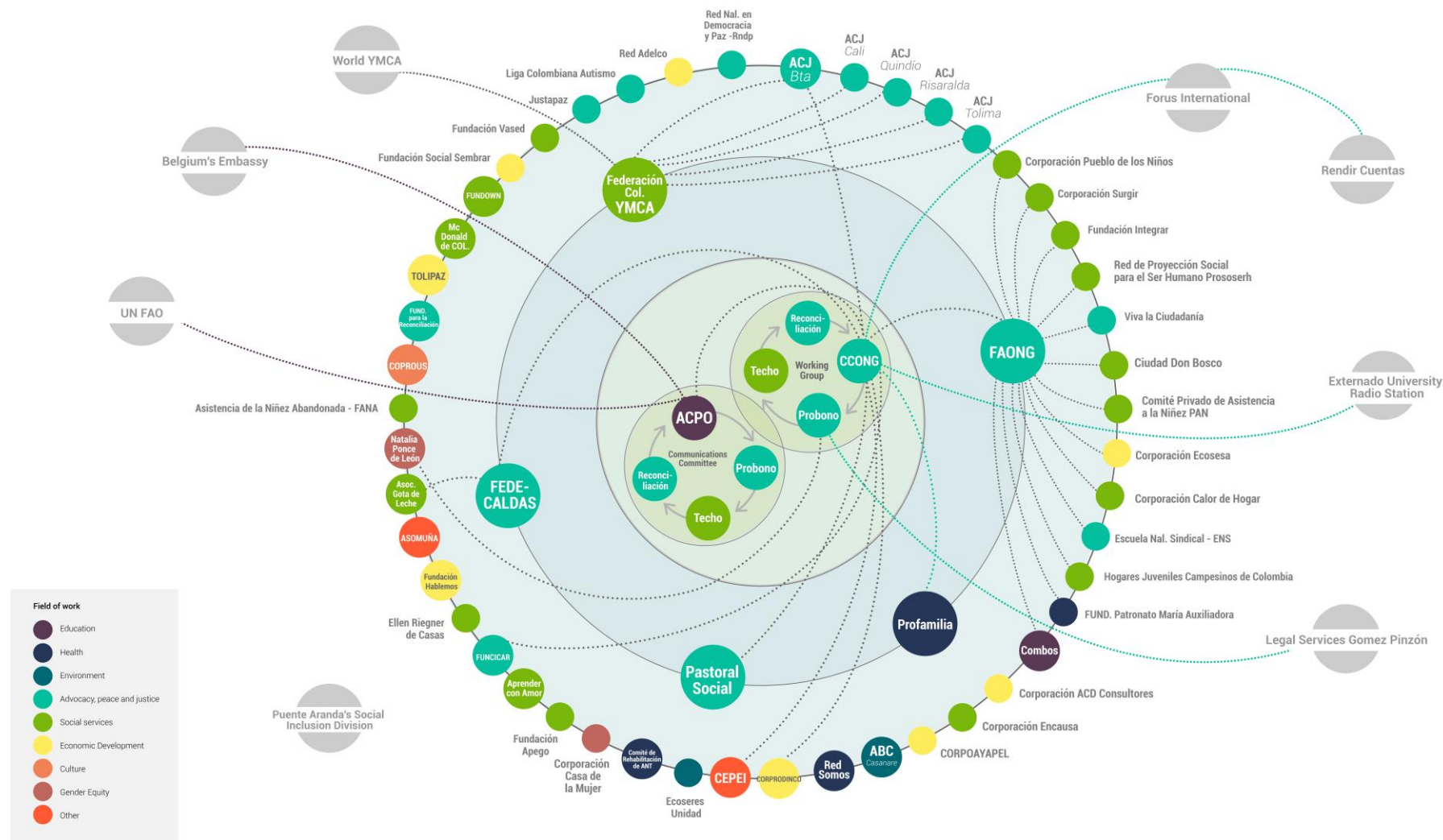
This chapter argues that qualitative network analysis (QNA), applied here to the study of collective action processes, offers a deeper understanding of networking practices by emphasizing the narratives and communication among network actors. Collective action processes are understood here as the relational dynamics through which organizations and individuals coordinate, form alliances, and mobilize resources to pursue shared goals (Diani & Bison, 2004; Olson, 1965; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). From this perspective, five features of network formation and internal integration are examined: actors, resources, coordination and timing, organizational learning, and identity linkages. These categories guide both the analysis and the structure of the chapter.

A network graphic has been sketched based on the deskwork and the empirical evidence collected from internet research, informal discussions and semi-structured interviews with NGO executive directors and communication coordinators that

participated in the online mobilization. Furthermore, an online survey conducted from February to April 2021 targeting NGOs that signed the petition but were not involved in the social media campaign backed up the results (See Appendix 9 for a summary of the main findings of the survey).

Figure 5 Network representation of the online mobilization (see next page) visualizes the linkages and interactions within the collective action process and facilitates the exploration and localization of the features proposed by the QNA. Figure 5 will be used throughout the chapter to present and interpret the results for each of the network features under study.

Figure 5 Network representation of the online mobilization



Note: Figure 5 and its subfigures were elaborated by Novoa, S. (2023) on Adobe Illustrator based on the author's own construction.

6.1. Actors

In collective processes, networks link a multiplicity of actors who have direct or indirect relationships as well as single or multiple linkages or interactions (Diani & McAdam, 2003). There are three major kinds of actors, also called “nodes” that make up collective action networks, namely individuals, organizations, and collectives and events (ibid., p 7, 9, 11). In this online mobilization, the actors correspond mainly to NGOs.

A key aspect that defines the formation and engagement of multiple actors on the network is the goal consensus (Provan & Kenis, 2007). A broad goal consensus fosters the commitment to the network and this might favor the collaborative work too (ibid., p. 239). I argue that goal consensus is based on the similarity of the demands or claims that the actors of the network have. The more similar the demands are, the fastest the actors build goal consensus for the collective action. Besides, dimensions such as the number and type of actors, their position in the network, their roles and interests expressed in the network, and the kind of relationship or interaction they incur define the network visualization and its boundaries. These two dimensions related to consensus of claims of the actors of the network and the position of the actors in the network’s representation will be explored as follows:

Consensus of claims: in the case of the case study of this research, the empirical evidence makes it clear that there was an agreement on the issues that motivated the NGOs to subscribe to the petition and mobilize it afterwards in social networks.

The following statement made by Mariana Córdoba, executive director of Fundación ACPO, summarizes the common claims mentioned by most of the interviewees as well:

It was really a very difficult context, at a time when the world was turning upside down for all of us, when our most basic working standards were being shaken, and the collective feeling of the entire social sector was that measures were being taken but that social organizations were being made invisible. There was a feeling that, for leases and traders at least, that specific measures were taken for different sectors and the aim was to reduce non-profit organizations as if we were the private sector. That is much more complex if one doesn’t take into account the challenges or the contributions that the sector makes. That is why we took the decision to participate, to sign the petition and to mobilize it through our social networks, and all our digital communications, specifically because we felt that the sector was being made invisible at a time of crisis, in which it could have played a very important role in getting out of that crisis, facing it, and, at

the very least, building a bit more collective resilience. (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021)

From the previous statement, the following aspects can be highlighted as common claims that motivated NGOs to subscribe to the petition and mobilize it in social networks: lack of acknowledgment by the national government of the non-governmental sector, lack of participation and inclusion of the NGOs into the measures adopted by the national government to tackle the economic, social and environmental crisis, and comparison of the non-governmental sector in particular to the private sector.

With respect to the lack of acknowledgment of the non-governmental sector by the national government, David Sánchez, executive director of Fundación Techo indicated:

The non-governmental sector is always left behind. There are entities and especially ordinary citizens that acknowledge these foundations, corporations, associations, but in terms of public policies, the sector is poorly addressed. During the pandemic, we started seeing a series of movements, government measures, benefits, subsidies, which were not reaching the third-sector. There was too much being said about other sectors but little about the non-governmental sector. That's why we decided to create a team and convene some organizations. (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021)

The previous statement is aligned with the empirical evidence of this research that points out that NGOs considered it necessary to unite their voices to raise awareness of what was happening with the non-governmental sector during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. NGOs felt their key role to build and rebuild the country during the crisis had not been acknowledged by the national government. That is why, NGOs felt they had to make visible their contributions reaching vulnerable populations in distant and conflicting areas, which other sectors don't reach, regardless that the pandemic was taking place. To quote the executive director of the Comité de Rehabilitación, Sonia Gallardo, on the government's lack of acknowledgment of the work of NGOs and its consequences for the recovery of the country:

How does the national government respond to a crisis? How should it have done it? With the support of social organizations, but it wasn't like that. 'You, defend yourselves as best you can, keep helping, look for resources to continue helping, because we obviously need you to not stop helping', but the national government didn't involve us in the strategies and decisions they took in an

articulated way. We can now conclude that the aid the national government provided was very welfare-oriented. At that time, it had to be like that, but now that we expect an economic reactivation, the pathway is unclear. Much of the investments during the pandemic were very welfare-oriented because they were not done in coordination with NGOs. That is why we subscribed to the statement and mobilized it in social networks. (S. Gallardo, personal communication, 8 November 2021)

According to the results of this research, there were two humanitarian aid campaigns at municipal levels, which involved the coordination and collaborative work between municipal governments, the private and the non-governmental sector. This occurred in the departments of Antioquia and Caldas, in which, the executive directors of the NGOs' federations established there, namely the Federación Antioqueña de ONG (FAONG) and the Federación de ONG de Caldas (Fedecaldas), referred to good cross-sector work in these regions. However, it seems that the collaborative work regarding these campaigns was very intense during the first months of the pandemic and it began to blur afterwards. Even though these are good examples of what could have occurred at a national level, still missing is a national and municipal sustainable approach in order to pass from a measure of immediate humanitarian aid to structured long-term transformative work.

In general, the results of the interviews indicate that NGOs felt identified and considered fair the claims addressed in the petition. NGOs had already discussed and reflected on the same issues within their organizations. This encouraged and speeded up their subscription to the petition and mobilization of the social media campaign. The most mentioned topics of concern during the interviews were: potential reduction of donations, possible cancelation of contracts, lack of communication and contact with their target populations, financial difficulties and the need to protect their work taking into account they face constant economic and security risks, which, with the risks of the populations they work with, made them more vulnerable to the implications of the pandemic.

Actor's position in the network representation: even though the coalition process brought together a big number of actors, interactions among them differed according to their level of communication and the mechanism they participated with, namely joint petition and/or social media campaign. According to this, communication was strong, in particular at the beginning of the coalition process, among the organizers of the

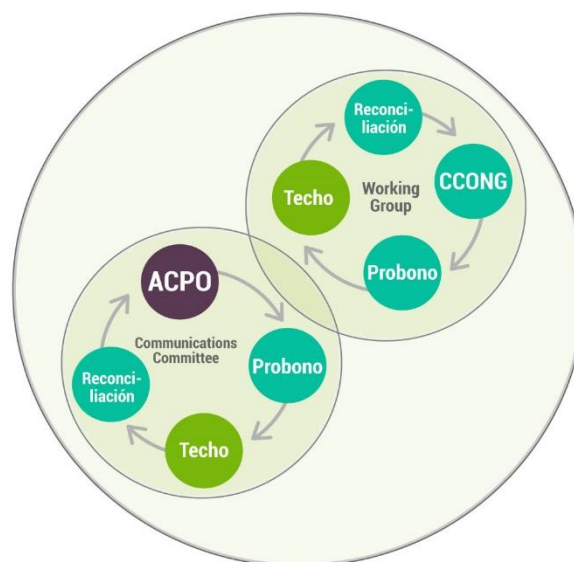
online mobilization through the working group they created as well as among the members of the communications committee once this was formed.

Figure 5 Network representation of the online mobilization (see page 120), illustrates the position of network actors across three levels: central, bridging, and peripheral. The actors who initiated the online mobilization and created the social media campaign form the central layer (first level). They are visualized in the center of the network's representation assuming a central and coordination role in the coalition process. The bridging layer (second level) consists of organizations connecting the core actors with those in the periphery. The peripheral layer (third level) includes actors who had little or no direct interaction with the core, though some engaged with bridging organizations due to affiliations. Additionally, external actors, who did not sign the petition but helped circulate it through the social media campaign, are shown. These actors are linked to central and bridging actors and are not exclusively NGOs.

A more detailed analysis of each layer of the network follows:

Central Actors (first level):

Figure 5.1 Central actors of the network



The network's representation suggests a high level of centrality that breaks up as the network expands. This kind of representation can be referred as to "wheel/star, structure", in which there is a central position whose function is to coordinate all exchanges across the network by pooling and redistributing resources (Diani & McAdam, 2003). However, in this kind of structure, there is not much investment in

building linkages with the peripheral actors and little interest in investing in building the network as a whole (ibid., 311). That is why central actors are the ones who assume leadership roles influencing decision-making throughout the network.

Figure 5.1 (see previous page) shows the central layer consisting of two intersecting groups: the working group and the communications committee. Five NGOs form these groups assuming the central position in the network, which considers that they came up with the mobilization initiative and acted as a steering and coordination node. Each of these organizations has key characteristics and interests that contributed to positioning themselves in the network and expand it pulling other NGOs in the collective process. A description of each of these organizations follows based on information presented on their websites and the interviews with their executive directors. They are listed according to the order in which they joined and their main characteristics and interests in the network are mentioned:

Fundación Techo Colombia: it is a Latin American organization of young volunteers and residents of low-income urban settlements, working to alleviate poverty while training volunteers through collaborative engagement with communities (Techo Internacional, 2021) Founded in Chile in 2001 as “Un Techo para Chile”, the organization has since expanded across Latin America, including México, Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, and formally to Colombia in 2006 (ibid.). Its four-step working model involves selecting target settlements through evaluation and dialogue, designing action plans with residents and volunteers to strengthen community capacity, implementing improvements such as housing construction, street paving, and workshops, and evaluating outcomes to determine whether to continue or conclude its engagement with the communities

According to his executive director, David Sánchez, Fundación Techo has a high presence in social media because of its young constituencies. David explains: “Techo’s volunteers communicate what is happening in the community, what is happening with the project they are involved in, what they are experiencing, and considering the organization and the volunteers are young, they can communicate their personal stories easily and permanently, in particular using Facebook and Instagram rather than Twitter” (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021). His director mentioned also that Fundación Techo has participated in several

campaigns in Latin America because of its affiliation with other Techo organizations (ibid.). That is why, they have a big audience to mobilize and they have experience in carrying out petitions and conducting social media campaigns.

Confederación Colombiana de ONG - CCONG: it was created in 1989 turning from a funded project of the United Nations into a registered non-profit organization. It is a national platform of NGOs³¹, which has currently 22 registered members in the form of NGOs. These members represent and give voice to other constituencies. That is why it connects about 1800 CSOs in the country. The main goal of the CCONG is to promote capacity building for the non-profit sector so it can accomplish its role of fostering development and peace in the country and assuming a collective voice in common issues in order to implement actions that guarantee the civil and political rights of the sector as well as a suitable environment in which to operate. That is why it has vast experience in political advocacy in the country and at international level. CCONG is one of the few institutions specializing in researching a wide range of topics related to the non-profit sector in Colombia. Because of CCONG's reputation, political advocacy expertise and platform nature, this actor has a high degree of legitimacy and was approached by Fundación Techo and Corporación para la Reconciliación to work jointly on the mobilization initiative.

Fundación ProBono: it facilitates access to justice for vulnerable people and communities as well to organizations serving the common good or assisting these communities, which do not have economic resources to look for legal advice (Fundación ProBono Colombia, n.d.). According to the executive director, Ana María Arboleda, they accomplish this goal through a network of members, most of them located in Medellín, Bogotá, and Cali, and consisting of firms of lawyers, legal corporate groups and independent lawyers that take on the cases voluntarily and free of charge (A. M. Arboleda, personal communication, 10 November 2021) . Fundación ProBono receives legal advice requests and after filtering and analyzing them, they are sent to their network of lawyers in order to find the lawyer who will take the case voluntarily (ibid).

³¹ "A National NGO Platform is an independent umbrella organization gathering NGO members at a national level and addressing development, humanitarian and environmental issues. NGO Platforms' membership is based on shared principles such as democratic governance, transparency and members' participation" (forus, n.d., *National NGO Platforms* section).

Ana María explains that ProBono Work had its origins in the United States and is now carried out in several countries but it is in that country where it has evolved the most (A. M. Arboleda, personal communication, 10 November 2021). In Latin America, with the “Probono Statement of Latin America” endorsed in 2006 or 2007 the lawyers of this region were invited to engage in this kind of legal service and in 2009 the foundation was created legally (ibid.).

Fundación ProBono was a member of the board of directors of Corporación Reconciliación, which itself constitutes a central actor within the network. It was because of this relationship that it was invited to join the working group. Besides, its expertise in the field of law and justice has made Fundación Probono a good partner of the CCONG. For instance, both organizations had worked previously on analyzing tax reforms that addressed the non-profit sector. That is why, there was already a high degree of trust and cooperation between them which favored network building.

Corporación Reconciliación Colombia: This NGO has been in liquidation since 2021 as communicated during the research process by other interview partners. It was a joint non-profit group made up of 96 organizations committed to the promotion of peace and reconciliation in the country (USAID & ACDI-VOCA, n.d.). They implemented projects, social, community and productive initiatives in remote regions of Colombia that aimed to generate economic opportunities, transform behaviors and strengthen trust, which has been lost because of the armed conflict (ibid.).

Corporación Reconciliación’s work in peripheral regions far from major cities made it a focal point to interact and partner with grassroots and local organizations. They strengthened and gave voice to small NGOs in marginalized rural areas. In the case of this mobilization, Corporación Reconciliación pulled local organizations into the collective action network that otherwise wouldn’t have participated. However, the participation of these organizations in the social media campaign was challenging, because of their difficulties accessing the internet and the lack of social media accounts.

Fundación Acción Cultural Popular - ACPO: even though this organization doesn’t belong to the working group of the network, it was a key member of the communications committee on behalf of the CCONG. That’s why it assumed a central role in the network as well as the other NGOs in this position. Fundación ACPO

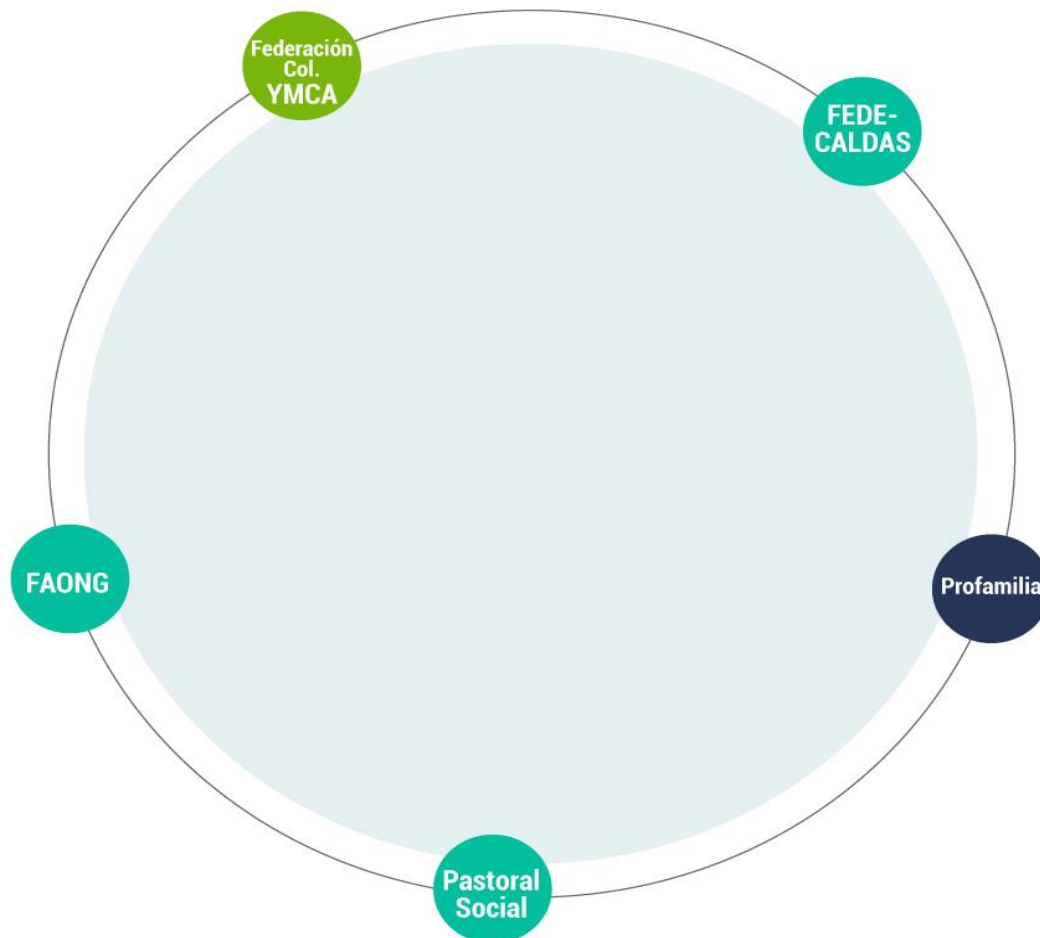
belongs to the board of directors of CCONG as well as CCONG to Fundación ACPO's board of directors. In addition, Fundación ACPO is one of the oldest members of CCONG. This relationship and affiliation between both organizations facilitated their engagement in the network.

With respect to the work of this foundation, it concentrates on contributing to the social, productive and digital inclusion of Colombian rural inhabitants and communities through the use of ICTs (Fundación ACPO, n.d.-c). One of its flagship programs is the "Escuelas Digitales Campesinas" (in English Digital Peasant Schools). This programme provides training, education and capacity building to peasants and their communities employing a convergence of actors and media (Fundación ACPO, n.d.-a). In addition, Fundación ACPO issues a monthly newspaper online called "El Campesino" (in English the Peasant) in order to distribute information on rural topics to the Colombian peasants and general public (Fundación ACPO, n.d.-b). It is evident that Fundación ACPO has a strong strategic communication approach. That's why CCONG pooled these resources to develop and conduct the social media campaign.

Previous depiction of the central actors of the network makes the importance of the relationships for the network's formation clear. These organizations came together thanks to their mutual legitimacy and identity links such as memberships, affiliations or previous partnerships. With respect to the role of their affiliations and relationships, it prevailed as the main criteria to sharing the joint petition, asking for comments and mobilizing their subscription. Directors of these core organizations mentioned during the interviews that the first actors they approached were their board members, members of their organizations, partners and allies. This means that the boundaries of the network were apparently clear consisting of actors that belonged exclusively to the non-governmental sector and have links with the core or peripheral actors. However, a few external actors also mobilized the social media campaign and they are also visualized in Figure 5 (see page 120).

Bridging Actors (second level):

Figure 5.2 Bridging actors of the network



The second layer of the network is composed of actors that facilitated the linkages of the central node with the peripheral layer acting as a bridge between the two levels of the network. They perform a brokerage role, defined as “an actor connecting other actors who are not directly related to each other” (Diani & McAdam, 2003). As brokers, they create spaces for integration by establishing communication with subgroups of heterogeneous social movement organizations (*ibid.*, p. 113). Even though this is a coalitional process connecting the non-governmental sector and these organizations aren’t as heterogeneous as actors in other kinds of collective processes, they still differ in terms of their size, fields and regions of work, target populations, access to ICTs and legitimacy role. That’s why the role that brokerage actors played was crucial to pulling and engaging the peripheries of the network with the central node encouraging them in particular to subscribe to the petition but also mobilize the social media campaign.

According to my internet research and the semi-structured interviews, the following organizations could be identified as bridging actors. A common characteristic among them is their role as NGO platforms that speak for other local NGOs and their orientation towards capacity building.

Federación Antioqueña de ONG (FAONG): this platform of NGOs was created in 1988, a period in which the country was facing violence and social difficulties left by drug trafficking (Federación Antioqueña de ONG, 2020). Currently, 89 NGOs are affiliated to this federation. Its main goals are to unite the social sector in this region of Colombia, influence public policies, and make the work of this sector in Antioquia visible (ibid.). It's also a direct member of CCONG.

According to my internet research, 77 NGOs, out of the 256 organizations that signed the joint petition, are FAONG members. This amount corresponds to 30% of the total of NGOs that signed the petition and 88% of the members of this federation. However, the participation of the members of this federation decreased in the social media campaign. Only 14 NGOs out of the 77 that had signed the petition and are members of this federation joined the social media campaign.

Federación ONG de Caldas (Fedecaldas): this platform of NGOs, created in 1990, consists of currently 38 NGOs. It leads processes of social development fostering the articulation, strengthening and sustainability of social organizations in the region under a pluralistic, democratic and participative framework (Federación ONG Caldas, n.d.). Besides, its work focuses on political advocacy at local, regional and national levels (ibid.). According to my internet research, six (6) of their members subscribed to the joint petition and from them, one NGO joined the online mobilization.

Sistema Nacional de Pastoral Social – SNPS caritas Colombia: this organization has a high level of legitimacy in rural areas of Colombia, which reinforces its brokerage role. As the Corporación para la Reconciliación, this NGO works with and for grassroots and local organizations in rural regions of the country with an ecclesiastical approach. Pastoral Social empowers communities to face and transform their social reality since 1977 contributing to human and sustainable development (Pastoral Social - Cáritas Colombiana, 2022). Even though it's not possible to mention the number of organizations they pulled into the network, especially for the subscription of the joint petition, it's worth mentioning their bridging role.

Federación Colombiana de ACJ-YMCA: this is a world movement of young volunteers and professionals that started in England in 1844. In Bogotá, the first local chapter was created in 1964. Currently, there are local chapters located also in Barranquilla, Cali, Medellín, Santander, Risaralda, Tolima, Quindío and Puerto Boyacá. They generate diverse programs and projects for the empowerment and leadership of young people, in particular vulnerable groups (YMCA, n.d.). The chapters of Bogotá, Cali, Quindío, Risaralda and Tolima subscribed to the petition and joined the social media campaign. Furthermore, the chapter of Medellín and Puerto Boyacá participated in the social media campaign.

Asociación Profamilia: this non-profit organization is a provider of sexual and reproductive health services as well as a center of education in sexuality with a strong nationwide presence and recognized in Latin America (Profamilia, 2023). Its mission is to “support people in fully exercising their sexual and reproductive rights, contributing to equity and poverty reduction” (ibid., p. 2). Political advocacy is also one of its fields of work in order to contribute to the development and strengthening of regulations and public policies related to sexual and reproductive rights (ibid., p. 6).

Based on the qualitative network analysis, the bridging actors were relevant to pulling most of their members, partners and allies into the network. In particular, they contributed to the flow of information between the central actors and the peripheral actors distributing the joint statement, the subscription mechanism and the communication materials of the social media campaign. However, it seems that their role remained active for the subscription of the petition but it declined during the social media campaign. Indeed, they facilitated the exchange of information but, to a lower degree, the production and exchange of knowledge. This could have influenced the low level of actors’ internal integration in the second and third network’s layer. However, the central actors might have also failed in connecting with the bridging actors and the peripheral actors. According to the results, this could have occurred because of the lack of personnel and shift of priorities during the pandemic.

Peripheral Actors (third level):

Figure 5.3 Peripheral actors of the network



According to the QNA, the peripheral actors' function was to mobilize the social media campaign through Facebook and Twitter. 48 NGOs that signed the petition and mobilized it during the social media campaign can be identified as peripheral actors. However, there was a low level of interaction among the peripheral actors and between them and the central actors. With regard to this, even though there were a total of 545 Tweets and 75 Facebook publications during the social media campaign, interaction among them depended exclusively on the use of the digital communication materials, likes and retweets, but the number of commented posts from Facebook or Twitter/X can be assessed as minimal. Besides, there was a lack of use of other forms of communication outside of the social media platforms to encourage other kinds of exchanges and to enhance identity links and a learning process.

According to Diani and McAdam (2003) "the lack of horizontal exchanges at the periphery, and the relatively low number of ties activated suggest a comparatively low

level of investment in the building of the network as a whole” (p. 310). In the case of this coalition process, the results indicate, that the low investment in building the network could be related to the lack of resources to invest in the network, NGOs’ priorities during the pandemic, the missing steering and coordination role of the working group and communications committee as the central node and the instrumental use of the coalition process to achieve a specific goal but not towards a long-term network’s formation.

The online mobilization was designed exclusively for the non-governmental sector, fostering shared identity and solidarity among its actors. However, participation extended beyond the organizations that signed the petition: 32 NGOs joined the social media campaign without subscribing to the petition.

In addition, as mentioned previously, external actors also joined the mobilization by retweeting the campaign’s communication materials. In Figure 5 Network representation of the online mobilization (see page 120), the external actors are represented outside the three layers of the network in grey circles. Three of them, Forus International, World YMCA, and Rendir Cuentas, are civil society platforms at the global and at the Latin American and Caribbean levels, respectively. The Colombian chapter of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Belgium’s embassy, a local public authority in Bogotá, a law firm, and a university radio program also retweeted the campaign. This shows that the boundaries of the network expanded, which opens space for further research. Questions such as how external actors were pulled into the network and why their participation in the coalition process was brief could have been explored. The empirical evidence indicates that these external actors had links of affiliation or partnerships with the initiative’s organizers. For this reason, it would be of interest to conduct further research on how network boundaries expand, potentially incorporating other types of organizations beyond NGOs.

6.2. Resources

Another relevant feature to study collective action processes from a network perspective is the mobilization of resources. According to Raeymaeckers (2016) “in an integrated network, all organizations are connected and resource exchange between network actors is guaranteed” (p. 1). In the case of NGOs, they recognize

networks between themselves as an opportunity to share information and material resources (Dalaibuyan, 2013). NGOs form networks in order to secure economic resources instead of competing for them. Donors and grant makers have also realized the importance of coalitions of NGOs in avoiding the duplication of projects and increasing the impact of their funding (Dalaibuyan, 2013). Besides, NGOs can gain flexibility, strength and efficiency when they share skills and resources (Holmén, 2002).

Della Porta and Diani (2006) distinguish between material and non-material resources in collective action processes and argue that the capacity of mobilization depends on the availability of them. The joint petition and social media campaign #PiezaClaveparaColombia implied the use and mobilization of material and non-material resources. Among the material resources, economic, human and digital resources and non-material resources involving the values and principles of the network can be distinguished. Each of these resources played a relevant role in the formation, dynamics and results of the network.

The analysis shows that the access and availability of material resources were more evident in the center than at the other levels of the network. This might have happened because these NGOs are national platforms equipped with more sources of economic and human resources and they have developed network skills to pool resources from other organizations. With respect to non-material resources, they could be localized in a more extended way in the network.

In general, there was a good flow and dissemination of the information of the campaign through digital resources even though the network wasn't fully integrated. In particular, the relationships among actors at the peripheries and with the central node were sparse preventing the exchange of human resources and reducing the possibilities of building interactions and stronger identity links. These two aspects are also key features of the network and they will be explained in this chapter.

The next section makes an analysis of the material and immaterial resources involved in the network:

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Economic resources: there was a low level of investment and mobilization of economic resources in the network. From a monetary costs-benefits perspective, this online mobilization was sustainable and affordable. Based on the results, it was also the most appropriate action considering that the pandemic lockdowns were still in place and online communication was encouraged.

To quote Mariana Córdoba, executive director of Fundación Probono: “I’d tell any sector who wants to come together and spread a message, to use digital communications tools because it’s the current mechanism of participation and political impact” (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021). Mariana explains further: “We don’t need a high investment of resources, we don’t have to print newspapers, flyers, we don’t have to distribute them either, or send them, this is also friendly with the environment and the best way to make political incidence” (ibid.). With regards to this, no economic resources were allocated to come up with this initiative.

With respect to organizations in territories, they subscribed to the joint petition and leveraged their voice through this collective process without any kind of monetary investment. Subscription to the petition took place through different mechanisms such as an online form, e-mail, WhatsApp or phone call. These mechanisms were at the disposal of the NGOs that got to know about the joint petition because of their relationships with the organizers, partners or their participation in networks or federations. However, based on the analysis, their mobilization decreased notably when turning to the social media campaign due to a lack of organizational and digital resources.

Human resources: the results of the analysis indicate that NGOs used their organizational structures and protocols to engage in the coalitional process. The configuration of positions, functions and availability of personnel determined their level of participation in the collective process. According to the results, for the subscription of the joint petition the decision-making was on the executive directors in agreement with their board of directors. For the participation in the social media campaign, the area of communications, if existing, undertook this task.

To quote Sonia Gallardo, executive director of the Comité de Rehabilitación de Antioquia: “For the subscription, I am responsible. As legal representative I have to

share this because this is an institutional position. I have to share it with the board of directors. Once they approve the subscription, the person or the communicator that we have internally is in charge of managing the social networks” (S. Gallardo, personal communication, 8 November 2021). Another director that referred to the subscription of the joint petition was Carlos Monsalve, executive director of the Federación Antioqueña de ONG (FAONG): “We have a protocol, petitions must be approved by the board of directors, obviously they are reviewed, and if we are told to do it, we make changes, but there is always a protocol to have a position of the federation and in this case, the request was to submit it to every organization so they could join. All that has to pass by the board of directors” (C. Monsalve, personal communication, 6 November 2021). Gloria Bustamante, director of systematization and research of the Corporación Educativa Comunidades Educativas de Base - Combos also mentioned that: “According to our organigram, these petitions are read and signed by our director Gloria Amparo Henao, she consults with the board of directors of Combos on this, then we sign the petition, and it passes to the programs and projects’ coordinators, so they can tell the teams about it and teams tell families and children and after this it passes to the communicator and we mobilize it in our social networks” (G. Bustamante, personal communication, 19 October 2021).

However, it cannot be assumed that every NGO has a communications department or permanent qualified personnel to mobilize social media campaigns. Non-profit literature acknowledges that in particular local NGOs face human resource challenges that affect the recruitment, retention and development of personnel (Batti, 2014). Based on the findings of this research, it is evident that the existence or absence of a communications department or personnel assuming these functions is shaped by the size, project and program orientation, and organizational capacity of the NGOs.

Figure 5.4 (see next page) visualizes an example of the low exchange of human resources between the network’s layers. It presents two NGOs working at national and regional levels with differences in their human resources. The national organization corresponds to Asociación Profamilia, which occupies a position in the bridging layer of the network and the regional organization is Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Tolima –Tolipaz, which belongs to the periphery layer.

Figure 5.4. Example of low exchange of human resources between the network's layers



Marta Royo, executive director of Asociación Profamilia, distinguished as a bridging actor in the network, explains:

I have a communications director and he has six people in charge, three out of six work with everything related to internal communication of the organization and the other three are in charge of the external communication, from them one is specialized in the subject of social networks, another is specialized with the subject of projects because we have an area that has to do with social projects and almost all of them address communication and the third person is the one that deals with institutional presentations, that is the area of communication that we have. (M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022)

On the contrary, Hugo Rincón, executive director of Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Tolima -Tolipaz, located at the network's periphery, indicates:

Tolipaz has a very small core team and sets up project teams to develop them. We have had seasons where we have had a team of 24 people, a large team, and at some point, we have had one or two communicators to develop communications strategies. Due to difficulties, the communications issue is basically managed by me and currently through a freelancer, we turn to this person for support, for example for the management of the website, or right now we are waiting this week to develop a script for a new podcast about the five years of the peace agreement that he/she has to do. (H. Rincón, personal communication, 19 October 2021)

From previous statements it can be inferred that these two organizations could have interacted during the social media campaign in order to exchange or pool human

resources, but they did not. This is an example of the predominance of a low level of integration of NGOs localized in different rings of the network. Besides, these sparse relationships also influenced another key feature of the network, namely organizational learning during the collective action process

Another aspect related to human resources concerns the work load of NGOs. The results reveal considerable levels of work load with limited personnel capacity. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation making NGOs prioritize internal work upon their involvement in external activities such as the social media campaign. To quote Jessika Camargo, communications coordinator of Fundación Probono:

Let's say that a barrier to doing this type of work [campaigns] is always the day-to-day workload, one always has a lot of things to do and adding another task can be complex. However, if you look at it in the long term, it is great since it increases the visibility of the organization and what you do. But bearing in mind that not all social organizations have the means to carry out this type of campaign, in many cases there are one or two people who are not only in charge of communications, but who also attend to the population, it is not so easy to engage them or demand that they take part in the campaign and do so actively. So, let's say that this can be a limitation. (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021)

Liliana Rodríguez Burgos, director of the Confederación Colombiana de ONG (CCONG) also argues that:

It was a campaign that was carried out with limited resources. I said to our reference person from Fundación ACPO, look, we need an evaluation of the campaign. This person told me she wrote on the WhatsApp group of the communications committee they created and nobody responded. So, I think that this is also a weakness that existed within the organizations themselves, because tasks were assigned to them, more responsibility to the organizations' teams and obviously, what was done was done, and don't ask me for anything else. We think that's what happened. (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021)

Liliana added: "I saw that people were not moving in the regions, no matter how much we followed up in the regions, with the federations and so on, it seems that they didn't have the capacity, or their priorities were other" (ibid.).

The executive director of Fundación Probono, Ana María Arboleda, who also was part of the working group in which the online mobilization was conceived, reflected on the organizations' priorities too:

We four leading organizations had a lot to do within our own organizations. That happens in times of crisis, one turns to see how to work in alliance, but when one sees that in one's own house there are a lot of needs and things to do, then one postpones the issue of alliances a little bit. We wrote that joint petition, we did the campaign, it worked, but then we went back to our 'own kitchen' so to speak, now we're back here. I think that this type of alliance needs someone to whom you can say, 'you take care of the follow-up of this'. We directors were with our own organizations with enormous needs, involved in this, but we never had the possibility, nor did we discuss putting someone in place who could move this forward, but in the end, despite this, the result was very positive. (A. M. Arboleda, personal communication, 10 November 2021)

Previous statements confirm that collective processes in times of crisis demand a high level of human resource capacity, time, commitment of the actors and a very strong agreement on goals, roles, and interests to be able to pass from short-term to long-term priorities.

NGOs' human resources are typically embedded within organizational structures that align job positions, tasks, and procedures to enable decision-making and daily operations. In the case of the joint petition, the subscription was made by executive directors and board members who applied protocols in order to subscribe to it without any apparent difficulty. In contrast, in the case of the social media campaign, results show that the areas of communication require strengthening, no matter the size of the NGO or whether communication is structured as a department or not. This is not only based on the low mobilization of the campaign through social media compared to the high number of subscriptions of the joint petition, but also it takes into account that the COVID-19 pandemic forced NGOs to have a different perspective of the relevance of communication, in particular online communication.

Digital resources: NGOs acknowledge their organizational websites and their presence in social media as relevant forms of communication technologies to gain visibility, position their work and interact with different stakeholders (AbouAssi et al., 2016). With regard to the stakeholders, NGOs use social media to promote, recruit, engage and create networking with them as well as to share knowledge, information

and build relationships (Nchabeleng et al., 2018). That's why it can be argued that digital resources improve the networking activities of NGOs.

In the case of the joint petition and social media campaign conducted by the Colombian non-governmental sector, communication technologies were key for their development and mobilization. This meant the use of different ICTs, also called in this research digital technologies or digital media. ICTs were an important variable of analysis during this research, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period in which there were physical barriers to establishing relationships when turning to online communication.

A convergence of ICTs such as meeting-software, social media platforms and digital communication materials were employed during the collective action process under study in order to facilitate communication among network actors as well as to amplify coverage and impact. An analysis of these communication technologies follows:

Meeting-Software: Videoconference applications such as Skype, Zoom, WebEx, Google Meets and Jitsi were employed to facilitate communication among the members of the working group. These software programs can be downloaded for free to use their basic settings, but a subscription is required to have access to special settings. Members of the working group met in person during the first meetings. However, once the lockdowns were in place, their meetings turned online. With respect to the elaboration of the petition, its discussion and incorporation of changes were discussed during online meetings till a final version was completed.

Social Media platforms: Twitter and Facebook were the two platforms selected by the communications committee to run the online campaign. According to the interviews, the joint petition was sent by the beginning of May as the first step to the target audiences in written form, namely to the President of the Colombian Republic and governmental bodies, aid development agencies, embassies and multilateral organisms. The social media campaign followed from May to June 2020. It aimed both to raise awareness of the role of the non-governmental sector as a key partner of the national government to mitigate the crisis and contribute in the recovery recognizing their diversity, knowledge and know-how and to influence the national government to include the non-governmental sector in the COVID-19 pandemic mitigation measures. Two mechanisms were employed to influence the target audiences: firstly, through

administrative channels that included official letters, the joint statement and meetings with key entities involved with the President of the Republic in the issuance of Decrees related to the economic, social and environmental measures to mitigate the implications of the pandemic and secondly, through the social media campaign.

According to David Sánchez, director of Fundación Techo, both mechanisms should be considered to conduct a mobilization. For him, giving the example of a Green Peace campaign, the petition itself won't save the artic. He said: "It's not only about how many people share the campaign communication materials, it's also about conducting working tables, negotiating, positioning the opinion of people, of technicians, and presenting a formal document too" (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021). However, he adds, "it's difficult to understand the results correlation. Anyway, both mechanisms should be in place to produce results" (ibid.).

On the other side, the communications committee concluded that Facebook and Twitter were the most employed social media by NGOs and they could offer a rapid, practical and low-cost tool to mobilizing online. That's why they created the campaign to be run in these two platforms. This goes in line with literature that considers social media as a public space that amplifies and optimizes the messages and missions of non-profit organizations, including NGOs. However, literature also acknowledges that non-profit organizations, including NGOs, lack of internet access and scarcity of human and financial resources to take care of their websites and take advantage of social media. This coincides with the results of the case study that show NGOs were able to subscribe to the joint petition but they fell apart during the social media campaign. According to the results of the online survey applied to the 201 network actors who subscribed to the petition but didn't participate in the social media campaign, lack of digital infrastructure and human resources (31%), little information about the campaign (35%) and other priorities related to the COVID-19 pandemic (35%) were the most influential factors to not joining.

Digital communication materials: a content strategy that encourages online engagement through the creation, curation, publication, and broadcasting of relevant content should be considered when using digital channels (Garsten & Bruce, 2018). In the case of the social media campaign, the communications committee, after brainstorming and discussing in a couple of meetings and through a WhatsApp group,

developed a concept note that was sent to the NGOs that subscribed to the petition in order to invite them to participate in the social media campaign and to explain to them the main aspects of the campaign, namely its goal, logo, tone, positioning strategy and frequency of messages (see Appendix 15). Besides, they prepared a 'dissemination kit' for the NGOs that included visual material, a publishing schedule, a data base of the other NGOs, which also subscribed to the petition, and examples of contents. The visual material corresponds to sections of the joint petition, short messages that explain the contribution of the non-governmental sector to democracy, peace and development in Colombia and messages related to how to distinguish a non-profit organization from other kind of organizations. Appendix 16 shows the dissemination kit and visual materials of the social media campaign.

For the director of Fundación ACPO, Mariana Córdoba, the joint petition and social media campaign responded to the logic of digital communication. Mariana mentions: "The convergence of different communication materials (use the joint petition together with different visual and content material), was accurate because there was a joint petition in which it was stated what to do, but it was also important to raise awareness through short but powerful messages and to have a hashtag. We had to mobilize according to the actual logic of online communication without missing the classical statement" (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021).

On May 21st, 2020 the social media campaign was launched. That day a reminder e-mail was sent to all organizations informing them that the campaign was going to be launched at 6:00 p.m. Each organization had to make a first publication at that time. The communications committee decided to launch it on a Thursday because they agreed this was one of the most effective days to publish. However, there wasn't a live broadcasting event with the organizers of the campaign nor with the NGOs involved to make an official launch in social media. According to Jessika Camargo, coordinator of communications of Fundación Probono and member of the communications committee, this couldn't be accomplished because of the overlapping agendas of the organizers (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021). Besides, Jessika explained that the communications committee considered that the information was already explained in the concept note, dissemination kit and in the joint petition itself (ibid.). For Liliana Rodriguez, director of CCONG, the communication committee proposed launching the campaign live on Facebook but, executive directors were a bit

afraid of doing it and preferred to wait to talk with the national government (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 29 July 2020). Taking into account the big number and diversity of NGOs, broadcasting the start of the social media campaign could have been a good strategy to booster linkages and interaction, in particular between peripheral actors and between them with the core actors of the network. This would have encouraged more active engagement.

With respect to the logo of the campaign (see Figure 6), it was elaborated by Corporación Reconciliación based on the discussions that the communications committee held. The instruction was to use it with all the visual pieces in order to make the campaign publicly known. To quote Jessika Camargo, coordinator of Communications at Fundación Probono: “We talked about highlighting Colombia, with the three national colors. The logo was thought as a puzzle that is being pieced together. We considered that the country consisted not only of three bodies, the public, the private, and people, but it consisted also of our sector that has been affected by the pandemic, and despite of this, the non-governmental sector is also a key actor for the reconstruction of the country in the middle of the emergency that was occurring” (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021). It is important to highlight that the logo didn’t include any of the organizers’ names nor participants of the joint petition. This might have contributed to strengthening the sense of group identity among the participants.

Figure 6 Logo of the social media campaign



Source: elaborated by the Communications Committee of the social media campaign.

As for the tone of the social media campaign, organizations were encouraged to use positive messages that showed their contribution as social actors to the reconstruction of the social fabric of the country. NGOs were invited to use figures, pictures, and videos about the scope and impact of their work. According to the results, NGOs preferred to use the pre-elaborated visual pieces and examples of contents proposed in the publishing schedule by the communications committee than come up with their

own messages. On the reasons why NGOs employed the digital communication materials, it's possible to refer to the following empirical evidence:

Laura Delgado, director of Programs of the Fundación Natalia Ponce de León explains: "I consider that the organization conducted by Fundación Probono was wonderful. They kept us informed on what was happening, they sent us all the communication materials on time, they explained to us how and when we should make the publications, the coordination with the publishing schedule was very good, because we knew exactly which copies and hashtags we had to employ. I found this awesome, because we didn't have to depend on them or ask them all the time when to post" (L. Delgado, personal communication, 18 November 2021).

Another director who referred not only to the digital communication materials but also to the joint petition was Carolina Calderón, executive director of Fundación Funcicar:

This was possible because there was previous work done by the CCONG. That facilitated our task. If the joint petition had been issued as a simple draft, it would have been more difficult to stop my activities getting into the campaign, even though it was a campaign for NGOs. Besides, the communications staff would have said they had to submit a report or prepare a fact sheet, their work is very intense. We hadn't made it. Instead, the work was already done with the messages, there was already a structured campaign for social media, and it wasn't complex. It's important to highlight this, because the campaign could transmit a message. It was key in particular in territories as many of these NGOs don't have social media. (C. Calderón, personal communication, 19 February 2021)

For Liliana Rodríguez Burgos, executive director of CCONG, there were organizations in territories with difficulties accessing the internet or without social media accounts. Liliana indicates: "If we don't come directly to them to explain them why and what we are doing, it's very difficult that they participate" (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 29 July 2020). Liliana indicated that CCONG used the e-mail sent with the concept note and the dissemination kit to explain the campaign to these organizations (ibid.).

Previous statements confirm the importance of developing structured social media campaigns in order to respond effectively to the lack of human resources and facilitate their mobilization. However, the empirical evidence also indicates that social media campaigns studied with a network approach represent an opportunity for learning, in

particular for local NGOs active in distant regions. That's why it is not only about ensuring the exchange of information with the use of pre-elaborated messages or visual pieces, but also about fostering linkages through reflection and interaction in order to achieve an active online engagement and in that way sustain the network.

With regard to the positioning strategy, it consisted of employing the hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia and #UnaONGes (in English #KeyPieceForColombia and #anNGOis) in the publications related to the campaign and in other publications that NGOs were producing as part of their work. By using the hashtags, there was more visibility of the campaign and also of the NGOs. Besides, the communications staff could connect these hashtags to their regular publications avoiding another task for them. Furthermore, they were encouraged to mention, tag or include any other NGOs from a data base in order to generate more engagement. From the target audiences, in particular the account of the president of the republic was also tagged.

With respect to the frequency of messaging, the communications committee suggested at least one publication per day. Publications correspond to visual pieces and pre-written messages based on both the joint petition content and on the work of NGOs as facilitators and key actors for sustainable development, democracy and peace building in the country. The publication's content was proposed by the communications committee in a publishing schedule.

According to the number of posts during the social media campaign, the highest traffic of publications occurred during the launch of the social media campaign on May 21st, 2020. This corresponds to 130 tweets, which makes 23,8% of the total of tweets (545) and 15 Facebook posts, which makes 20% of the total of Facebook publications (75). This confirms the positive engagement of the NGOs at the beginning of the campaign and the good coordination role of the communications committee. It's also relevant to mention that the publications recalled from Twitter were more than seven times higher than those from Facebook. This might indicate that NGOs prefer their Twitter accounts for this kind of campaign and that the practice of interlinking Twitter and Facebook is still not very widespread. Furthermore, the assumption of the communications committee that Thursday was one of the most effective days to publish was confirmed with more than 60 tweets every Thursday during this campaign. The number of Tweets on the other days was between 15 and 30. I cannot provide evidence explaining why

Thursday was particularly active. Future research could investigate the factors contributing to variations in posting activity across different days of the week.

Even though this case study doesn't study the metrics³² of the social media campaign but the qualitative dimensions of the network, information on the number of posts and a general overview of the frequency of shares and comments were very useful to identify the actors' engagement, understand the scope of the campaign and assess its results.

Other digital media: there were other forms of communication technologies used to mobilize the joint petition and social media campaign besides social media platforms. According to the results, at internal level, NGOs used e-mails, newsletters, banners and their websites. Besides, the Fundación ACPO indicated that they used their newspaper "El Campesino"³³ to mobilize the joint petition and social media campaign. At an external level, two articles were referred to by the organizers of the initiative published online about the joint petition, one by the national magazine *Semana* (see Appendix 17) and another on the newspaper called *Publimetro*.

NON-MATERIAL RESOURCES

Understood as the shared values and principles that facilitated and sustained the collective action process under study, the results indicate that trust, solidarity, and organizational legitimacy facilitated the formation and duration of the network. Non-material resources were also key to facilitating the realization of the other network features explored in this collective action process, namely coordination and timing, organizational learning and identity links.

Even though the empirical evidence for this kind of resource is less explicit than the statements related to material resources in this study, they were essential for the creation of the joint petition and development of the social media campaign. Besides, beyond this collective action process, they constitute an asset for the work of NGOs.

³² Social media metrics refers to a system of measures that monitor and assess social media performance (Pencarelli & Gabriella Mele, 2019). They include engagement, amplification and virality rates as well as reach, impressions, and awareness metrics (Newberry, 2023). In order to track them, there are online analytical tools. Some of these are free of charge such as Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram Analytics and can be used by any user but other tools require a monetary subscription and are designed for in-depth analysis conducted by experts (Tien, 2023).

³³ According to Mariana Córdoba, Director of Fundación ACPO, this online newspaper has a very powerful story of advocacy, transformation, and participation of the rurality in Colombia.

Not only when NGOs lack of adequate financial or other material resources, non-material resources are cornerstone of NGOs to exercise their development, social and political role.

With respect to trust, Liliana Rodríguez, director of CCONG explains that the collective process contributed to building trust by establishing linkages with actors they didn't know before (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021). According to her, they could share with new actors what they were doing in favor of the non-governmental sector during the pandemic and now these actors look for them to work together (ibid.). Another executive director who referred to the building of trust was Marta Royo, director of Asociación Profamilia. For Marta, during the pandemic, national and local NGOs had to reinforce their trust in each other in order to work together (M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022). This means that not only local NGOs had to acknowledge that national NGOs could support them, but national NGOs had to recognize and trust the work of local NGOs (ibid.). The same position was referred to by Arturo Rodríguez, administrative director of Fundación Hablemos, who explained in an interview that there was a very strange but interesting phenomenon of forming relationships. Arturo indicates that even though the pandemic distanced them away from many actors, it facilitated new relationships with national NGOs that looked for them and trusted them to cooperate at a local level considering the restrictions these actors had to overcome (A. Rodríguez, personal communication, 14 October 2021). This resulted in a larger network of new partner NGOs to work with after the pandemic (ibid.). Laura Delgado, director of programs at Fundación Natalia Ponce de León also considers that the pandemic facilitated the building of trust in coordinating and working with different actors towards the same goal (L. Delgado, personal communication, 18 November 2021).

The building of trust among the actors of the collective action process followed the same principle explained above taking into account the diversity of the non-governmental sector in terms of size, target populations, field and region of work. The peripheral and bridge actors trusted the leadership and joint work of the central actors organized through the working group and communications committee to formulate the joint petition and develop the social media campaign according to collective interests and needs. Reciprocally, the central actors trusted the transparency and work of the

peripheral and bridge actors to subscribe to and mobilize the joint petition and social media campaign.

With respect to solidarity, the collective process might be acknowledged as a manifestation of the union and solidarity among NGOs through a difficult time such the COVID-19 pandemic. For Margarita Macías Ramos, executive director of Fundación Coprous: “The sector has made advances precisely because pioneer people have lead spaces and fought for human rights, that’s why we need to unite” (M. Macías Ramos, personal communication, 29 November 2021). However, the empirical evidence indicates that there is still a need to broaden the participation of actors and make these initiatives more systematic and programmatic. To quote Sonia Gallardo, executive director of Comité de Rehabilitación: “I still think that unity is strength, but it’s missing a well-articulated and well-done union, a union where we all have to be together, because if we want to be the same people with the same campaign, we are not going to achieve nothing either” (S. Gallardo, personal communication, 8 November 2021). Besides, the director of FAONG, Carlos Monsalve also referred to the need for better articulation among NGOs: “The national government has a lot of responsibility towards the social and cultural sector, especially with the weaknesses to which they are subjected. But internally, we have responded to this by allying ourselves and strengthening each other, strengthening solidarity, and I believe that this should be more systematic and more programmatic, and this aspect we have to work more forcefully, on how to strengthen our capacity for a network of articulation” (C. Monsalve, personal communication, 6 November 2021).

Finally, with respect to organizational legitimacy as a non-material resource, Lister (2003) explains it and makes it dependent in particular on three elements: accountability, representativeness and performance. However, these elements make the study of organizational legitimacy very technical (*ibid.*, p. 178). That’s why it’s also very important to reflect on for whom, for what and how legitimacy is created within a socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions (*ibid.*, p. 178). In the case of this research, organizational legitimacy was analyzed as “the extent to which a network can convince organizations that the network is valuable” (Raeymaeckers, 2016).

Based on the results, two forms of organizational legitimacy could be identified. Firstly, through the positive perceived reputation and level of representativeness of central and bridge actors. Secondly, through the positioning of the social media campaign as an institutional initiative of the non-governmental sector. Empirical evidence that supports both results follow:

With respect to the positive reputation and level of representativeness of central and bridge actors, the results highlight the strong role of CCONG as a national platform of NGOs. CCONG possesses expertise in topics related to the non-profit sector and occupies a leading position at the national level, making the contributions of the non-governmental sector visible and advocating for favorable operating conditions. A similar role is played by its federations at the regional level. To illustrate CCONG's legitimacy, some NGO directors stated:

I have seen the CCONG to take ownership in the defense of the interests of the NGOs in the country [...]. (C. Calderón, personal communication, 19 February 2021)

For me CCONG is the entity that brings us together, just as for example ANDI³⁴ for the industry, or FENALCO³⁵ for the merchants, and this is the only association, no matter which field of work, people, environment, animals, house-building or whatever, every NGO can belong to it. (C. Ritzel, personal communication, 4 January 2022)

I don't know what was going on with other NGOs, but we were very busy. The work that CCONG makes is vital, they open spaces for reflection, they show other perspectives and that's their mission, so they have time to do it. (G. Hidalgo, personal communication, 4 November 2021)

The Confederation is very important for us in several ways: firstly, because we recognize its consultative character on the one hand and its historical character, I mean, its importance within the country and within everything that has been built around the enabling environment, which are the two words that come out of the confederation [...].(D. Martínez Torres, personal communication, 12 November 2021)

I think that the Confederation has been that place where recognition is given to the organizations, well, a place where organizations themselves can say: we have minimum or maximum quality standards and we are willing to show ourselves in that way, just as we also have shared standards that we also

³⁴ ANDI stands for Asociación Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia (in English National Business Association of Colombia).

³⁵ FENALCO stands for Federación Nacional de Comerciantes Empresarios (in English National Association of Merchants).

demand to be recognized. (D. Martinez Torres, personal communication, 12 November 2021)

With regard to the last statement, CCONG and its federations have established mechanisms to make the work of NGOs visible, assess their performance, and make NGOs accountable to their stakeholders. During the interviews NGOs acknowledged these mechanisms, mentioning several times the social accountability tool and system of accreditation (in Spanish *rendición social pública de cuentas y sistema de acreditación*). Results show that through these mechanisms NGOs have been linked to CCONG and its federations.

The following statement of Gloria Maria Bustamante, director of research and systematization of Corporación Comunidades Educativas de Base (Combos), summarizes the relevance of such tools to legitimize the work of the non-governmental sector and strengthen the leading positions of CCONG and its federations: “We have for example the social accountability tool, it is a very important strategy because it puts us in the public eye and shows what we do and shows our figures, it is a matter of transparency, of gaining trust with society which is very important, because in Colombia we have also suffered discrimination and persecution, we have been linked to armed actors, and this mechanisms plays a very important role” (G. Bustamante, personal communication, 19 October 2021).

David Sánchez, director of Fedecaldas, one of CCONGs’ regional federations which participated of the collective action process, referred to the challenge of increasing the number of confederated organizations. For David, the CCONG is well positioned and acknowledged, its team has grown, it has international partners, its financial figures go well, but there is a point he considers frustrating, namely the number of organizations that belong to the platform, there must be from 600 to 1000 members (D. Martinez, personal communication, 9 April 2021). This is something David feels committed to working for, on a strategy in order to seek representation and legitimacy (*ibid.*). David compares the board members meetings’ attendance of the FAONG and Fedecaldas to the ones held by the CCONG and he considers it’s missing the presence of other sectors and collectivities. This is a challenge and he has offered himself to work in this aspect (*ibid.*).

With regard to the second form of legitimization, which concerns the positioning of the social media campaign as an institutional initiative of the non-governmental sector, two aspects stand out. First, the organizers decided to draft the petition and conduct the social media campaign exclusively on behalf of the non-governmental sector, without the participation of other actors. Thus, it remained an initiative rooted in and led by this sector. According to Sergio Guarín, executive director of Corporación Reconciliación, there were politicians from different parties that wanted to subscribe to the petition, but the working group agreed to keep the collective process out of political campaigns and topics (S. Guarín, personal communication, 22 February 2021). Besides, Sergio indicated that if politicians participated, this prevented other NGOs from joining in (ibid.). This opinion was also shared by Liliana Rodríguez, director of CCONG, who indicated that during the launch of the statement, some NGOs proposed allowing everyone from politicians to ordinary people to subscribe to the petition (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 29 July 2020). In the end, they rejected this idea arguing that this initiative was from non-profit organizations. Instead of external participation, they suggested conducting political dialogue with the national parliament and other opinion leaders after disseminating the joint petition. Furthermore, petition was also not open to ordinary people but legally constituted NGOs. With this subscription mechanism, initiators wanted to guarantee a transparent, trustworthy and legitimate non-governmental collective process.

Secondly, since it was a social media campaign led by NGOs, the Twitter and Facebook accounts used were primarily institutional or corporate. Only a few NGO staff members posted content from their personal accounts. In this sense, the Twitter accounts of twelve executive directors were identified, each of whom made single retweets of the campaign's communication materials.

NGO executive directors and their board members prefer and expect to employ the corporate social media accounts of their NGOs instead of their own. To quote Carolina Calderón, executive director of Fundación Funcicar: "Our individual activism is off, it's more institutional and collective. If I had to record a video with the messages of the campaign, I'd have done it, because my name has reputation, good or bad, it has, but I'm very careful because I'm a public figure, I'm the spokesperson of an organization" (C. Calderón, personal communication, 19 February 2021). Besides, Carolina adds: "This is a dilemma with the ethical code. Indeed, this topic has been discussed with

Funcicar's team. Funcicar observes the political actors, it relates with the business sector. Imagine I'm leaving a meeting with the mayor and after that I post something against a public servant. It's very contradictory. I consider it a threat for the sustainability of Funcicars' programs. I'm very strict with this" (ibid). Another director who referred to this was Mariana Córdoba, from Fundación ACPO. Mariana explains: "I maintain my personal social media accounts separately from my professional activity. Even though I have no notification message that indicates that what I post reflect my personal opinion, it's a personal account. I don't remember if I post something related to the campaign. I think, I did it, because I repost all what I find from ACPO or CCONG, but the dissemination was done principally through ACPO accounts and the newspaper "El Campesino" (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021).

In the case of David Sánchez, executive director of Fundación Techo, he admits to being very active in social networks, but he has become more cautious since he became executive director of this foundation. To quote him: "I'm very active in Instagram, I would like to be more active in Twitter, but since I became director of Fundación Techo, I try to be careful with this social network. The nuances of the social networks are very different. That means it's very different to post in Facebook, or LinkedIn or Twitter" (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021). David continues: "Twitter can become easily a field of war because there is impunity towards the opinions given by any person. I'm very active mobilizing/disseminating information, but I try to be cautious with the personal opinion of what I communicate. This doesn't mean that I don't give my personal opinion of what it's happening in the country, but this can become a double-edged sword, because even though they are my personal social networks, one is becoming renowned in the country" (ibid.). At the end, David concludes, "I try to employ in my social networks the communication approach of Fundación Techo, we present actively what the organization does, and what we seek in the regions, we don't criticize or attack, we always try to generate good proposals" (ibid.).

Based on the empirical evidence, the use of NGOs' social networks as well as that of their executive directors can become a source of legitimization of their work. However, there must be clear ethical codes, procedures and information policies to handle the contents and flow of information in these communication platforms.

In the case of coalition processes, the exchange of resources occurs in a more deliberate manner specifically to accomplish the common goals of the specific project or campaign (Ernstson, 2011). With regard to this, it could be argued that material resources play an instrumental role and once the goal of the collective process is or is not achieved, their flow or circulation is reduced till it stops. This seems to be the case of the joint petition and social media campaign, in which the flow of information, the use of communication materials, the allocation of personnel and time occurred only during the duration of the campaign.

6.3. Timing and Coordination

Time is considered a key dimension in crises management and collective action processes. In crises, there is a short decision time to implement any management action (Penuel et al., 2013).

Quick to respond is considered one of the main characteristics of effective non-profit leaders in times of crisis as well as other characteristics such as being a team player, strategic, transparent, self-composed and prepared (Gilstrap et al., 2016). With respect to collective action processes, they can occur at a specific or different point of time through single or repeated collaboration between actors (Ernstson, 2011).

Based on the survey results and the empirical evidence of this research, the collective action process carried out by the Colombian non-governmental sector was well-timed. 90 out of 94 respondents of the online survey considered that the joint petition was relevant and timely taking into account the situation at that moment and the eventual consequences of the COVID-19 crisis for the activities of these organizations and for their value proposition.

From the online interviews, the statement of Mariana Córdoba, executive director of Fundación ACPO, can be quoted to address the relevance of the quick response: “I think, it was very strategic, the response was quick, it was timely. If we had waited to evaluate which the measures would be, or how the outlook was, results hadn’t been resounding. The response was very fast, the strategy was appropriate. There was a need and intention to show a united social sector. However, [the joint petition and social media campaign] could have taken place more simultaneously [...], but I insist, if we had had six months to plan an advocacy/influence strategy, but it wasn’t like that,

it was a response to a difficult situation. That's why I think it was very good". (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021).

To quote also Carolina Calderón, executive director of Funcicar on the well-timed response: "It's important to support the leadership of CCONG and the rapid way of reaction, because even though it was distressing, in the middle of the pandemic, maybe in a year we will be freer of COVID, but it will take us more time to get out from the economic setback. I think it was a reaction in time and must be sustained" (C. Calderón, personal communication, 19 February 2021).

With respect to the duration of the campaign, the findings indicate that it was conducted under a short-term timing approach. The main organizers or central network actors agreed that the social media campaign had to take place timely. This also meant to plan it for a short duration of time in order to reduce the invested material resources and considering the other priorities at the moment of the organizations. However, organizations such as Fundown, represented in this study by Claudia Patricia Ritzel, president of the board of directors, explained that because of the short timing, they could only share the joint petition and social media campaign partly with some of their partners (C. Ritzel, personal communication, 4 January 2022). If they had had more time, they would have disseminated them more broadly (*ibid.*). Indeed, Claudia indicates that the information about the social media campaign was received one week before the closing date of the campaign. This meant that they couldn't take advantage of it as they wanted (*ibid.*). For her, it was a very good campaign and they were aware a campaign should have a starting and closing date, but they consider the campaign didn't have the expected impact because of its short timing (*ibid.*). Indeed, this could might happen with other organizations too, all of them could have joined late, finished Claudia.

On the other side, despite the short-timing approach, results indicate that the network achieved its collective goal and it might be reactivated/employed for other collective action processes. However, this implies strengthening the five dimensions of the collective action network addressed in this chapter, namely actors, resources, coordination and timing, organizational learning and identity linkages.

With respect to coordination, also referred to as network governance, Provan & Kenis (2007) highlight its key role in the overall functioning of the network and its outcomes.

For them, “network governance involves the use of institutions and structures of authority and collaboration to allocate the resources and to coordinate and control the joint actions across the network as a whole” (ibid., p. 231).

Provan & Kenis (2007) classify network governance along two dimensions: degree of centralization and internal versus external governance. In terms of centralization, decentralized networks are managed collectively by members, with decisions shared relatively equally despite differences in size or resources. In contrast, centralized networks are coordinated by a leading organization or a small group of members with sufficient resources, legitimacy, and performance; an intermediate form exists when one organization leads but others also share coordination responsibilities. Regarding internal versus external governance, internally governed networks are managed by members themselves, either all, a subset, or a leading organization, whereas externally governed networks are coordinated by an organization outside the network.

The coalition process under study used two coordination mechanisms: the working group and the communications committee. Based on the network governance typology proposed by Provan & Kenis (2007), it can be classified as a centralized participant network governance. This classification applies even though the organizations did not deliberately choose any specific form of network governance. According to the empirical evidence, a group of four NGOs with resources, legitimacy and good performance assumed the coordination role establishing a working group. After some joint work the working group mandated the establishment of a committee of communications composed of the heads of communications of their NGOs. Governance turned centralized through these two institutions or mechanisms, but it remained shared between the members of these mechanisms. This means that there was no single or leading organization nor external entity created to assume the governance role. In the representation of the network (see Figure 5 on page 120) both coordination mechanisms constitute the central node.

Each mechanism of coordination with their functions, decision-making procedures, and the roles played by the organizations belonging to them will be explained as follows based on the empirical results:

Working Group: it consisted of the NGOs’ executive directors who initiated the collective action process, except for Mr. Diego Díaz who acted as administrative

director from Fundación Techo. The other directors were Ms. Ana María Arboleda, executive director from Fundación Probono, Mr. Sergio Guarín, executive director from Corporación Reconciliación Colombia, and Ms. Liliana Rodríguez, executive director from CCONG. It's important to mention that Mr. David Sánchez, executive director of Fundación Techo assumed the role of member of the working group after Mr. Diego Díaz finished his working contract with Fundación Techo. Besides, Mr. Sergio Guarín didn't continue as executive director from Corporación Reconciliación from March 2021, shortly after his interview for this research. Both dismissals were confirmed by an interview partner of this research and an automatic email, respectively.

With respect to the establishment of the working group, Fundación Techo approached the CCONG and Fundación Probono to create the working group. According to Fundación Techo's executive director, David Sánchez, they have had a very good relationship with the director of CCONG and they have also worked with different lawyers companies connecting with Fundación Probono (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021). Besides, both organizations are well known because of their advocacy work (ibid.). In particular, CCONG has a broad NGOs' convening capacity (ibid.). In the same way, Fundación Probono invited Corporación Reconciliación Colombia to join the working group taking into account that Fundación Probono was a member of the board of directors of Corporación Reconciliación with the role of President Chair. The working group was established in April 2020 and it remained active till September 2020.

According to Sergio Guarín, executive director of Corporación Reconciliación Colombia, the working group began as a space of reflection given the current COVID-19 situation (S. Guarín, personal communication, 22 February 2021). During their meetings, Sergio mentions, they analyzed the decrees that were being issued by the national government but didn't include NGOs such as subsidies of rent or employment (ibid.). Initially, Sergio explains, they didn't think about a collective action, but when they realized, the conclusions they had reached, were also the same as other organizations, they decided to come up with the joint statement (ibid.). For Liliana Rodríguez, CCONG executive director, the working group was initially a space to meet and exchange what they were doing during a time of crisis (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021). Once the joint statement was issued and disseminated and the social media campaign took place, she explains, they tried to do other activities

to keep the working group active such as meetings to discuss the tax reform during the months of August and September 2020 (ibid.). However, the level of participation decreased and the working group didn't operate any longer (ibid.). Even though the working group dissolved, directors of CCONG and Fundación Probono indicated that bilateral relationships among them continued on topics such as the tax reform for the non-profit sector and legal and regulatory frameworks of the non-profit work. Besides, Fundación Probono is working with Fundación Techo in two other network initiatives related to COVID-19 implications. Fundación Probono mentioned that the work with Corporación Reconciliación Colombia didn't continue because the organization is in liquidation. This was confirmed by the director of CCONG

With regard to the continuation of the working group, Liliana's statement can be highlighted:

Perhaps the working group will be reactivated. I think it's necessary to consider that these spaces emerge in critical moments to fulfil their purpose. In our case, the purpose was to conduct the campaign, make it visible, and say what was ok and what was wrong and that was the scope. But I think that in another moment of crisis like the tax reform that is coming, the working group should be reactivated. This is the way these mechanisms/spaces work, working groups, networks, they come together to take collective action at a given moment, the purpose is fulfilled and afterwards they emerge again, that's very important. (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021)

With respect to the functions of the working group, the results indicate, it was responsible for writing and disseminating the joint statement and for following-up/monitoring the work of the communications committee. To quote Sergio Guarín, administrative director of Corporación Reconciliación: "My role was to disseminate the joint statement through all my internal mechanisms and mobilize its subscription. That's why I disseminated it with platforms, networks, supporting entities, working groups" (S. Guarín, personal communication, 22 February 2021). Liliana, director of CCONG, also refers to the working group functions: "We played a key role till we issued the joint statement and mobilized its subscription. For this, the directors were very active. In our case, we invited networks and federations, to join the initiative and to help us to mobilize. As for the social media campaign, it was delegated to the personnel responsible of communications" (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021).

Regarding the frequency of the working group meetings, Liliana explains: “We met very oft, I think once per week. Those meetings began in Abril, and continued in May, and June. During those months, before the joint statement was released, there was too much movement in the working group. Now, during the two weeks of the social media campaign, we met and review, we discussed how we could approach the government, how else we could disseminate the joint statement. We strategized some actions and we did a kind of follow-up, each of us assumed responsibilities and fulfilled them from their role of directors” (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021). With regard to the decision-making, Liliana indicated: “At the beginning, because it was really too much to decide, our way of work was to reach agreement, four of us had to approve, this taking into account that we four submitted the joint statement to the government” (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021).

With respect to the relationship of the working group with the communications committee, it was very weak. Based on the interview results, the working group mandated its creation, but they worked separately. Besides, it seems there was not a permanent follow-up on its work.

In conclusion, even though each director fulfilled their role as a member of the working group, and they worked jointly on the petition and its subscription, this mechanism of coordination could have played a more significant steering and connecting role between the different levels of the network during both moments of the collective process, namely the joint petition subscription and the social media campaign. The working group could have enhanced more interaction between actors of the collective process by establishing mechanisms of communication during the collective action process that employed not only social media platforms but build a communications ecosystem. Besides, the working group failed to forge a relationship with the communications committee, which they commissioned to conduct the social media campaign but didn't accompany nor monitor its work regularly. A better synchronization and distribution of tasks between both mechanisms have strengthened the network functioning.

Communications Committee: it consisted of the heads of communications of each of the NGOs that was part of the working group, namely Alexandra from Fundación Techo, Jessika Camargo from Fundación ACPO, David Hernández from Corporación

para la Reconciliación Colombia, and Ana María Rizo from Fundación ACPO on behalf of CCONG.

CCONG, as was mentioned in the section Network Actors, pooled organizational resources from the Fundación ACPO, which is a member of this national platform of NGOs and one of the members of the CCONG board of directors. According to Liliana Rodríguez, director of CCONG: “It was ACPO that accompanied as strategic partner all related issues of the campaign’s mobilization. ACPO designated a person, Ana María [ACPO’s head of communications]. We provided resources in order to count with a person from ACPO that assumed this role. Ana María met with the heads of communications of Techo, Reconciliación and Probono, and they designed everything related to the communications plan of the campaign, they were given the responsibility to disseminate the campaign” (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021).

To quote Jessika Camargo, member of the communications committee and coordinator of communications of Fundación Probono, on the establishment of this coordination mechanism:

Initially, directors expressed their concern about the visibility of the joint petition. They met to talk about the signatures and other issues, and they agreed on the need for giving more visibility to the topic. That’s why they conveyed the communications teams so communicators could make decisions. Firstly, the executive directors created a WhatsApp group so we could know each other a bit better. The first time we met, we talked about what we wanted to do, how we could do it, it was a brainstorming. If I’m not wrong, we met like three or four times after that, but we also talked all the time on WhatsApp and by e-mail, which I think was our main channel of communication. (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021)

The previous quotation coincides with statements of the members of the working group according to which the communications committee was created by their initiative, but they provided it with independence and autonomy to function. Liliana Rodríguez, CCONG executive director, explains: “They [heads of communication] were the ones who led the whole mobilization, all the directors said, well, let those who know about it be the ones in charge” (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021).

With respect to the functions of the communications committee, it was in charge of designing and conducting the social media campaign. Jessika Camargo, communications coordinator of Fundación Probono, explains further: “We knew that

we had the support of more than 200 NGOs that had already signed the joint petition, but we considered the four of us could lead the construction of the campaign” (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021). According to Jessika, for the social media campaign, each organization had a basic task, namely to disseminate the message and demonstrate why NGOs were key to Colombia (ibid.). Jessika further highlighted the following aspect of the campaign: “We had to depart from the fact that every organization did a very different work, in fact, this campaign is quite different from Probono or Reconciliación’s work, but what we realized is that everyone from their own point of view or even if we work in the same field but maybe in different regions or cities, with different populations, etc., each organization had the task to demonstrate with figures, with their work, why the social organizations were a key piece for Colombia, that was the basic task for each organization” (ibid.).

With respect to the roles of each member of the communications committee, Jessika Camargo, annotated: “Reconciliación was in charge of the campaign’s logo and the visual pieces, we developed together a dissemination kit that we sent to the social organizations so they could help us to spread the campaign in their social networks and in the different channels of communication they used. CCONG supported the construction of the publishing schedule and from Fundación Probono we were in charge of the contact with the organizations, inviting them to join the initiative” (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021). In a second interview with Jessika, she added: “Alexandra from Fundación Techo supported, if I’m not wrong, the publishing schedule and the visual pieces, not too much the copywriting, but the messages that were included on the visual pieces” (J. Camargo, personal communication, 3 May 2023). With regard to the decision-making practices, Jessika explained that it was very horizontal, decisions were made together, each of them made proposals during the meetings, provided contributions, but together they strategized and came up with the communication materials, even though they divided tasks to be more effective (ibid.).

In conclusion, this mechanism as well as the working group mechanism can be classified as centralized participant network governance. This classification is made because of the limited number of NGOs that belonged to it, being the same of the working group, and considering the horizontal decision-making practices of the

committee. With respect to the continuation of the communications committee, it dissolved after the social media campaign took place including the WhatsApp group that was active after the campaign but it was deleted according to the second interview with Jessika.

From the empirical evidence, it's clear that the group of heads of communications had the expertise to create and conduct the social media campaign, they were very active in its design and especially its coordination role was notorious during its launch and first days of mobilization. However, they did not establish a closer contact with the other organizations members of the network in order to encourage their online engagement. According to Jessika, "there was no a general meeting with all the organizations, in topics related to communications, it was more by e-mail or on the phone. Let's say that if they looked for us, we responded. Particularly, I was in charge of talking to the organizations". This statement evidences that it was possible to interact and learn through the network but this dimension wasn't sufficiently exercised. This could have been an indirect task of the communications committee and the working group but they couldn't facilitate it successfully due to other priorities, lack of organizational resources, or the instrumental function of the campaign.

The following section presents where the organizational learning occurred in the network based on the empirical evidence.

6.4. Organizational Learning

The relationship between networks and learning has received increasing attention in recent years. According to the organizational learning literature, learning can occur at the individual, group, or organizational levels (Bapuji & Crossan, 2004). At the organizational level, learning takes place between firms and within networks or industries (ibid., p. 412). One key advantage of networks composed of different organizations is their potential to foster knowledge creation (Hartley & Allison, 2002). Thus, networks are understood as sources of learning in which knowledge creation forms an integral part of the learning process (ibid., p. 104). This research conceptualizes organizational learning as a relational phenomenon (Binder, 2019).

Based on the empirical evidence, this research found that, NGOs could interact, exchange information, experiences, and resources, create and transfer knowledge and gain and unite capacities as part of the collective action process. In this sense,

organizational learning was more notorious in the core of the network (central layer) but less evident, even rare in the peripheries.

With respect to the core of the network, Sergio Guarín, executive director of Corporación Reconciliación and member of this coordination mechanism, indicated: “This was a collaborative experience in which doubts and own experiences were shared” (S. Guarín, personal communication, 22 February 2021). Sergio continues: “The fact of gathering, reviewing the decrees, elaborating the joint petition, mobilizing it, this made that the organizations could strengthen their relationships. Organizations could get to know about legal and administrative topics, and this as a group. Besides, there is now a network that can be used” (ibid.). According to Liliana Rodríguez, executive director of CCONG and member as well of the working group, the collective action generated more dialogue and the chance to approach other actors in order to talk about how the organizations have reacted to the crisis (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 7 April 2021).

As for the communications committee, positioned as a central actor of the network, Jessika Camargo, communications coordinator of the Fundación Probono and member of it, indicated that this was a collective construction and that is what she liked the most about the campaign. Jessika explains: “To be sincere, I’ve been working more or less six years organizing the communications of non-profit organizations and I hadn’t participated in the construction of a campaign like this. While it is true that each organization works in different fields, in different territories and for different populations, some of them with more resources than others, our competition isn’t the other organization [...] then it was very nice to organize ourselves and work together. Personally and as communications coordinator that was the victory of the campaign” (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021). Jessica also referred to the relevance of the collective process later during the interview: “[...] I agree completely that we keep on conducting this kind of jointly work, it was really rewarding because of many reasons. Firstly, it’s advisable, from the communications area perspective, to make more visible our daily work. For us it’s very positive regarding the visibility. Besides, one learns from the area, from their colleagues, these are other experiences, other points of view, it’s a learning space” (ibid.).

With respect to the learning relationship between the peripheral actors, it was established through the communications committee, in particular with the Fundación Probono who assumed the role of learning facilitator. Jessika Camargo illustrates the communications committee's competences as learning facilitators:

When we did the process of building the campaign, what we thought is that we are organizations that have experience in the topic of communications. This is not common in organizations, let's say that organizations are more concerned with the issue of operations, project implementation, and direct attention to their beneficiaries and so on, rather than communications. So, what we thought was, since we have the strength of having these four people, who have a certain amount of experience, let's build a template that can be used by these organizations. Then, I sent them an e-mail with the publishing schedule, the communication materials, and the messages. I told them these are the logos, copies and dates that we propose. I made for them like a special guide so that they could use the templates. (J. Camargo, personal communication, 3 May 2023)

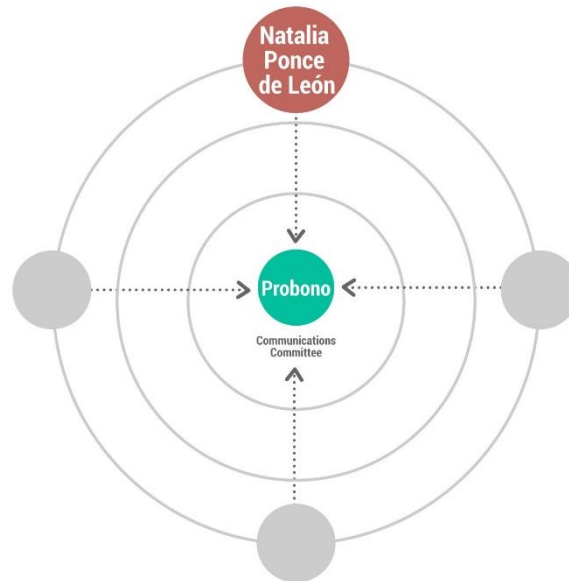
With respect to how bridging and peripheral organizations responded to this learning facilitation, Jessika Camargo, explains further:

Small organizations replied to me, they asked me for instance, what if I don't have social media accounts? I suggested alternatives taking into account their channels of communication [...] There were also big organizations that didn't have a communications person, since they are more concerned with operations, because of resources and strategic topics. If I'm not wrong one of the organizations was Fundación Natalia Ponce de León. They are a big organization in terms of what they do. They have several [communication] channels and they continue growing impressively. They asked me for instructions, they were intense, but in a good way, saying to me: explain to us, when do we have to publish? What time is more convenient? We've published, now what do we have to do? and so on. I addressed this in the communications committee and told them that it was impressive that such a big organization was benefiting so much from our support. In fact, they were demanding more from us than we could do, because we had other obligations within the same organization, but let's say that as far as organizations were looking for us, we responded to them, especially me who was in charge of talking to the organizations, but that was the contact we established. We never had a general meeting with the organizations or something like that to address communication issues, that didn't happen, it was only through e-mail and by phone, if I'm not wrong. (J. Camargo, personal communication, 3 May 2023)

According to the previous statements, signs of organizational learning were identified between Fundación Probono as the learning facilitator member of the communications committee and some of the peripheral organizations.

Figure 5.5 shows how the organizational learning emerged between this central actor and peripheral actors. In this example, learning occurred in a bilateral direction between Fundación Probono and some peripheral actors such as Fundación Natalia Ponce de León, but only through the explicit request of the peripheral actor compared to the permanent and natural learning in the core of the network.

Figure 5.5 Example of organizational learning between central and peripheral actors



For Jessika Camargo, it's important for future collective actions to think from a communication development approach and be able to integrate all the organizations (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021). This means for her to provide them not only with the [communications] idea but with the tools and support to be able to conduct a relevant joint project (ibid.).

Regarding the internal priorities that prevent them assuming the learning facilitator role, Jessika indicates: “Undoubtedly someone with the role of community manager [...] would definitely have made the difference. Someone concerned about building and strengthening networks, adding capacities, everything that a person as a community manager can do, review how the results are going, what the most effective strategies are, a thousand other things. I am completely sure that a person dedicated to this project could have achieved more results” (J. Camargo, personal communication, 3 May 2023). According to the results, the other members of the communications committee didn't assume a learning facilitator role as Fundación Probono did. Instead of this role, they participated actively in the design and

mobilization of the social media campaign. Based on the results, they could have also fostered the interaction among the different actors of the network and in this way, they could have enhanced organizational learning too, but they concentrated on their role as developers of the social media campaign.

Finally, there is no empirical evidence of interaction among peripheral actors within the framework of the collective process itself. They mobilized the social media campaign mainly by using the communication materials, giving likes, doing retweets and making few comments on the publications, but in the framework of the collective action process itself there were no incentives nor mechanisms to promote their interaction. However, they highlighted during the interviews the relevance of sharing experiences with other organizations related to the strategies implemented to tackle the crisis brought by the pandemic. To quote Sister Ana Judith Salazar, executive director of Asociación Gota de Leche on this type of organizational learning: “We shared with the federation of NGOs. They trained and empowered us a lot, in particular with the experiences of other foundations which reinvented themselves to cope with the situation”(A. J. Salazar, personal communication, 10 November 2021). Sister Ana continues: “Sharing with these organizations, there was the chance to create or apply something they were using, or look for the way to continue supporting the target populations according to the available options or try to manage resources from other sources. This has been very enriching” (ibid.). Asociación Gota de Leche was a peripheral actor, member of Fedecaldas (NGO Federation), and Fedecaldas was a bridging actor in the network. Even though they interacted because of their affiliation, they didn’t do it as part of the collective action process in which other peripheral actors could have been also interested in learning about other experiences and strategies to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic implications.

The affiliations between the organizations served as a condition to foster the collective action process. Next section explores what kind of identity linkages were identified in the network formation such as NGOs affiliations and memberships, but it also explores if these linkages were reinforced through the collective action process.

6.5. Identity Links

According to Melucci (1995) “the notion of identity always refers to these three features: the continuity of a subject over and beyond variations in time and its

adaptations to the environment; the delimitation of this subject with respect to others; the ability to recognize and to be recognized” (p. 45). In this case study, the subject was defined as the non-governmental sector. The sector is composed of NGOs with particular characteristics that distinguish themselves from other kind of organizations and from the governmental and business sector (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.1). Besides, NGOs are acknowledged by others such as their target populations, donors, and governmental bodies. However, it’s a very diverse sector regarding size, types of organizations, geographical location, fields and manners of work, and target populations, making challenging to establish a shared identity. That’s why even though there are identity links that backed up the collective action process, it was classified as a conflictual coalition process but not as a social movement.

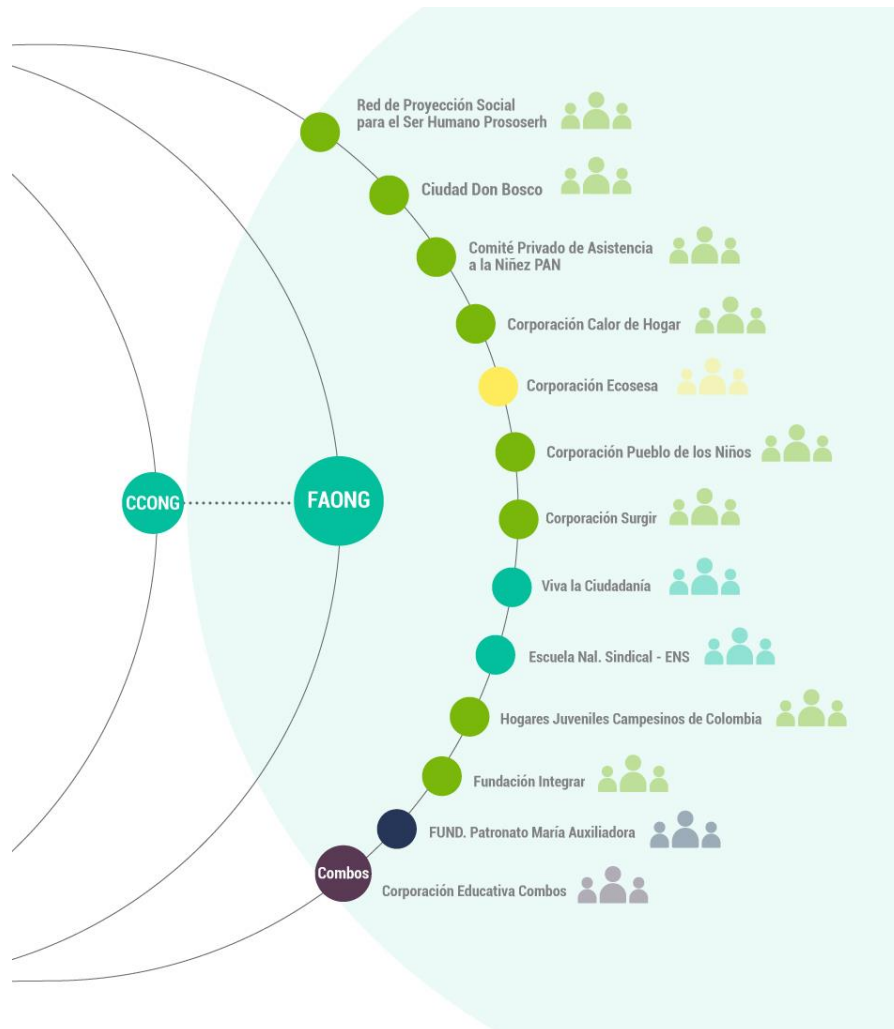
Based on the results of this research, organizations that participated in the joint petition and social media campaign have identity links through two main connections: memberships and affiliations among them and the underlying motivations of their participation in the joint petition and social media campaign.

With respect to memberships and affiliations between the different network actors it is important to highlight that in every interview the following statements were registered: “We are part of, we are affiliated to, we have a direct relation with, we continue with the joint work, we participate in, we have partnered several times”. Through these connections network actors could express their common interests and manifest a sense of solidarity, in this case because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to this, memberships and affiliations were evident between core actors and bridge actors as well as between core or bridge actors and peripheral actors, but they decrease among peripheral actors. These results coincide with the ones of the online survey that show that 49% of the NGOs knew about the joint petition because of information provided by the federation or network they belong to, and 36% by information provided by one of the main initiators (CCONG, Techo, Reconciliación, Probono).

Figure 5 Network representation of the online mobilization (see page 120) illustrates with dotted lines the identity links that correspond to memberships and affiliations among the different network actors based on deskwork and empirical evidence. From Figure 5, it’s possible to make a close up in order to illustrate the links of identity between FAONG and its federated NGOs. Based on this, Figure 5.6 visualizes how

identity links emerged, evolved and expanded through the different layers of the network contributing to strengthening its level of integration.

Figure 5.6 Links of identity between FAONG and its federated NGOs



In the previous figure, the Confederación Colombiana de ONG (CCONG) occupies a position in the central layer, then the Antioquia’s Federation of NGOs (FAONG) positions itself as a bridge actor and 13 other local NGOs assume positions in the peripheral layer. Each of the 13 NGOs is a member of FAONG and at the same time FAONG is a member of the CCONG. Through these memberships these NGOs have built identity links at different levels, which extend to the target populations of the NGOs and the communities to which the target populations belong. In this sense, it is possible to go further than the previous figure arguing that identity links can be taken to the communities and it is at this point when the outreach of collective action

processes can be amplified. In the previous figure, this is visualized with the groups of individuals in front of each NGO at the peripheral layer. Even though there was a low level of engagement among the target populations for the joint petition and social media campaign, NGOs mobilized in order to have the appropriate conditions to continue working with and for them during the COVID-19 pandemic. NGOs continued reaching their target populations and encouraging and facilitating capacity building despite the restrictions to mobilization and physical distancing measures. The relationship between NGOs and target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic established through (online) capacity building will be addressed in the second empirical chapter of the dissertation.

With regard to the motivations underlying the collective action process, it was already stated under the actors' dimension of the network how the consensus of claims strengthened the commitment and participation of the NGOs in the process. The non-governmental sector has developed an identity link from the demands that it makes to be able to operate in a considered restricted environment. However, research results point out that the identity links are still under construction because of aspects such as lack of trust, a general lack of knowledge of the non-profit sector, and the lack of willingness or opportunities to connect with other actors that belong to the non-profit sector.

To quote Laura Delgado, projects coordinator of Fundación Natalia Ponce de León on the lack of knowledge of the non-governmental sector: "I consider that this kind of campaigns can be corner stones of the work made by the organizations in the country, it's fundamental that the third sector begins working with their partners, that knows which organizations there are at national level, because I think there is a general lack of awareness on this. This exercise helped us to have an updated database of social organizations in Colombia, with their focus of work and goals, and it has helped us a lot to direct some cases to specialized organizations [...]" (L. Delgado, personal communication, 18 November 2021).

For Martha Bazzani, NGO specialist and consultant, the sector has a very important challenge and it's about working with the other actors of the social sector. Martha explains: "I refer to the different modalities of the social sector, including small and medium enterprises, in particular, and faith-based organizations, all of them, they are

like 16 types. This is a sector, and if we want to strengthen the sector, whether we like it or not, these organizations, 16 forms are part of the sector and if there is no union among us, we will never be a strong sector” (M. Bazzani, personal communication, 14 October 2021).

Furthermore, it is also relevant to highlight the contribution that the design of the joint petition and social media campaign had to the building/formation of a group identity during the collective action process. To quote David Sánchez, executive director of Fundación Techo on this: “The fact that the joint petition didn’t have any logos was intentionally, because we didn’t want to look for limelight, we didn’t want to show the initiative was from some organizations and not from others, but we looked for a sector approach [...]” (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021). Another director who referred to this was Carolina Calderón from Funcicar: “The online mobilization in social networks was very important because it made us feel, the Colombian NGOs, identified with a petition and it made us mobilize, that was very important” (C. Calderón, personal communication, 19 February 2021). Jessika Camargo, coordinator of the communications committee in which the social media campaign was conceived explains: “We liked #UnaPiezaClaveParaColombia, because we didn’t want that the campaign had a leading person or organization” (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021).

Finally, the Confederación Colombiana de ONG - CCONG was mentioned several times during the interviews as an important actor able to articulate/integrate in the sector. For Martha Bazzani, CCONG is a relevant actor, but it requires and should allow the companionship and support of other actors (M. Bazzani, personal communication, 14 October 2021). For Marta, active participation of other organizations in order to make proposals and indicate guidelines is essential. To continue with her annotations: “It’s about everything what the Confederation makes, that is to enrich themselves with the diverse views of the sector, but it also implies the internal preparation of the CCONG to be open to others and change narratives” (M. Bazzani, personal communication, 14 October 2021). On the contrary, David Sánchez, executive director of Fundación Techo explains: “[...] the sector is difficult to integrate/articulate. I mean, it’s not so easy. I think it occurs the same with the other sectors. Let me give an example. A sector like the business sector, it’s integrated/articulated through the ANDI (National Association of Businesspeople of

Colombia), but the ANDI doesn't represent 100% of the sector, there are some challenges. The CCONG concentrates big organizations and many social organizations of the country, but it doesn't represent 100% of the organizations [...]" (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021). For Laura Delgado, projects coordinator from Fundación Natalia Ponce de León: "It's necessary that an organization takes the lead because there are several organizations and the joint work needs to be organized since there are too many organizations. There must be an open database not only with the organizations that participated in this exercise but all organizations can be included, at a national level, including the regions [...]" (L. Delgado, personal communication, 18 November 2021). Results from the empirical analysis show that there cannot be a shared identity without being aware and without integrating in collective processes the diverse organizations that composed the Colombian non-governmental sector.

Before mentioning some conclusions based on how the QNA was conducted, it is relevant to sum up the perceptions of the network actors with respect to the effectiveness of the online mobilization. According to the empirical evidence, members of the coordination mechanisms as well as other actors in the network agree on the importance of the joint petition and social media campaign to make the work of the non-governmental sector in Colombia visible and to raise awareness of how NGOs function and the constrained enabling conditions they face to operating.

For Carlos Monsalve, executive director of FAONG: "[The campaign] was very important to make the [non-governmental] sector visible. We have some difficulties that other sectors do not have [...]. We don't have money and we lack influence. [...] We act based on ethics [...]. One can say that results aren't so good, because we should have better conditions, but that's not so easy because of the enabling environment, there are some interests we aren't willing to negotiate in the same way other sectors do [...]" (C. Monsalve, personal communication, 6 November 2021).

To quote Laura Delgado from Fundación Natalia Ponce de León: "[...] This was a very important pedagogical work because not everyone knows how an NGO works. It helped us to explain to our target populations that a social organization doesn't make a profit and if there is a surplus, it has to be reinvested in the organization. It was a pedagogical campaign to show them how difficult it is to manage a social organization

and look for resources [...]” (L. Delgado, personal communication, 18 November 2021).

With respect to the specific goal of the campaign on influencing the government to include the non-governmental sector in the different measures used to mitigate the economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are different perceptions, most of them provided by the central and bridge network actors who had high levels of communication and engagement in the joint petition and social media campaign:

To quote Sergio Guarín, administrative director of Corporación Reconciliación: “In terms of effectiveness, it’s not clear to what extent the government considered our petitions, but some subsequent decrees allowed the organizations to profit from some benefits. We sent letters to DAPRE (Administrative Department of the Presidency of the Republic), ministries, and development cooperation agencies. It wasn’t just the social networks, it was hard work” (S. Guarín, personal communication, 22 February 2021).

According to Liliana Rodríguez, director of CCONG, “the government did respond to us officially saying here we have included you here, but here we have not, we can open a space for dialogue. There is a letter from Diego Molano, who is the director of DAPRE, saying that we could open a space for dialogue. Let’s say that there was an official response from the government” (L. Rodríguez, personal communication, 29 July 2020). For her, “it’s relevant to continue conducting this kind of campaign, [...] the government was willing to talk to us [...], the fact we didn’t take advantage of it as a collective is another matter, but the Confederation continues with its role of talking to the government” (ibid.).

David Martínez, executive director of Fedecaldas explained: “Let’s say that advocacy processes are very complex, they depend on many things, they depend on very good management, they depend on placing the issue on the public agenda, they depend on political will, and they depend on the visions of the people who make decisions [...]. So, it is very relative, [...] in this issue I think that some objectives were achieved, for example, to include non-profit organizations, that is to say that their profit or non-profit purpose would not matter for accessing this support, and I feel that this was done well” (D. Martínez, personal communication, 9 April 2021).

For the executive director of Profamilia, Martha Royo, there is something to reflect on beyond the effectiveness of these online mobilizations:

I think it was a very good initiative but I feel that something is missing, I don't know, that's why I feel that maybe I lack information, in the end what you need with this type of campaign is for the government to act, because this was a government decision [...]. What I don't know is whether the campaign had the desired effect on the government or whether the government woke up and realized that NGOs were there [...]. There is a complex relationship (between the government and NGOs). I would like this type of campaign to go directly to the government and for them to say 'let's work with them, not against them or in competition', this is how they become our real allies, there is an issue of jealousy, for the government everything is always perfect, they have to sell themselves but many times it is the NGOs that give the real figures. I didn't know the results and what I think is needed is to see how what you are doing links directly to a straight impact on the decision-maker. (M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022)

From previous statements it can be argued that the willingness of other actors with decision making powers such as the national government but also the engagement itself of the involved NGOs play a significant role in the development of collective action processes.

There were also other aspects from the joint petition and social media campaign that can be taken into account for further on-line mobilizations of the non-governmental sector. According to Sergio Guarín, administrative director of Corporación Reconciliación, "this kind of initiative shouldn't be worn away/eroded. You can't just do this kind of movement or process for the sake of it. It depends on the motive, it must be a relevant motive" (S. Guarín, personal communication, 22 February 2021).

With regard to the motives of this kind of campaign, Mariana Córdoba, executive director of Fundación ACPO, compares the campaign of the non-governmental sector with one conducted by their target population. Mariana explains: "We are talking about a more specific, a more concrete world, which is the peasant sector, and I think that would be the difference [...] sometimes when you want to talk about a very general issue it is more difficult to empathize. With the Colombian social sector, you can say there are millions of foundations, international foundations [...]. On the other hand, we know that the peasant sector is a vulnerable sector [...]. So it was easier to empathize because of the specificity of the issue" (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021).

For David Sánchez, executive director of Techo Colombia, “[...] these kinds of campaigns, which are much more institutional, have less penetration in terms of audiences. This is not the kind of content that many people like to replicate on a massive scale because it is highly institutional, because it is highly focused on a clear objective, which is to mobilize the government, and it does not have an active position in terms of a systematic denunciation [...]” (D. Sánchez, personal communication, 24 February 2021).

To quote Gloria Bustamante, director of systematization and research of the Corporación Educativa Comunidades Educativas de Base – Combos: “It’s necessary to make a search and a wider dissemination because the members of these 250 NGOs could in turn look for 5 or 10 others, perhaps it could be more agile, the issue is that when a statement of this type is made, it is very quick, it does not give much time, so the best thing would be to make it with further time in advance, almost with a campaign of expectation as well”(G. Bustamante, personal communication, 19 October 2021).

Other directors such as Philipp Schönrock, executive director of Centro Estratégico de Pensamiento – Cepei, explains: “We also have to take into account that in times of COVID-19, we are competing against 300 statements per hour in front of the whole world, this is not making things easier” (P. Schönrock, personal communication, 9 March 2021). However, for Philipp it’s necessary to be self-critical. To continue with his statement: “I do believe, and here we should be self-critical, where this information is going to end up, I believe that an analysis should also be made of who the confederation reaches, in other words, who are the people who are really reading it, are they not already people who are convinced of this or are from the same group, or are they connecting with other actors?, because I’m not 100% sure we are reaching the actors we want to influence” (ibid). Philipp concludes that “256 organizations is not a small thing, so I don't really feel that it has the weight that a statement as such could have, I think that this is part of a communication strategy and an area of communication that needs to be strengthened” (ibid).

According to David Martinez, director of Fedecaldas, it’s still necessary to professionalize the application of these campaigns from the CCONG in order to have a greater impact (D. Martinez, personal communication, 9 April 2021). David is also self-critical and raises the question of how can the third sector better sell what it does,

because he thinks there are favors that influence how they sell their ideas and prevent them having other proposals, which is essential for the sector to sell and position many ideas” (ibid).

With respect to the communication’s strategy, executive directors and communication personnel agree that the campaign’s results were not fed back and there wasn’t an appropriate conclusion to the campaign. To quote some of these statements:

There was a weakness or a failing because after June 5th, we didn’t receive any feedback to tell us how many NGOs joined, we did this, the government gave us an appointment, this public officer told us this. Nothing, it was all just in the air, there was no feedback. (C. Ritzel, personal communication, 4 January 2022)

I never knew what results it had, beyond the fact that the document was elaborated, which makes all the sense in the world and asks for very important things for the organizations such as donations’ taxation, [...] I never knew what happened if we presented it, there was no report, I am going to tell you I signed it and then you called me, or if suddenly something arrived, it passed me by and I didn't see it. We mobilized, we organized it, because I was very interested in it, but what happened to it. (D. Peña, personal communication, 17 November 2021)

I think that there is one issue that needs to be improved, and that is the visibility of the results obtained by the campaign [...] there is still something that raises doubts in my mind, it’s not very clear what was achieved with the petition. We do know that it was sent to President Duque [...] but we never knew what happened with the campaign, [...] and I imagine that it was not easy to coordinate 250 organizations with their own small worlds, with their internal bureaucracy and so on, but I think that this would be an issue to improve, the visibility of the results. (L. Delgado, personal communication, 18 November 2021)

Finally, the use of social media in the campaign raised some concerns among some executive directors. To quote Marcela Vega, director of the Education for Governance strategic line at the Asociación de Becarios de Casanare (ABC): “This issue of social networks is undoubtedly on the rise [...]. It helps to make NGOs visible and this visibility can lead to certain political influence, but it does definitely require further actions to ensure that it is not just an immediate media issue but actually reaches another level”. According to Gloria Bustamante, director of systematization and research of the Corporación Educativa Comunidades Educativas de Base – Combos, “[...] (social) networks reach a lot of people but they can also cause the opposite, (social) networks always have detractors who use the information you post and turn

that information around and it can be used for other things, so you have to be very clear about the communication strategies [...] I think it would have to be something very well thought out, very consensual, because (social) networks are always double-sided” (G. Bustamante, personal communication, 19 October 2021).

For Jessika Camargo, communications coordinator at Fundación Probono and member of the communications committee of the online mobilization, “communications in non-profit entities and organizations is very complex, because you have to attack a lot of actors, there are many stakeholders that participate in the construction of the message (J. Camargo, personal communication, 30 November 2021). Jessika explains further: “My social networks are going to be seen by the donor, by the local mayor's office, by the national government, but also by the beneficiary, so it is very complex to construct a message when you have so many different audiences. However, I believe that the campaign #PiezaClaveparaColombia has a clear objective, and that is to articulate us as a sector and to make it clear that as a sector, each one of us, from our results and from our work, does extremely important work for the country. What I want is that other actors such as the national government, perhaps local governments, perhaps donors, understand that we as organizations are institutionally doing a lot of things for the country [...]” (ibid.).

The conduction of the qualitative network analysis facilitated the study of key network features of this collective action process based on the communication and narratives among the actors involved. The identification of the actors, resources, coordination and timing, organizational learning and identity links in the network contributed to understanding and analyzing the emergence, development and effectiveness of this non-governmental collective action process.

The following are some conclusions about this collective action process from a network perspective that can be summarized from general to specific. Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic forced NGOs to have a different perspective on the relevance of communication, in particular online communication and mobilization. In line with this, strengthening the areas of communication became a priority, no matter the size of the NGO or whether there was a communications department or not. Secondly, even though this collective action process was instrumental and short-lived, it left behind a network infrastructure that can be reactivated by the mobilization of network actors

and resources. With regard to resources, while material resources declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, the non-material resources of NGOs facilitated their communication, cooperation and networking. Finally, as part of this collective action process there were signs of organizational learning that enhanced the creation and transfer of knowledge and multiple identity links that might extend to the target populations of these NGOs. However, the integration of other actors of the non-profit sector apart of NGOs in collective action processes is required to build a shared identity that can support lasting transformative action.

7. EMPIRICAL CHAPTER II: (ONLINE) COMMUNICATION BETWEEN NGOS AND THEIR TARGET POPULATIONS THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION APPROACH

The second empirical chapter addresses the (online) communication between NGOs and their target populations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter answers the second research question of the dissertation: In which way did NGOs and their target populations use online communication during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain their relationships with each other and facilitate capacity building?

The goal of this chapter is to study the increasing online communication that arose between NGOs and their target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter acknowledges the communication barriers that NGOs faced in reaching their target populations due to the implementation of physical distancing measures and restrictions to mobility throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. NGOs and target populations had to employ ICTs in order to be able to maintain their relationships and develop their capacity building processes, which are essential aspects to accomplishing their role as actors of transformative action in the country. In this digital transition, they had to shift from in-person activities to an online modality of communication.

The empirical data presented in this chapter will describe and reflect on how the online communication between NGOs and their target populations occurred based on the implementation of (online) capacity building courses and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this, empirical evidence based on two online focus group discussions conducted in 2022 with target populations of the NGOs participants of the study will be considered.

As was explained in the methodological chapter, this research initially explored an instrumental case study, namely the online mobilization of the NGO sector consisting of a joint petition followed by a social media campaign under the hashtags #PiezaClaveparaColombia and #UnaONGes (in English #aKeyPieceforColombia and #anNGOis). The boundaries of this case study unfolded after having conducted desk research and a first round of interviews with executive directors of the NGOs who took part in the online mobilization. The scope of the research was broadened to include the target populations of the involved NGOs exploring not only the communication and mobilization among NGOs but also between NGOs and their target populations.

The online FGDs followed 30 semi-structured interviews with executive directors and communications coordinators of NGOs that had signed the joint petition and mobilized the social media campaign. From these, eleven (11) NGOs that stressed the importance of capacity building and described their transition from in-person to online activities were re-contacted and asked to refer two members of their target populations who had taken part in online courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Six (6) of the eleven (11) provided contact details, resulting in 10 participants for the FGDs: six (6) in the first (April 12, 2022) and four (4) in the second (May 3, 2022). All participants had engaged in online capacity-building activities during, and in some cases before, the pandemic. In addition, three facilitators responsible for two of these online capacity building courses, based in the same region as the target populations at the onset of the pandemic, were interviewed online. Contact details of the facilitators were also referred by the NGOs' executive directors.

The aim of the FGDs was an exchange among the participants on the increasing use of online communication during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of their participation in online courses and activities fostered by the NGOs, as well as to discuss how they have related to the NGOs and to others throughout the pandemic. The names of the FGD participants and capacity building facilitators as well as some specific details of their statements were partly anonymized, upon request. Each participant contributed to shaping the discussion and debating during the FGDs. Therefore, the current chapter makes an effort to compile their perspectives and experiences in a structured manner.

The presentation and analysis of the empirical data are guided by the core components of the development communication approach: participation and interaction, the adequacy of ICTs, and the appropriation of the (online) communication process. This analytical framework serves to emphasize the "how" of the communicative process. The chapter's organization also follows these components.

The current empirical chapter is structured as follows. First, it presents a summary of the online capacity-building courses based on statements from NGO directors, FGD participants, capacity-building facilitators, and desk and internet research. These courses trained target populations in topics such as democracy, peace, and critical development. Each course is described in relation to the NGO's core mission, followed

by a brief account of its content, duration, region of implementation, and the ICTs employed. Second, the chapter examines each component of the development communication approach, combining empirical data with corresponding reflections and analysis. Finally, key remarks on the potential and pitfalls of online mobilization and communication by civil society actors in shaping transformative action in the country are outlined, which will be further developed in the concluding chapter.

NGOS and their online capacity building courses: NGOs adapted their capacity-building programs into online courses and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study show that organizations increasingly incorporated digital methodologies and tools. These shifts ranged from simple online meetings aimed at maintaining contact with target populations to more elaborate courses delivered through video conferencing, social media platforms, Moodle, and combinations of asynchronous and synchronous learning.

The digital transition, as described by NGO directors, was shaped by three central aspects: negotiations with funding organizations and donors to secure support, the incorporation and strategic use of ICTs, and measures to ensure access for target populations through the provision of devices and mobile data.

This chapter considers six (6) NGOs that converted their capacity-building courses and activities from in-person to online formats, as the target populations participating in the FGDs were enrolled in these courses. The following section provides a description of the NGOs and their online capacity-building courses.

Fundación ACPO: this non-profit organization was founded in 1947 in a context in which there was a complete disconnection between the rural and the urban areas in Colombia (M. Córdoba, 2020). At that time, the only way to bring education to the peasants was through distance learning (ibid.). Its founder, Monsignor José Joaquín Salcedo, created the radio station “Radio Sutatenza”, a literacy radio program that brought education to millions of peasants and contributed to peace making (ibid.). This initiative was part of the movement of popular education, which was very strong at that time (ibid). Currently, this literacy program is known as “Escuelas Digitales Campesinas” (in English Digital Peasant Schools) and it provides capacity building to peasants and their communities employing a convergence of actors and media (Fundación ACPO, n.d.-a). Fundación ACPO’s mission is to effectively influence

education, economy and rural society in Colombia through ICTs to achieve social and digital inclusion (Fundación ACPO, n.d.-d). In addition, according to its executive director, Mariana Córdoba: “Education in the rural areas continue as one of the most powerful tools against inequalities and violence” (M. Córdoba, 2020).

From Fundación ACPO, two courses that had to pass from in-person activities to an obliged online format will be addressed in this chapter: “Digital literacy: my first steps in the digital life” and “Protect and Communicate Peace: defending our human rights defenders”. A description of them follows:

Digital literacy “My first steps in the digital life”: in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this course became very relevant. Its main goal was to teach peasants how to use ICTs in their daily lives. The course promoted the knowledge of ICTs and their application to agricultural work fostering responsible digital behaviors and contributing to closing the digital gap. The course lasted from February to April 2020 and it was conducted in the municipality of Corinto, Cauca, located in southwestern Colombia. In total, 52 participants received a completion certificate. The closing event was held online with the participation of the ACPO’s executive director, a representative of the funding agency, the major officer of Corinto and the participants of the course. At the beginning of the course the activities took place in person at schools or at the Live Digital center³⁶ (in Spanish Punto Vive Digital) of the municipality. When the course went online, videos, radio programs, phone calls, social networks and the use of WhatsApp through smartphones, tablets and computers of the participants was employed to continue with the course.

Protect and Communicate Peace: defending our human rights defenders: The course focused on strengthening the capacities of communication, protection and self-protection of members of two social organizations: Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos - ANUC and Asociación de Consejos Comunitarios del Norte del Cauca – ACONC (in English National Association of Peasant Users and Association of Community Councils of Northern Cauca). Fifty participants, including peasants and Afro-Colombians, received the completion certificate for this course. It was conducted in the municipalities of El Tambo and Santander de Quilichao, located in the

³⁶ As explained in the context of the study chapter, the Vive Digital centers are internet centers that were built in rural and urban areas to provide vulnerable communities public access to ICTs.

department of Cauca in southwestern Colombia, from mid-2020 to mid-2021. The course highlighted the work of human rights defenders (HRDs) in areas affected by armed conflict, aiming to reduce the stigmatization they face (RCN Radio, 2020). HRDs often become obstacles to the territorial control sought by armed groups and illegal economies (ibid.). In some cases, the violence and pressure exerted by these groups give rise to rumors, false accusations, or prejudices against community leaders, portraying them as aligned with a faction or as troublemakers, even when they are simply defending their community's rights. Consequently, their work becomes both controversial and dangerous, generating legal and social stigmas. Facilitators of the course looked to strengthen the way human right defenders communicate their community work of building peace and democracy (ibid.). The course aimed to motivate the participants to create their own content, that they narrated their experiences as human right defenders in the territory employing their traditional communication media (ibid.). In this way, they can raise awareness of their work and communities can contribute to their protection. At the beginning of the course, the activities were done in person at the Vive Digital center of the municipality. During the lockdowns, an online methodology was employed using smartphones and computers owned by the participants.

Sistema Nacional de Pastoral Social – SNPS caritas Colombia: this church-based non-profit organization has been empowering communities to confront and transform their social realities since 1977, contributing to human and sustainable development (Pastoral Social - Cáritas Colombiana, 2022). Its projects are structured around four strategic lines: reconciliation and peace, land and territory, protection, and organizational strengthening. SNPS engages extensively in networking, reaching local and grassroots organizations as well as communities in rural and remote regions of the country.

During the mobility restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, SNPS developed an online course delivered through WhatsApp from May to December 2020, entitled “Development of Leadership Capacities for Advocacy and Public Awareness”. The course sought to maintain communication, provide information, and sustain capacity-building processes among farmers in two municipalities of Cauca (southwestern Colombia) and one in Huila (south-central Colombia). These municipalities were also part of the broader project “Strengthening Capacities of Coffee Growers’ Communities

through Coffee Value Chain Innovation” (2018–2021), implemented by SNPS in collaboration with two partner organizations. While the partner organizations were responsible for the project’s technical component, SNPS was in charge of the social component.

Facilitators of the online course reported that the course was introduced to prevent the disruption of organizational processes within the communities and to preserve the progress achieved in the broader project. Participation ranged between 50 and 70 farmers, who engaged through three WhatsApp groups, supplemented by phone calls and printed materials. The course consisted of nine modules addressing project formulation, municipal development planning, regional advocacy, citizen participation, public speaking, ethics, COVID-19, women’s rights, environmental sustainability, and models of social organization.

Fundación para la Reconciliación: Founded in 2003, this non-profit organization seeks to contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia. As its executive director, Angélica Pérez, explains, at that time the country was experiencing an extremely violent period, and discussions about peace and reconciliation were still uncommon compared to the situation today (A. M. Pérez, personal communication, 17 January 2022). The organization’s work is grounded in developing pedagogical initiatives with community participation to foster and strengthen peace (ibid.). Central to its approach is the promotion of forgiveness and reconciliation as fundamental elements of peacebuilding (ibid.) Its target groups are diverse, ranging from communities in conflict-affected territories, victims, ex-combatants, and illegal armed groups to peasant communities, educational institutions, and even private companies (ibid.).

The course that will be addressed in this chapter is entitled “Peace from a youth perspective: a legacy for reconciliation and no repetition” (in Spanish PazAlo joven: Un legado para la reconciliación y la no repetición). This was a hybrid project (in-person and online course) of youth for youth that involved different social actors such as university teachers, youths, truth commission members and communities. The project took place from September 2020 to October 2021. It involved two stages; the first stage’s goal was to teach young people the theoretical foundations of the Truth

Commission³⁷. In the second stage, young people prepared and conducted different activities and workshops in different regions of the country to raise awareness on the role and results of the Truth Commission. A total of 15 universities from different regions of Colombia (9 public universities and 6 private universities) and a university network joined the project. From these universities, 24 study groups were created and more than 400 university students participated in the project. For the online modules of the first stage of the course, a learning platform developed by a group of experts commissioned by the NGO was employed. The pedagogical material was already prepared for in-person activities, so it was converted it to online modules. Students had access to material such as documentaries, academic articles, and pedagogical guides, as well as being able to meet online with the teachers and classmates through platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. The modules of the first stage of the online course were: 0. Acknowledging the journey, 1. Genesis of the Truth Commission, 2. Navigating the Truth Commission, and 3. The logic of truth and the truth as a public good. In the second stage of the course, young people conceive and conduct local action days of peace to mobilize communities and raise their awareness about the topics addressed during the first stage. For this, diverse artistic, cultural, and academic tools were employed.

Corporación Tolipaz: founded in June 2003 as one of the 25 regional programs of development and peace (in Spanish programa de desarrollo y paz en el Tolima – PDP), this non-profit organization is comprised of public and private organizations, which aim “to promote the development of capacities of the population, organizations and institutions and strengthen the existing ones so that the community itself can manage its own development and thus live the life they want and value, with an emphasis on peace building” (Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Tolima -Tolipaz, 2022). Their target populations are vulnerable communities and communities affected by the armed conflict in the municipalities of Tolima (ibid.).

³⁷ The Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, known as “The Truth Commission” (in Spanish Comisión de la Verdad) was created as a temporary mechanism in the framework of the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla group in November, 2016. It is one of the three public entities that comprise the Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition (abbreviated in Spanish as SIVJRNR). The Truth Commission was created “to learn the truth about what happened in the context of the armed conflict and to contribute to the clarification of the violations and offences committed during the armed conflict and to offer a comprehensive explanation of its complexity to society as a whole” (Comisión de la Verdad, n.d., *¿Qué es la comisión de la verdad?* section).

With respect to the capacity building course addressed in this chapter, it is called “School for Socio-Environmental Advocacy” (In Spanish Escuela Incede Socioambiental). The training program aims to strengthen the social capital and human capacities, in particular of rural women, so they can exercise political advocacy. The course develops and applies conceptual, theoretical and practical tools that contribute to shaping empowered women in the protection of collective and individual rights. Two versions of the capacity building course were completed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in two municipalities of Tolima: Chaparral and Líbano. In the first version, from September 2019 to June 2020, activities began in person and when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, they had to be converted to an online modality through the use of podcasts and online meetings. The completion ceremony of this version was carried out online. The second version of this course took place from August 2020 to February 2021 based on an online modality that included in-person activities for the culmination of the course. For this version, print material and USB-memories were delivered to the participants. With this regard, a pedagogical guide was designed by the NGO with contributions of the facilitators of the course. Participants had to develop the activities at home including watching videos, hearing podcasts and attending online meetings based on a pedagogical guide delivered to their houses. The three modules of the course were: 1. Advocacy, rights, and citizen participation, 2. Gender: differences, everyday life, rights and gaps and 3. Environment: climate change, adaptation and legal framework. A total of 20 rural women joined the second version of the course.

Asociación de Becarios de Casanare - ABC: This NGO was founded in 2007 in Yopal, the capital of the department of Casanare, located in eastern Colombia. It addresses topics of territorial governance and conservation. Its mission is to “promote the governance and conservation of the territories through education, communication and research strategies that inspire and facilitate critical participation in their planning and use” (Asociación de Becarios de Casanare - ABC, 2024). For them, strengthened democratic and environmental awareness can transform the relationship with the territory (ibid.). Their three strategic pillars of work are: conservation and environmental sovereignty, education for governance and communication for development (ibid.).

Under the pillar of communication for development, they have conceived and developed a series of radio soap operas entitled “Stories from the future 2.0”, which are inspired by real and fictitious facts in order to address how communities tackle the challenges of conservation and climate change in their territories. Productions are made remotely and via mobile phones with communities contributing to local research, performance, production and distribution (Spotify, n.d.). During the COVID-19 pandemic they came up with the first radio soap opera called “Stories when the weather gets crazy”. Of the 70 people registered to participate, twenty (20) participants were selected from Sabana Larga and Ponedera to join this initiative (Asociación de Becarios de Casanare - ABC & Lewis Energy Colombia, Inc., n.d.). These municipalities are in the department of Atlántico, located in northern Colombia. Participants were always in contact through a WhatsApp group and recorded their voices at home and other venues with their smartphones according to a script that was developed in a participatory way. According to Natalia Roa, one of the creators of the radio soap opera and coordinator of the pillar “Communication for Development” at this NGO: “More than a podcast, this is an attempt to generate a territorial conversation among many people” (Spotify, n.d.). The radio soap opera was mobilized on social networks, local radio stations, WhatsApp groups and at the communities in both municipalities through big speakers.

Asociación Profamilia: this non-profit organization ensures timely access to sexual and reproductive health services. According to their executive director Marta Royo: “They show people what opportunities they have and empower them to make informed decisions about their sexuality”(M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022). One of their main goals is “to promote and defend the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights so that adult men and women, adolescents and young people can enjoy a healthy and satisfying sexual life, free from discrimination, coercion and violence, and so that they can make free and informed decisions about their reproductive lives” (Asociación Profamilia, 2024). They develop social projects in particular for vulnerable target populations, which live in rural areas and under difficult contexts of conflict and migration (M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022).

Profamilia has also a strong national network of youth called “La Red Joven de Profamilia” (in English the National Youth Network Profamilia). This is a network consisting of adolescents and young people who are passionate about the defense

and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights. The network is “a platform that brings together young people in Colombia, determined to promote the pleasurable, autonomous, informed and safe experience of sexuality through the exercise of human rights with a gender perspective” (RedJoven Profamilia Colombia, n.d.). There are different local youth networks according to the cities the young people live in. Members of the network attend capacity building courses to become leaders of social transformation in topics related to sexuality and reproductive rights. During the COVID-19 pandemic these activities had to be shifted from an in-person to an online modality. Members of this youth platform who belong to the local networks of Quibdó (Chocó, western Colombia); Marinilla (Antioquia, northwestern Colombia); and Tuluá (Valle del Cauca, southwestern Colombia) participated in a FGD.

Table 4 (see next page) presents the main features of previous online capacity-building courses run by the NGOs in this study, attended by FGD participants from the target populations these NGOs engage with.

Table 4 Online capacity building courses

Name of the course	NGO	Nr. of participants	Region	Duration	Description	Communication Channels
Digital Literacy: my first steps in the digital life	Fundación ACPO	52 Peasant farmers	Corinto, Cauca	Feb to Apr 2020	Transfer to an online methodology. It fosters the knowledge of ICTs and their application in farming. It fosters digital responsible behavior and promotes the reduction of the digital gap	Vive Digital center Phone calls Radio Computers and smartphones WhatsApp Social Networks
Protect and Communicate Peace: defending our human rights defenders	Fundación ACPO	50 Peasant farmers and Afro-Colombians	El Tambo, Cauca	2020-2021	Transfer to an online methodology. Its goal is to strengthen the capacities of communication, protection and self-protection of members of Human Rights organizations that work in zones of armed conflict	Vive Digital center Computers and smartphones WhatsApp Zoom
Development of Leadership capacities for advocacy and public awareness	SNPS- Caritas	50 to 70 Members of rural communities	Piendamó and Morales, Cauca and Pitalito, Huila	May to Dec 2020	Online course proposed to keep informed, maintain contact and continue with the capacity building process in territories during the COVID-19 pandemic	Phone calls Print material Computers and smartphones WhatsApp
Peace from a youth perspective: a legacy for reconciliation and no repetition	Fundación para la Reconciliación	16 Universities 24 Groups 363 certified upon completion	5 Regions according to Truth commission regions: Antioquia, Centro Andina, Sur Andina, Nororiente y	Sep 2020 to Oct 2021	A hybrid project of youth for youth that involved different social actors such as university teachers, young people, truth commission members and communities. The first stage goal was to teach young people the theoretical foundations of the Truth Commission. In the second stage, young people prepared and conducted different activities and workshops in different regions of the country to raise	Learning Platform WhatsApp

Name of the course	NGO	Nr. of participants	Region	Duration	Description	Communication Channels
			Orinoquia-Sur Oriente		awareness on the role and results of the Truth Commission	
School for Socio-Environmental Advocacy I	Corporación Tolipaz	20 (2 nd Edition) Rural women	Chaparral and Líbano, Huila	Sep 2019 to Jun 2020 (1 st edition) Ago 2020 to Feb 2021 (2 nd Edition)	1 st edition: online conversion 2 nd edition: completely online The school aims to strengthen the social capital and human capacities, in particular of rural women, so they can exercise political advocacy. The course develops and applies conceptual, theoretical and practical tools that contribute to shaping empowered women in the protection of collective and individual rights.	Print material Phone Calls WhatsApp Zoom Google meet
Stories from the future 2.0	Asociación ABC	20 Members of local communities	Sabanalarga and Pondera, Atlántico	2020	Online initiative. It's a series of radio soap operas inspired by real and fictitious facts in order to address how communities tackle the challenges of preservation and climate change in their territories	Local radio stations Smartphones WhatsApp Social Networks
National Youth Network Profamilia	Asociación Profamilia	More than 1000 members	Cities nationwide	2020	Members of the network attend capacity building courses to become leaders of social transformation in topics related to sexuality and reproductive rights	Computers Smartphones Online Workshops WhatsApp Zoom Google Meet

The following section presents empirical evidence from this research concerning the core components of the Development Communication approach. In this sense, I examine the participation and interaction, the adequacy of ICTs, and the appropriation of the communication process between NGOs and target populations within the online capacity-building courses implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, as discussed in the preceding section. These components enable a deeper understanding of the communication process. I focus on them because they are considered essential elements of communication aimed at fostering community development. Insights from this analysis will inform the discussion chapter by highlighting the opportunities and challenges of using online communication modalities to support transformative action by civil society actors.

7.1. Participation and Interaction

According to Gumucio Dagron (2012), a prominent Latin American scholar in the field of Development Communication, the true basis of communication lies in establishing dialogue. For him, it's necessary to preserve the word communication for processes of horizontal exchanges, participation and sharing (ibid., p. 50). The Development Communication approach rejects the linear model of disseminating information, fostering instead a process of interactions that facilitates the shared knowledge and collective action (ibid., p. 42). It concentrates on promoting dialogue, debate and negotiation (ibid., p. 42).

Departing from the previous premise and based on the empirical findings of this research, the following aspects were identified as central dimensions of the participation and interaction between NGOs and their target populations throughout the (online) capacity building courses implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic: involvement of target populations, horizontal flow of communication, encouraging role of the capacity building facilitators and the flexibility and time-management during the online courses. Each of these dimensions will be described as follows employing empirical evidence:

Involvement of target populations: Even though FGD participants as well as directors of NGOs and communications coordinators recognize the digital gaps as a barrier in establishing relationships and participating in the capacity building processes

during the COVID-19 pandemic, FGD participants acknowledge inclusion as an important aspect of their involvement in the (online) capacity building courses.

During the 1st FGD, a participant addressed inclusion saying: “Among all activities that were done at the beginning, [...] there was participation from all people, no matter their profession nor occupation [...] there was inclusion, and that was the most beautiful [aspect of the course]” (FGD1, P4, April 12 2022). Another participant who took part in the same online course added: “We all participated very actively, young people, children, adults, elderly, there were housewives, teachers, students [...] we all made a contribution [...]” (FGD1, P3, April 12 2022). In the same FGD, a participant referred to other online activities implemented by another NGO saying: “there was plenty of participation, for instance social workers joined, psychologists, social managers, even members or the organization’s team with their diverse branches of knowledge. People liked this a lot” (FGD1, P6, April 12 2022).

From previous statements it is possible to reflect on capacity building as a source of social inclusion to integrate all segments of populations. The majority of the online courses addressed in this chapter were focused on a specific target population: peasants, rural women, human rights defenders, university students, and youth. This is important because of the specific interests and needs of these target groups. However, the positive experience of two of these online courses, as referred to in the previous statements, might raise awareness about considering to develop capacity building processes that target not only a specific segment of the population, but that also integrate other segments. Even though this demands a more comprehensive process of conception and implementation of the capacity building activities, it might contribute to avoiding the fragmentation of populations.

Another example of integrating different target populations was the implementation of the two online FGDs conducted during this study. Both participants and capacity-building facilitators provided positive feedback on this form of (online) group discussion, noting that it enabled diverse groups of target populations to connect and share their experiences with online communication and mobilization. Participants expressed their interest in holding similar meetings in the future to learn from others and contribute their own perspectives. One capacity-building facilitator emphasized the importance of the FGDs in fostering connections and exchanges between different

regions of the country. For this facilitator, the FGDs also demonstrated that capacity-building initiatives are meaningful and that the realities of local regions and communities can spark academic interest.

Horizontal flow of communication: As mentioned at the beginning, a premise of the development communication approach is that senders as well as receivers exchange and relate to each other from the horizontality (Mayugo i Majó, 2012). Simple methods such as the exchange of information or dialogue among groups facilitate that recipients become senders and the other way around (ibid., p. 335). This is what a horizontal flow of communication means for this research, that there is a fluent communication in which all participants relate to each other becoming senders and receivers without concentrating communication in one of the sides.

The findings show that ICTs' literacy as well as personal characteristics influence the participation and horizontal flow of communication in the capacity building activities. Empirical evidence that pairs with this finding follows:

In the 1st FGD, a participant referred to the horizontal flow of communication saying: "Many times there are people who participate more because they feel empowered, they have that ability and know how to handle certain issues in these scenarios. In contrast, there are others who have not been given the space and the opportunity to open up, or they don't know how to manage these technologies. Besides, there are people who perhaps have more connection with some people than with others, or if they are not within their group, they do not feel like this is the appropriate space to share" (FGD1, P6, April 12 2022). In the 2nd FGD, a participant also referred to this situation saying: "It's not the same to be face-to-face compared to be online. Online, the truth is that it was only the teachers and trainers who spoke. So, of course there were many people who were shy, who were embarrassed to speak or simply didn't participate. Well, in my case it was like that. Only those who were leading the training were the ones who spoke and it was very rare for anyone to ask a question or something" (FGD2, P8, May 3 2022).

In contrast to these opinions, a participant in the 2nd FGD pointed out the benefits of an online interaction for a horizontal flow of communication: "Here, something strange occurred, because face-to-face, there are many people who are shy and only those who had already participated in other workshops took the floor. On the other hand, in

the online [activities], when people noticed they were not in front of everyone, they communicated more, they spoke more, because in that way they were not so afraid [...]. People who were really embarrassed or shy, in the online [activities], they took a little more risk and there was more participation from people” (FGD2, P1, May 3 2022).

In the case of the capacity building facilitators, they agreed that those who already had experience with ICTs could participate and interact more during the online capacity building activities. However, it’s also necessary to consider the context that surrounds the target populations when pursuing a horizontal flow of communication during online interactions. One of the facilitators specified on this stating:

The internet is not used constantly and it is not a means of communication because [rural communities] have their families in their homes, their neighbors in their villages, so their most direct and effective and trusted means of communication is voice to voice, person to person, and sometimes many people were afraid to express themselves through these tools. They would say ‘who is going to listen to me, I’m going to say what everyone else has said’, so there was not a flow of communication in response to some topics we were working on at certain times, and perhaps people who participated were those who were already leading processes and people who had generally used WhatsApp before the pandemic. (F1, online discussion, April 5 2022)

For another facilitator, the online course she/he facilitated made the fragility of the communities in topics related to digital connection evident. This facilitator also specified on the meaning of ICTs’ literacy and characteristics of rural communities for a horizontal flow of communication:

This exercise allowed people, first, to identify their fragility in terms of digital connection in their communities, it also allowed them to get closer to a world that was so unknown to them and that they were afraid of. In a certain way, if it is difficult for farmers to speak and express themselves, it is much more difficult to make a voice message. I said to them ‘If you don’t want to write’, because it’s difficult for many of them to write, I told them ‘Then record a voice message, but knowing that the voice message will be heard and won’t be erased, and that people will be able to continue listening and will hear again the mistakes they have made or if they have slurred when they spoke, those kind of things made them afraid of making contributions, even to ask questions. We had some leaders who used WhatsApp more and were more active in that field, so they were the ones who participated, who commented, but many others could not even download the document, the image or the video, because the downloading process was very slow or they had no data, they put top-ups on their mobiles every 15 to 20 days. (F3, online discussion, August 8 2022)

Another facilitator of the same opinion briefly concluded: “Those who participated were perhaps those who had already used WhatsApp. There is fear, participants think ‘is what I want to say worth saying?’, ‘are they going to read my message?’” (F2, online discussion April 5 2022).

A further aspect considered relevant for a horizontal flow of communication during online interactions is to learn how to use the floor respectfully. A capacity building facilitator mentioned that people learned how to raise their hands during their online interventions and there was more respect during the communication process (F2, online discussion, April 5 2022). Indeed, etiquette rules for the use of WhatsApp or for public speaking were included as central topics during the online courses. Mariana Cordoba, executive director of Fundación ACPO, referred to this in the interview saying: “[...] everything was through WhatsApp, with the support of a facilitator, and considering all the implications, such as the new etiquette rules, like please do not send any chain of messages, please respect the hours of rest and use respectful language” (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021).

A participant in the 1st FGD referred to respectful language saying: “The purpose was perhaps to see what the individual perception was, with respect as well, respect for opinion was very much handled, without the need to try to change it, but to look at it as a common point” (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022). This participant also added: “[...] they also trained us through WhatsApp on the art of public speaking, they gave us many guidelines, which we needed so much, they also trained us on the subject of teamwork, and also in a general way on the use of social networks” (ibid.).

Encouraging role of the capacity building facilitators: Local facilitators know very well their target populations and the context in which they live. They are able to understand target populations’ strengths and difficulties, and desire to establish a horizontal relationship with target populations and community members. During the COVID-19 pandemic this role was reinforced and became crucial in attempting a participatory and horizontal communication process during the online capacity building activities. The main statements from the empirical evidence that support this finding follow:

In the 1st FGD a participant began a conversation on the encouraging role of the capacity building facilitators saying: “At the beginning there were uncertainties, we

distanced ourselves. The issue of interacting online was a bit complicated, we worked on that as we moved along, looking for that integration, exploring how we managed to interact. Capacity building facilitators employed many contexts using asynchronous methods, online meetings too, so that the group could come together and at least the link could be maintained as such” (FGD1, P5, April 12 2022). According to this participant, it is important to take part in these online activities in an appropriate place with privacy. For him/her, it is complex, but it depends a lot on the facilitators maintaining the expectancy and enthusiasm but at the same time it depends also on the participants at the time of the interaction (ibid). Another participant added referring to the capacity building facilitators: “We always had their support, they were always looking out for us, they were always ready to answer any questions, any concerns, they were always there. [...] there has always been constant contact, they have always guided us, we haven't had any problems because of that, we have always been very well connected” (FGD1, P4, April 12 2022).

The conversation continued: “In our case, the trainer [...] was very attentive and she/he was not the essence of the meetings, but us, [...] as representatives of each of our families. When technicians or psychologists were invited, they were not the focus of attention but us” (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022). Another participant concluded indicating: “There was a lot of interaction, [facilitators] weren't the center of attention. There was always a discussion with every one about the topic that was going to be addressed. There was never that of, 'please, pay attention' because the topics were very important, so we were all paying attention so we didn't miss anything of the learning [process]” (FGD1, P1, April 12 2022).

In the 2nd FGD, participants also referred to the role of facilitators and trainers to facilitate a participatory and horizontal communication process. One of them said: “We all participated, and the trainer never established a hierarchical system where only this person participated and we could not talk any more. In fact, all the people who were there took ownership of the space very well. So, we could just simply make a contribution or the trainer clarified something: 'If you have any doubts or if you don't agree with something, please turn on the microphone and say so” (FGD 2, 10, May 3 2022). Another participant added: “The trainers or people coordinating the meeting allowed us to ask questions. They didn't really limit the time, most of them were more spontaneous in terms of time, and the fact that they did it that way, it avoided things

like ‘we didn't have enough time’, or ‘the information wasn't enough’, but because of that there wasn't like a limited time, and that also helped during the workshops and training sessions” (FGD2, P7, May 3 2022).

Facilitators’ themselves acknowledged their role of encouragement and efforts to maintain active and horizontal communication with the target populations during the online interactions. One of them explained:

I worked on one theme every week, but with a lot of effort so that they could respond. Sometimes I had to call them and tell them: ‘I submitted the theme, I sent the video, share with me your thoughts’. I used to call the top leaders so that they could motivate the others. I had to send information through the [WhatsApp] group, but also call to invite them to write in the group chat what they thought of the activity and participate in the group. I also called the younger ones and told them: ‘You have more ability with this, help me to motivate the others’. I relied a lot on leaders who could mobilize others to make contributions. (F3, online discussion, August 8 2022)

Another facilitator explained how they involved the target populations in the design of the online course: “[...] For example, we sent a form in which we listed the topics that we felt were most in line with the development of leadership capacities for advocacy and public awareness, and which would allow [participants] to confront these topics with the management and advocacy actions that the communities require, and we asked them what topic was missing, what topics should be left out, what they thought of these topics. Then, later on, a tenth topic came out of the proposals that they had made [...]” (F1, online discussion, April 5 2022).

Finally, a facilitator also referred to how they had to assume a technical role to assure online communication. He/she mentioned: “Before the pandemic, I was responsible for calls and logistics, I had to take the trainers to the field so they could conduct their orientation [workshops]. During the pandemic a facilitator assumed the role of technician, it was a 24-hour job: ‘I couldn’t enter’, send me a screenshot, ‘what device should I buy, what kind of headphones or microphone’” (F2, online discussion, April 5 2022). This facilitator added, that they created an online manual to explain how to install the ICT tools, how to log in, mute or activate the microphone and other procedures (ibid.).

From the previous statements it's possible to emphasize that capacity building facilitators play a very important role in increasing the group motivation, monitoring and facilitating the participation and interaction among participants taking part in a capacity building process.

Flexibility and time management during the online courses: In regard to the last dimension related to the participation and interaction component, FGD participants discussed the flexibility and time-management of the online courses as key elements in facilitating their participation on the online activities:

In the 1st FGD, a participant introduced the concept of asynchronous modality of the online courses. He/she explained it by saying: "It's not in real time. Instead, I can develop [a task] in a certain moment and the others can do it tomorrow or the day after, or I begin today, and I can retake it tomorrow". Other participants reacted to his/her contribution mentioning the advantages of this kind of method in terms of flexibility and time management. A participant specified:

We had the classes on Mondays, when we met in person. When we changed to have the classes on the phone, the trainer sent us the workshop guide, and it was as my colleague says, asynchronous. The trainer told us: 'You have from Monday to Thursday to resolve the tasks', he gave us time, so we could log in whenever we could and we could make progress. In our case, it was really well organized. Or if they considered that a topic was missing, we made an agreement to include one or two hours for that topic, but they always allowed us to assess how time could be favorable for us. (FGD1, P1, April 12 2022)

In the same FGD, a participant pointed out: In my case, I can also say that there was a lot of flexibility to manage time. The pandemic meant that trainers allowed us to manage our time, of course they proposed a deadline, but there was flexibility, because of [the pandemic]. We were also at home, that helped us. Even though we had to work, one could resolve the different tasks. Let's say that time was practically allocated by us" (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022). Another participant added: "[...] they asked us if we were busy, what we were doing, if we could join in, they always asked us in advance if we could attend the online activities, and if people couldn't do it, they informed this" (FGD1, P6, April 12 2022).

In the 2nd FGD, the opinions differed regarding flexibility and time management during the online courses:

A participant indicated: “Thanks to the trainers and those who coordinated the sessions, we had more time, indeed the [online-mode] provided more time than in-person activities. In person, you might be a member of other organizations and not have a lot of time. In contrast, that time was achieved on the [online-mode]. The workshops could fulfil their goals” (FGD2, P7, May 3 2022). However, another participant considered the opposite. She/he said: “[...] Well, the time was not enough, I had more time when it was in person because I knew that I was going to dedicate myself to the training, but it was very complicated when it was online, because of the things at home, after one thing and another, so in the end I was not well informed about the topics many times. When the evaluation took place, that was a problem” (FGD2, P8, May 3 2022). To this, a participant reacted saying: “The course lasted 40 hours, I think that it should have been longer, one of the topics they gave us and in which I wanted to be better trained was in the use of ICTs. They gave us [the modules] in a short period of time, and personally I like to go deeper into the topics because I do not retain the knowledge” (FGD2, P9, May 3 2022). For another participant in the same FGD, there were also time constraints. This participant indicated: “At some moments the trainer’s time was complex, let’s say that the sequence of meetings couldn’t be followed. There was no sustained time to say that the meetings took place successfully and that there was strong learning. We discussed with other participants that that was a program’s deficiency, the preparation wasn’t so solid because of time constraints” (FGD2, P10, May 3 2022),

One aspect that was mentioned during both FGDs, which also related to how the participants organized their time for the online courses, was the creation of study groups. A participant of the 1st FGD said: “If for instance, people were not able to participate online, they looked for the way to do it, someone could come to one’s house, or we formed groups with a single device to listen to, and the organization paid us for the mobile data” (FGD1, P6, April 12 2022). Another participant referred to the formation of study groups explaining: “During the first online meetings we participated let’s say in teams. From my community, we were eight participants, but not all of us had access to the internet, then we met in a certain place and we studied together. [...] With colleagues, we always said, that day we should meet to study, and the good thing is that we could learn a lot” (FGD2, P8, May 3 2022). A facilitator also referred

to this saying: “The neighbors used to gather where there was Wi-Fi, they used to come to the town to be able to attend the course” (F2, online discussion, April 5 2022).

From the previous statements and reflections, it’s possible to conclude that a critical aspect to increasing the participation and interaction during online capacity building is achieving a horizontal flow of communication. However, this is still missing because of the different levels of digital literacy as well as personal characteristics of the participants. The role of capacity building facilitators is key to encouraging and supporting a participatory and horizontal (online) communication. In addition, the findings show that the asynchronous modality offered by online communication during the capacity building gives the participants more time to reflect and discuss, to cover more topics and manage their time in a flexible way, which enhances their participation and interaction in the capacity building courses.

7.2. Adequacy of ICTs

The second component of the Development Communication approach refers to the adequacy of ICTs in the communication process.

ICTs have transformed and enriched the debate around communication and social change (Gumucio Dagon, 2012). According to this debate, it’s necessary to use a technology suitable to the real needs as well to the level of appropriateness that communities have (ibid., p. 42). In particular, the internet has become a cultural, social and economic phenomenon and it has challenged the forms of communication and general organization of society (ibid., p. 49). This was reaffirmed during the COVID-19 pandemic and it’s still being witnessed in all aspects of society.

In the case of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target populations, the empirical findings coincide with the digital transformation that global society went through during the COVID-19 pandemic. NGOs and target populations had to change their form of communication to an online modality employing increasingly ICTs in order to maintain their relationships and continue fulfilling their capacity building processes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic NGOs wanted to be near their target populations, even though this was no longer possible through a face-to-face interaction but one built up online. As a result, NGOs converted their capacity building programs and activities into online courses. For this, they implemented online communication through different ICTs.

The evidence gathered indicates that NGOs decided which mechanisms and ICTs would be adequate according to their administrative and technological capacity as well as their target population's needs and capacities. Target populations also acknowledged over time which ICTs they considered adequate for their communication. However, NGOs as well as target populations identified at the same time aspects regarding the use of ICTs that make them inadequate for the communication processes. This chapter argues that ICT's adequacy is a contested aspect of the communication process due to the interplay between positive and negative aspects of their use that will be outlined in this subsection.

The first part of this subsection presents the positive aspects of the use of WhatsApp, WhatsApp groups and learning platforms, ICTs that NGOs and their target populations considered adequate to maintaining their relationships and conduct the (online) capacity building courses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The second subsection discusses the aspects that make the use of ICTs inadequate for the communication process involved in the construction of relationships and online capacity building according to the empirical evidence. The inadequate aspects correspond to: digital gaps, loss of the on-site approach and loss of the experiential sense and pedagogical connection.

WhatsApp and its groups as an affordable mechanism for NGOs to transmit micro-learning and enhance the communication and networking among target populations: With respect to the most adequate ICT, executive directors of the NGOs involved in the online capacity building courses as well as capacity building facilitators and target populations who participated in the FGDs agreed that WhatsApp became an adequate system of interlocution, in particular in rural areas, and an efficient mechanism to continue with their capacity building throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because of WhatsApp's user-friendly nature, accessibility and availability and its feature to create groups which was key for the conduction of the online courses. Statements that back up these findings follow:

Mariana Córdoba, director of Fundación ACPO, explained about WhatsApp:

Knowing that it's not so easy for our participants to connect to Zoom, Skype or whatever, then we came up with the idea of WhatsApp, basically the easiest thing in the world. If you go around Colombia, and look at the figures, the smartphone and WhatsApp are something that have a lot of presence. It was interesting because we took advantage of the resources that are in the territory,

and people very quickly identified with WhatsApp [...] one travels to the countryside, and you see people just like us glued to smart phones. So it was a tool that felt very natural for our work. (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021)

Rosa Inés Floriano, director of Programs at SNPS referred to WhatsApp as an adequate mechanism to transmitting their online courses:

In rural areas where for example small coffee growers did not have internet connection, what they (local facilitators) did was to develop audio-visual content with pedagogical guides and they sent them by WhatsApp because WhatsApp does work. WhatsApp was the method through which people downloaded, watched the video, made their previous reflections and filled out these guides; this is how the capacity building was carried out, we really did not stop working thanks to the technological mediation that we discovered. (R. I. Floriano, personal communication, 14 October 2021)

The executive director of Tolipaz, Hugo Rincón, said about their experience with WhatsApp:

The proposal that we presented to GIZ³⁸ was to implement the mechanism of podcasts with the themes that we were going to work on, [...] then we transformed the contents of the modules to podcasts and small educational videos. We worked with them (target populations), we sent them the videos and podcasts to WhatsApp, so they could see them, or listen to them and in this way we continued the capacity building and organizational processes online. (H. Rincón, personal communication, 19 October 2021)

One of the capacity building facilitators detailed how they came to the decision of creating an online course transmitted through WhatsApp:

As a result of that time when we couldn't travel, we started to create an online course called XXX. We realized that we could have a fluid communication through WhatsApp and phone calls, and then we said 'well, if we can't do a face-to-face course, it's a great opportunity to be able to generate all the structure and all the thematic content of the course and find the possibilities and material in images, texts, in very short videos that we could share via WhatsApp' and we invited the community to participate with these images, with messages, so they could be part of this course from the beginning. (F1, online discussion, April 5 2022)

Previous capacity building facilitator described how this online course worked through a WhatsApp group. He/she explained that each module of the online course consisted

³⁸ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH - GIZ (in English German development cooperation agency). It's mission statement is "shaping change, applying knowledge, securing results" (giz, n.d., *Vision and Mission* section) GIZ assists the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation (City of Bonn, 2024, *Heading* section).

of themes and a series of 'capsules. He/she said: "We call each small topic within the big theme a capsule [...] they are short videos, texts, schemes, pictures, which leave a message that allow reflection by the person who receives them and then participants make their reflections in the [WhatsApp] group [...] we did not send the themes very often. We gave about two weeks per theme. And the capsules every two or three days" (F1, online conversation, April 5 2022).

According to this facilitator, he/she worked with another local facilitator looking for materials that were not too time-consuming such as short videos and texts that the community could read and understand easily. The facilitator said: "We found very long texts on each topic and sometimes very good ones from universities, but we said 'they are not going to download such a large document to read and then socialize', so we changed the format, we provided short inputs during the course, and at the end, when the course finished and it was possible to meet in person again, we did a workshop to review the subjects" (ibid.). This facilitator also referred to the way participants made their contributions by leaving written comments or voice messages in the WhatsApp group. He/she described these contributions saying: "Participants replied 'this video was interesting because of this, this can be helpful here because of this, it would be good if we could go deeper into this subject, it's necessary to go to the mayor's office to discuss this, we should work on this issue'" (ibid.).

Another facilitator referred to the contributions of participants in the WhatsApp group pointing out: "[...] apart from being a space to share a theme, people also made visible and shared the community processes they were developing. This motivated others to say 'here we can do that, we can make something similar'" (F3, online discussion, August 8 2022). As was already addressed, the role of local facilitators was key to enhancing participation and interaction as well as in solving technical issues faced by the participants of the online capacity building courses.

Mariana Córdoba, executive director of Fundación ACPO, also referred to the use of capsules transmitted through WhatsApp groups for their (online) courses. Mariana defined this mechanism as micro-learning explaining: "The greatest acceleration was to diversify our means of capacity building by resorting to micro-learning models with the privileged use of social networks and gamification" (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021). Mariana defined micro-learning as "an educational

process followed by every participant in the same way, consisting of transmitting specific, well-designed, short and repetitive capsules over the course of a week through WhatsApp [groups]”. With regard to gamification Mariana defines it as the “use of game in education” (ibid.).

During the FGDs, participants referred to the suitability of WhatsApp to continue with the capacity building activities too. One of them said: “I believe that WhatsApp has been the platform, I don't know if there are statistics, but the platform that has been most used in the country in times of the pandemic because sincerely, it's an essential platform both for us who are in the city and I think for people who are in rural areas, really, for the ease of the application, and also for the updates that the application began to promote during the pandemic, such as expanding the number of people in groups, also other tools that facilitated communication” (FGD2, P10, May 3 2022). Another participant said: “We use [Google] meet a lot and more than anything else WhatsApp. In my case, it is easier through WhatsApp because I go out a lot, I go to the town, and constantly I commute to [the city], and for the native [people] here, WhatsApp [is adequate]” (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022).

With regard to the use of games during the online courses, a FGD participant referred to them saying: “We managed to have some face-to-face classes, we did them in a farm nearby. After that, the issue of the pandemic grew, so we also started to work via WhatsApp, [...] and we worked with modules. When we finished a module, the trainer left us a kind of competition, a competition game, with questions from the same module. So, everyone did their best to climb up” (FGD1, P1, April 12 2022). Another participant said addressing the use of games: “At the beginning of the pandemic, around May 2020, the network introduced a different competition game every month, there was a story-telling competition, a poetry competition, and it served to anchor people and to maintain a permanent interest in the organization and the program as such” (FGD, P5, April 12 2022).

With respect to the formation and continuity of the WhatsApp groups created in the framework of the online courses, facilitators indicated that they created the groups adding participants with a leadership role in these communities. At the beginning, facilitators were the only administrators of the groups, but once they realized the pandemic was continuing and they identified the need to add more people, they invited

the current participants to refer other participants they considered relevant to participate in the group. Here, facilitators started to make other participants administrators of the groups so that they could also add more people. Facilitators explained to the participants they were now administrators because once they finalize the project, they might leave the territory and it was key that they could take ownership of these groups. One of these groups is no longer active, but the other is. A FGD participant referred to this WhatsApp group saying: “although the project has ended, the group is still active [...], we share for example upcoming activities, information independent from [the NGO] but the group continues as such. At this moment, there are 45 members” (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022).

One of the capacity building facilitators referred to the consolidation of the WhatsApp groups she/he had previously administrated: “The [WhatsApp] groups still exist, they added me with my personal number when I left the institution, we continue sharing topics related to the municipalities, calls from the public administration, educational offers, they (target groups) have not stopped, the group has kept them informed, [...], there is information that they can benefit from, either for their families or because they can participate in what is offered” (F1, online discussion, April 5 2022).

A participant in the 1st FGD also referred to the WhatsApp group after the acute phases of the COVID-19 pandemic: “The [WhatsApp] group as such has not finished, and at the moment the person in charge of our group is XXX, collaborator at the NGO XXX, and [this person] has been in charge of our capacity building since 2019. At the beginning there were two people, but one left” (FGD1, P6, April 12 2022). To this statement, another participant replied: “The [WhatsApp] group is still active because we are still active with the project, the project has a duration of four years, and this is the third year. We have continued with the group [...] the group is relevant, there are quite a number of members, because they have been involved in several phases of the same project [...]” (FGD1, P3, April 12 2022).

During the 2nd FGD, a participant also referred to the continuation of the WhatsApp groups saying: “We used the WhatsApp tool a lot and we still do. During the pandemic, the truth is that it was a bit complicated because there were many new people, and I am, let's say, from the class of 2019, although it's not so long ago, but many new people have joined the group. The WhatsApp strategy was especially for those in the

rural areas, for instance I come from a municipality but belong to the network of a city, so commuting is difficult sometimes [...]" (FGD2, P9, May 3 2022). Finally, another participant pointed out: "Let's say that in other spaces, WhatsApp was used a lot as an educational tool, but in this particular program, we didn't use it for meetings, mostly they were held through zoom [...] there is still a WhatsApp group with the participants of the program, the invite to participate in this FGD was sent in this group (FGD2, P10, May 3 2022)".

Finally, during the 2nd FGD a participant addressed the benefits of WhatsApp to exchange relevant information for the benefit of the communities and generate their own local content. Thus, WhatsApp might be employed potentially as community media. This participant said: "[...] WhatsApp groups composed of leaders were created and they remained because we still use them when there are, for example, calls for work, mingas de trabajo³⁹ on the roads, or maybe there is some information that is really important for the community, then we call for a meeting [in the WhatsApp group]". This participant explained further: "What we did was to create a means of communication and we called it "El paradero de WhatsApp" (in English the WhatsApp stop), so, we created a WhatsApp group with all the leaders, teachers, parents, and if there was information we didn't receive, someone in the municipality of XXX will inform us [through WhatsApp], and we could also communicate what was happening in our community. It was very useful" (FGD2, P8, May 3 2022). Another participant in the same FGD said: "We continue using these communication tools, either with the community or with the family, it is really part of our life in order to communicate with each other. It wasn't only during the pandemic, but because of the pandemic we learned how to use them" (FGD2, P7, May 3 2022). This participant added when he received the certificate of completion of the course: [With these tools we] let people know the good and the bad things in the territory, we communicate about the life and experiences of the territory so that others get to know about it. With these tools we can learn about other experiences and we support other communities [...] It has brought about a change in my way of life, these tools and their uses have been fundamental [...]" (ibid.).

³⁹ "Minga comes from the Quechua language "minka", which refers, in this native language of the Peruvian Andes, to an old tradition of community work for the benefit of society as a whole and the good life of society" (as.com, 2020, para. 3).

In the case of Fundación ABC, WhatsApp was used as a tool to come up with the soap opera entitled “Stories from the future 2.0: Stories when the weather gets crazy”. The soap opera was broadcasted as a podcast through local radio stations, social networks, and speakers in the neighborhoods of the municipalities involved in the initiative. This soap opera contributed to the resurgence and recovery of this radio genre that played a key role in Colombia during the 20th century. Besides, it was relevant in order to hear other stories in a time in which the media coverage was the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Natalia Roa, coordinator of the online capacity building, when they launched the initiative, they were afraid it was going to be boring and nobody would like to participate. On the contrary, this NGO received a lot of participants’ registrations and the selected participants were looking forward to recording their voices and raising awareness on topics related to climate change and conservation of the local ecosystems. The WhatsApp group created for the communication and work on the first radio soap opera has been active since the beginning of the initiative. After the first radio soap opera, another two series have been created and mobilized.

The empirical evidence presented above shows how NGOs and target populations gave a new use to WhatsApp and its feature to create and administrate groups in order to maintain their relationships and continue with the capacity building throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Executive directors of NGOs, capacity building facilitators and participants of the FGDs acknowledge WhatsApp’s adequacy as a user-friendly and affordable ICT employed, in particular, in rural areas to transmit micro-learning during the capacity building courses and as a networking mechanism and potential community media. Even though the online courses finished, some of the WhatsApp groups are still active enhancing communication and mobilization of the current group members to accomplish different actions inside the communities. These actions range from informative announcements to more coordinated activities and mobilizations.

Online learning platforms as an adequate ICT for capacity building: In the case of Fundación para la Reconciliación, they employed a learning online platform to conduct the online capacity building course “Peace from a youth perspective: a legacy for reconciliation and no repetition”. They used an online platform considering that the target populations, namely university students, had sufficient digital skills and access to the internet to join the online course.

According to the empirical evidence, a higher level of time and financial investment, expert advice, and sufficient digital skills from the team members of the NGO as well of target populations were required to be able to materialize the learning platform.

Angélica Pérez, executive director of Fundación para la Reconciliación explained that it was also a long process from the decision-making phase to the introduction of the platform, consisting of different modules used not only for their work with their target populations but also to handle administrative and team processes. Angélica explained the introduction of the platform during different sections of her interview:

We made the decision with the support of the members of the board of directors to develop a technological platform and we started developing online content. Today we are working with different communities alternating [between online and offline work]. We are developing it with an external provider, this is another thing, we are illiterate in these technological issues, so we have had to learn as well. At the beginning we did an evaluation of suppliers. I met with other people from the team, with several sister organizations, [...] organizations close to us that are a little more familiar with technological issues, [...] and we started to gather these experiences and at this point we started this technological development. We have been learning and growing technologically, [...] we have incorporated people with these profiles into the work team, they have come to teach us and to support us [...] and we are so clear that this is an opportunity. (A. M. Pérez, personal communication, 17 January 2022)

With respect to the modules of the platform, Angélica specified:

It is a platform that consists of eight modules, so one of them is the events and capacity building module, another is the administrative and personnel module, the human talent management module, the knowledge management module, the international network module, there is a project management module, alliances and social marketing, and the technological readiness module. [...] due to budget issues we decided to do it by modules so as not to spend all the financial resources at once, we have already developed two modules, the events and capacity building module, we are going to renew the website and now we are going to start with the administrative and human talent modules. (A. M. Pérez, personal communication, 17 January 2022)

Regarding the technological readiness module, Angélica detailed: “The platform is functional for population groups that have a certain proximity to technology. We developed a technological readiness module, one of the requirements we asked the supplier, and indeed one of the criteria for the selection of the supplier was that the platform should be extremely user-friendly, allowing easy understanding, for teachers, university students, even for people from communities such as social leaders. As long as we can provide the digital resources, and populations know how to use the platform,

the [capacity building] can be done” (A. M. Pérez, personal communication, 17 January 2022).

Previous empirical evidence shows that online learning platforms require specialized and accessible digital infrastructures as well as good levels of digital skills to be employed during (online) capacity building courses. This means that members of NGOs as well as target populations should feel ready to use the online learning platform with respect to both digital equipment and digital skills to take part in the activities. A technological readiness module that prepares target populations before the beginning of the course is key to facilitating their participation and prevent future difficulties, in particular for target populations which lack digital skills and experience with learning platforms such as rural populations. This also applies to members of the NGO who are not familiarized with these platforms and require training before their use. Besides, internet connection and availability of digital equipment must be assured for the implementation of the online platform.

It is possible to conclude that online learning platforms could be very sophisticated ICTs, in particular for rural populations. In contrast to WhatsApp and WhatsApp groups, learning platforms didn't become part of the daily lives of rural populations and weren't reinforced as essential for online communication throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the adequacy of this kind of ICT to maintain relationships and conduct capacity building processes will depend on both the target populations' readiness to use it and the appropriate and accessible digital infrastructures.

This chapter will move now to the aspects that according to the empirical evidence show that the use of ICTs is inadequate at maintaining the relationships and conducting online capacity building. Digital gaps are the most referred to aspect mentioned by NGOs and FGD participants followed by loss of the on-site approach and loss of the experiential sense and pedagogical connection with the target populations. Each of them will be explained as follows:

Digital gaps: The marked digital gaps in the country are the concern most frequently mentioned by NGOs and target populations who participated in the FGDs. Digital gaps involve the lack of access and infrastructure to employ ICTs, low levels of digital literacy and a lack of a digital culture among NGOs and their target populations. Each aspect will be described as follows:

Lack of access and infrastructure to employ ICTs: NGOs and FGD participants agree that there are big digital gaps between rural and urban areas, which affected online communication throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the most relevant statements on this follow:

The executive director of Corporación Tolipaz, Hugo Rincón, referred to the issue of unequal digital access in the country:

[...] I believe that the common denominator in this country is that ICTs are not present in the rural sector. [During the COVID-19 pandemic] there was a very famous scandal of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies regarding the loss of 70 billion pesos (approx. 18 million USD) that were supposed to be invested in extending the internet to at least the populated centers. If one goes for example to a village in the Tolima's municipality called 'La Libertad', one has to travel from the urban center to the village for almost two hours by a trail and obviously there is a very weak signal of Claro [Telecommunications operator] and this obviously forces whoever is going to make a call to walk to certain places where the signal reaches. (H. Rincón, personal communication, 19 October 2021)

Marta Royo, executive director at Asociación Profamilia, provided an example of the difficulties of accessing the internet in certain areas of the country:

In Colombia you have a huge part of the country in which [internet] connection is only available in specific places such as parks in villages. People can have a smart phone and WhatsApp, but they do not have full mobile data plans, they cannot pay for them, they cannot download YouTube for example, nor download the video we made to be able to participate in the webinars on Facebook, they are very poor people and they do not have connectivity in their homes and to be able to take part in a webinar they have to go to the park of the town and with the confinement measures, nobody can be outside. Or you have other problems of security, violence, there are many areas in the country where you cannot move around peacefully. We tried to connect online with the Youth network online, but they used to say 'I cannot log in, I have bad signal, I am in the park and the town Wi-Fi is down'. (M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022)

In the case of the target populations, during both FGDs and during the discussions with the capacity building facilitators, participants discussed the lack of infrastructure, scarce financial resources and the difficulties of having a stable internet connection because of the weather conditions in the regions in which they live. Some statements that back up these findings follow:

In the 1st FGD, a participant explained about the financial limitations of accessing ICTs:

The economic factor has a strong influence on participation in social networks. In what sense? It is necessary to have high-end or medium-range mobile equipment to be able to access all the capacity building courses or, failing that, to have a computer, which in rural areas is a bit complicated, because a computer doesn't cost less than two million pesos (ca. 508 USD), so not everyone can buy a computer. And the same applies to participating in all these social network campaigns. But we also have the problem of the internet antennas. To be able to install one of them, you need 200 000 pesos (ca. 51 USD), and monthly payments of 75 000 [pesos] (ca. 20 USD) [...]. (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022)

This participant referred again later on the discussion to distancing among members of the community and a low level of participation in the capacity building activities offered by the NGO due to the lack of financial resources and bad weather conditions to access ICTs. This person said: "In our case, we distanced ourselves because of the communication problem, due to our financial limitations and weather conditions" (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022). This participant broadened their explanation during the FGD:

Before the pandemic, capacity building was done in person, it was constant, we met between 80 and 120 [members of the community] from the different sectors of the village, [...] and when the pandemic emerged, we created the WhatsApp communication system. At the beginning we had some problems, because we are in a very rainy area, with a lot of storms, so the weather still affects us, when it starts to rain the internet goes down. The other disadvantage of WhatsApp is that not all the participants were able to make mobile top-ups. We all know that if there is constant communication by WhatsApp, the mobile data lasts a very short time, so of those 120 [participants], we became a group of approximately 30. (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022)

Another participant in the same FGD reacted to previous comments saying: "I live in a geographical area, which is generally very rainy and people have a lot of difficulties with the internet connection. And we have to recognize that XXX is very supportive, they paid for the mobile top-ups, or if not, they told us to get together as a group and we went to [their center] and they advised us there. In my case, it was difficult because I didn't have a mobile phone or computer, sometimes I borrowed them, or I studied with someone else. Communication is sometimes very difficult" (FGD1, P6, April 12 2022).

A participant in the 2nd FGD also referred to the difficulties of using the internet because it was a new mechanism to learn but at the same time there was bad weather

conditions that made the internet connection difficult. This participant pointed out: “In the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had some online activities, some workshops, capacity building, and it was very difficult for us to adapt because we were not trained in this online method, it was totally new for us. And secondly, we live more or less five hours away from the municipality, so we don’t always have electricity, we don’t have daily internet, and the other thing is that the rainy-season has been quite heavy. So, that made everything very complicated for us” (FGD2, P8, May 3 2022). This participant added: “Imagine that in order for us to have internet, we didn't have it in our homes and we had at least to go to a Vive Digital point, it was like walking for an hour, 15, 20 minutes, depending on the distance” (ibid.).

Capacity building facilitators also referred to the poor internet connection, in particular in rural areas. One of them said: “One of the main challenges in rural areas of all municipalities, and in some more than others, is that we do not have internet connection [...] let's say that there is no government presence or support in this area [...]. Some of the municipal capitals do have some internet connection in their parks, but it allows people to send a single message by WhatsApp and no more, sending large files or download files or a pdf document cannot be done. This situation, not having a full internet connection, slows down the capacity building process” (F1, online discussion, April 5 2022). In another conversation, a facilitator explained: “At no time did the issue of internet connection appeared to be a priority, it was not on the radar of the [locals], when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged and everything started to revolve around the internet, [...] we were also taking a risk working with internet. On that point, we realized that both communities and us as an organization had difficulties with the internet connection and this was a topic that we talked about, but sometimes one is not aware of how difficult it can be in rural areas” (F3, online discussion, August 8 2022).

Another facilitator also referred to the implications of bad weather conditions to accessing the internet saying: “In some areas there is no [digital] connection, in other areas electricity goes out, it rains, or it is very windy, which affects the internet connection” (F2, online discussion, April 5 2022).

Low levels of digital literacy: NGOs as well as FGD participants acknowledge that before the COVID-19 pandemic, few of them had sufficient digital skills to maintain

online communication. In this sense, not only the access and infrastructure to ICTs should be ensured but also digital literacy of NGOs and their target populations.

Hugo Rincón, executive director at Corporación Tolipaz, said: “The impact was evident because there is also relative illiteracy in the rural communities regarding the use of information technologies. What definitely happened is that necessity also forced them to adapt and to be able to assume these new ways of using information technologies” (H. Rincón, personal communication, 19 October 2021) . Hugo specified on the need for fostering digital literacy saying:

[...] As long as there are no objective conditions for the people of the communities to take advantage of this digital transformation in the best way possible, that is to say, in person, [capacity building] will continue to be a necessity. It is not the same thing. It has been empirically demonstrated that if you hold a meeting by Zoom, and something happens with us who have a digital culture, academic experience and sit in front of a computer for hours without getting tired but not our target populations, if you take more than an hour, they start to log out of zoom. That’s why I think there is a big limitation and there is a task and it is that of digital literacy, it is necessary, it is pertinent and it is urgent, undoubtedly that would also facilitate many things, many meetings of the social sector could take place if there were objective conditions through digital media [...]. (H. Rincón, personal communication, 19 October 2021)

A facilitator also emphasized the relevance of conducting digital literacy capacity building. This person said: “It is important to continue the capacity building on these technology and connectivity issues. All the means we have to be in contact with rural communities and be able to promote their development and improve their quality of life are welcome. We may not be able to reach every corner, but for every person who gets the message, that person will be able to replicate it either to their village, family or organizations [...]” (F1, online discussion, April 5 2022). However, this person also referred to the challenges of establishing online capacity building: “at the end of the course we gathered with the participants in person to learn their opinion about the course and which topic they found interesting, even those who couldn’t attend it. We discussed the difficulties of this kind of capacity building, [...] definitely before taking rural communities to an online process, we have to prepare them so that they have the tools and know how to use them” (ibid.) Another facilitator also pointed out: “Using only digital media to reach out to the rural population is to some extent excluding a large number of people [...] It’s not only the internet connection, because there are people who have access to the internet. It is not because people do not want to

participate, it's because they do not [have digital skills] and if they have someone to guide them, they can learn and if not, they will remain isolated" (F3, online discussion, August 8 2022).

During the 1st FGD, participants discussed the influence of age in developing digital skills. One of the participants began the discussion saying: "There is really no age limit, nor a generational difference that affects the process, maybe the initial learning process can be a little slower for the older participants, but in the end we can all have the same digital skills" (FGD1, P5, April 12 2022). Another participant replied to this comment saying: "For me, there are no generational limits, quite the contrary, the limits are set by oneself, but when one has an open mind, is open to all these possibilities, one is on the way to improve every day" (FGD1, P3, April 12 2022). In contrast, a participant specified: "The generational part plays a role. In my case, I am already 57, I don't have the same agility as a younger boy or girl in the group. I cannot ignore that. It is true that it depends on the interests that everyone has. So, at this point support comes in play, the social construction, where those who know, take care of the others, and that happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was family, community, and group integration" (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022). Another two participants concluded emphasizing that the NGO activities are always offered to people from different ages. To quote one of them: "In our case, there are participants of all ages, there are children, young people. It has always been like that. There have never been activities, which are only for such age group, no. One of the leaders is XXX, this person is elderly and is one of the most active in our organization" (FGD1, P1, April 12 2022).

In the 2nd FGD a participant addressed age when developing digital skills saying: "[...] although it is difficult for older people, I think they are very receptive, and they receive this type of change and tools that are provided nowadays with a positive attitude, [...] In terms of communication and [online banking], these online tools are very positive" (FGD2, P10, May 3 2022). Another participant replied to this comment saying: "even though people are older, they have given importance to learning, at least to learning how to use one of those online tools for our communication" (FGD2, P7, May 3 2022).

Lack of a digital culture among NGOs and their target populations: Empirical evidence of this research also suggests that a cultural shift to incorporate digital transformations is also necessary in order to consider adequate the use of ICTs. Only

a few statements addressed this issue, indicating that it requires further attention and study.

Angélica Pérez, executive director for Fundación para la Reconciliación, pointed out: “This is also a cultural transformation, for an organization that is not used to technological issues, this also implies that people must first understand and accept that this is important and that it will be useful because if not, there will not be adherence to the process, [...] all the benefits should be presented to them, but if the team is not committed to this [transformation], it is an investment that will remain unused and unprofitable” (A. M. Pérez, personal communication, 17 January 2022).

A capacity building facilitator addressed the lack of a digital culture on the side of target populations: “I feel that ICTs are very good tools, but they shouldn’t be the only ones, especially in rural areas. If we talk about urban areas, I think there is a different dynamic, but in rural areas, I think they are valid and important tools and we should continue to strengthen their use, but they can’t be the only ones, because our population still doesn’t have a culture of using these media and therefore many people were also left behind [...]. If the space had been in person surely the impact would have been greater, and we would have had more people who would have joined the process” (F3, online discussion, August 8 2022).

To conclude with the aspect of digital gaps, NGOs and capacity building facilitators emphasized the crucial role of national and local governments in ensuring access to ICTs and fostering digital literacy capacity programs that contribute to closing the above-mentioned digital gaps. Besides, development agencies and the social sector are considered key advocacy players to tackling the digital inequality in the country. In particular, the private sector and telecommunication operators should assume a social responsibility role to support access to ICTs and digital literacy in rural and remote areas of the country.

Loss of the on-site approach: Also known as local or territorial approach, this is an important premise of the work of NGOs as well as an important concept in critical development and peace studies. This research understands on-site or territorial approach as the approach that “acknowledges and takes into special account the social, economic and cultural characteristics, particularities and needs of the territories

and communities, ensuring socio-environmental sustainability [...]”⁴⁰ (Mesa de Conversaciones, 2017). According to this, NGOs recognize that their work requires an everyday exchange with the communities in their territories and a meaningful connection with them and their environment. The introduction of an online form of communication to conduct the online capacity building courses during the COVID-19 pandemic made it challenging to stick to this approach. Based on the empirical evidence, there was a reduction in the on-site approach and the following statements back up this finding:

Angélica María Pérez, executive director at Fundación para la Reconciliación, detailed first the importance of working with the communities in person and locally in the field of peace and justice: “[...] violence brings with it a series of very perverse elements in the communities, a lot of fear, fear of expressing themselves and this implies a process of confidence building that can only be achieved on-site, so traditionally the work of the foundation has been based on being in the territory, we never conceived anything different to face-to-face work” (A. M. Pérez, personal communication, 17 January 2022). Angélica continued saying: “We also understand that in a country like Colombia, the territories we reach are territories that have been historically abandoned by the governmental entities and others, so the work in-situ plays a very important role not only in the creation of trust but obviously in the possibility that the territory offers us to directly get to know the problems and situations that the communities are facing” (ibid.). Angélica concluded saying: “Today we understand that this [COVID-19 pandemic] is a circumstance that is here to stay and departing from that, we have been accommodating ourselves, we have been strengthening ourselves technologically, but as long as we can return to the on-site work, due to the nature of our work, we are going to do it” (ibid.).

For Mariana Córdoba, executive director for Fundación ACPO, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed them to a 100% online model which affected the creation of learning communities that emerge on-site. Mariana explained: “Our program is blended [...] the program Escuelas Digitales Campesinas (in English Digital Peasant Schools) works with a Moodle platform, which is a classic learning platform, where anyone can open

⁴⁰ This definition of on-site approach is taken from the text of the final agreement for the termination of the conflict and the building of a stable and lasting peace signed between the national government of Colombia and the FARC guerrilla on November 2016.

their account, log in and study. Our strength is not that, our strength is to have the local facilitator, who is in the municipality, who convenes the community, and each person sits at a computer and does their course, autonomously, with the help of a facilitator, who solves technical problems, but also with their neighbor who is suddenly doing another course. We make those kind of learning communities, and the pandemic did take them away from us [...]" (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021) .

Hugo Rincón, executive director at Corporación Tolipaz, also referred to the relevance of on-site work: "[...] without any doubt there was a substantial impact because being in person, accompanying someone, promoting, is not the same as not doing it. Besides, people panicked, people themselves did not want to meet again, because of fear. This has improved, but it depends on the peaks of the pandemic" (H. Rincón, personal communication, 19 October 2021).

Loss of experiential sense and pedagogical connection: According to the empirical evidence, NGOs and FGD participants consider that the online communication cannot replace the experiential sense and pedagogical connection that takes place during face-to-face interaction.

During the FGDs, participants acknowledged the relevance of online communication through the use of ICTs to support their capacity building processes and maintain contact with NGOs, their own families and neighbors. They agree that the COVID-19 pandemic pushed them to learn about ICTs and now they are able to employ them. However, participants reckon that in-person interaction plays an essential role in strengthening bonds of trust and maintaining the experiential sense of the capacity building processes in the places they live.

In the 2nd FGD, a participant referred to the loss of experiential sense because of the physical-distancing and mobilization restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic: "I think that the experiential sense is missing, that chance to know in more depth what the other person was thinking. Mobilization is also missing. Let's say travel from city to city, or from place to place, makes the discussions more enjoyable. On the other hand, the online modality is always complex because sometimes the internet connection is not good or sometimes one does not really care about talking to a screen and one does not know if people are paying attention or not [...]" (FGD2, P10, May 3

2022). The same participant indicated later: “That face-to-face part is essential in the learning process, I wouldn’t stay only with the online modality. For me, face-to-face work is necessary and for me if there’s any type of work with the community, I have to go there, I like it better like that and I always prefer to do it face-to-face, regardless of whether it means walking 5 or 10 hours or if I have to go through mountains, or if I have to go along these bad tertiary roads in the countryside, that is no problem. But that face-to-face work is important” (ibid.).

Another FGD participant reacted to these comments saying: “To a large extent, I agree with my colleague because sometimes [face-to-face] meetings are really more enjoyable, because we live for that experience, for experience with others, it is good to know about it because we also learn from it, and there were many meetings in which we could not be present and well, it would have been much better to be there (FD2, P7, May 3 2022). Another participant in the 1st FGD also referred to the importance of in-person meetings to maintaining the experiential sense: “I also agree that technology is complementary. Technology is here to stay, as is COVID-19, but I would give a little more percentage [of importance] to face-to-face [interaction], because the human factor, the sensitivity of being with each other cannot be compared at any time with online capacity building. The face-to-face modality must prevail over the online modality, otherwise we may lose ourselves as humanity” (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022).

The capacity building facilitators also referred to the relevance of building up relationships with their target populations based on a face-to-face interaction/relationship. One of them said: “For some, the online modality is positive, but the construction of the social fabric is crucial, it is not possible to generate bonds of trust online, unless you are already recognized as an actor in the territory” (F2, online discussion, April 5 2022).

Another facilitator explained more extensively the changes it brought to personally getting to know the participants of their capacity building process:

I got to know them after 4 to 5 months of being in the project. We were told we could visit them, putting a face to the voices. This brought changes, people approached me with affection, people responded more easily to any communication. It demonstrated the importance of face-to-face interaction for the [locals]. Even though today the online theme is booming, it does not replace being in person, it does not replace being able to meet them, that they see your face and being able to feel closeness, that welcoming feeling that is so important

for the [locals]. I felt the difference when I was able to meet them and we could sit down for a coffee, another type of relationship emerged, a phone call made more sense. When communicating by WhatsApp, there was a more active response, we saw the need that prior to any online capacity building process, we should have a more face-to-face closeness so the process could work. (F3, online discussion, August 08 2022)

In the case of NGOs, Mariana Córdoba, executive director at Fundación ACPO, a 100% online capacity building process risks the community learning which the aim of their flagship is program “Escuelas Campesinas Digitales” (in English Digital Peasant Schools). Mariana clarified these implications:

In addition to promoting leadership, one of the goals of the schools is to rebuild the social fabric broken by war, broken by violence, and we want to create learning communities. These communities can be online, but we want them to be real, the fact of meeting in a place, of sharing, does not go out of fashion. So, I think that the online modality lacks that human element, of meeting one another, it certainly has those limitations, and obviously it lacks the support that a facilitator can provide. In a model that is 100% online, the relationship that is established is different, the pedagogical relationship that we are looking for is different, digital schools are based on a model of a symmetrical pedagogical relationships, peer learning, learning together. Our schools are intergenerational, and I think that this community element is lost in a 100% online model. (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021)

Besides Mariana referred to the necessity of building trust with the team in the field considering they were away from the project during the lockdowns: “There are things that we really had to put aside temporarily, I was very used to, in terms of travel, for example, to making those follow-up trips, having the reality of how a project is going, talking to a participant, talking to a partner on the ground, not being able to do that, you also feel very distant from the project and it makes you rely a lot on the staff you have on the ground” (M. Córdoba, personal communication, 1 March 2021).

Martha Royo, executive director at Asociación Profamilia also referred to the barriers of online interaction: “When we talk about connectivity, we assume that all people not only have access to internet but that they are skilled at chatting and that is not the case, people we assist find it hard to write, to explain what they feel, to say in a chat ‘I was raped and I am pregnant and I do not know what to do’, those things are not easy” (M. Royo, personal communication, 4 January 2022).

To conclude with the analysis of the component of adequacy of ICTs, the findings of this research confirm that NGOs and target populations employed increasingly online communication throughout the COVID-19 pandemic marked by digital gaps that risked the way in which they establish relationships and develop capacity building. However, NGOs came up with new ways to approach their target populations such as the use of WhatsApp and WhatsApp groups. Target populations also tried to embrace the incorporation of ICTs in their relationships and participation in the capacity building courses. It seems that a hybrid modality that combines in-person and online asynchronous activities could be the most adequate to continuing with capacity building. For this, the digital readiness of the target populations and members of the NGOs should be promoted and the principle of on-site work should be maintained.

7.3. Appropriation/Ownership of the communication process

This last component explored from the Development Communication approach refers to the capacity of adopting the communication process in an autonomous and collective way in order to use it as a tool that contributes to strengthening the community⁴¹ (Gumucio Dagron, 2012).

Results from the empirical analysis show that target populations have appropriated the communication process through the following actions: transfer of knowledge and the development of sense of awareness, participation in the design and evaluation of the online capacity building courses and commitment to scaling-up and continuing with the initiatives that emerged from the online courses. A brief description of each of these actions of appropriation follow:

Transfer of knowledge and the development of sense of awareness: During the FGDs, participants discussed about the new knowledge, skills and awareness on different topics they developed through the online courses they took part in.

In the 1st FGD a participant said: “Thanks to the capacity building with XXX, we worked a lot on XXX, that was very significant for each of us, [...] with all this learning, we

⁴¹ “Community denotes not only an ethnic unit or geographical location, but also a collective of common interests” (Gumucio Dagron, 2012, p. 41).

reinforced the work in the construction of social fabric [...] the community work has been greatly strengthened” (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022). Another participant pointed out: “In these modules, there was also one called XXX, [...] it was an important topic for us [...]. Thanks to the capacity building we had, we were taught how to XXX”. (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022). Another participant added: “The experience was gratifying, [...] time was at one's disposal and it was an enriching experience in all aspects. We got to know many opinions, strategies, many different ways of thinking and we also appropriated concepts to put them into practice or to replicate them. We reached more coverage. When in person, we only addressed one topic and that's all, but online we have the chance to digitally open up to other aspects and broaden concepts. It was very special and I'd repeat it” (FGD1, P3, April 12 2022). Another participant said: “Online one explores, one gain skills, one can intervene, interact, both ways in person and online are important” (FGD1, P6, April 12 2022). To this, another participant replied: “That is what I would like to highlight in all these activities that we have been carrying out and I hope we continue with this great project, so that we can continue generating more awareness through all these types of activities” (FGD1, P3, April 12 2022). In the 2nd FGD a participant said: “We learned a lot, in particular in how to deal with XXX, [...] we took part in the course because it was an opportunity to receive capacity building and learn. There were participants [with low levels of schooling], that's why this has strengthened us” (FGD1, P8, May 3 2022). However, this participant added: “[...] we couldn't get used to the online modality, but these meetings gave us a lot of knowledge and learning, which is the most important thing” (ibid.).

The online capacity building facilitators also referred to the appropriation of the communication process saying: “We managed to get them (target populations) to take ownership of the development of their capacities, to take ownership of this whole capacity building process, to give it the importance it had, to acknowledge it [...]” (F1, online discussion, April 5 2022). For this, facilitators not only shared in the WhatsApp group capsules that included the contents of each of the modules of the course, but they also encouraged the active participation of target populations with messages such as “grow in knowledge is to contribute to my rural community”, “we invite you to share your opinions and comments about XXX. Remember that your contribution enriches us”, “we invite you to continue deepening our knowledge in this capacity

building”, “we continue reading to those who want to share their questions or contributions”⁴².

Another facilitator pointed out: “[...] apart from being a space to share a theme, people were also sharing and making visible the community processes they were developing, [...] that in a way motivated the leaders to say ‘here we can do something similar’. When we evaluated the course as such, one of the things they valued a lot was the possibility of sharing and socializing their community experiences and the processes that each community was carrying out” (F3, online discussion, August 8 2022).

Participation in the design and evaluation of the online courses and activities:

Some NGOs and FGD participants referred to the level of involvement of target populations in the design and evaluation of the online activities. This can be denoted as an action of appropriation because target populations engage in shaping these programs according to their context, interests and needs.

Marcela Vega, director of the strategic line “Education for Governance” for the Asociación de Becarios de Casanare (ABC) said: “With the processes we have been carrying out, there is constant communication with the people to see if things are working or not. In order to continue or rethink the methodologies, this feedback from the community and the population is very important and even more so under these conditions (digital gaps), [...] the communities have a very important role to play in saying how we can continue strengthening them” (M. Vega, personal communication, 23 February 2021).

In a FGD, a participant explained that the last module of the online course was a self-evaluation. This participant said: “Thanks to all the experiences and what we were able to exchange between those who taught us and ourselves, we came to the conclusion that it would be very important to have a second phase of the program. In general, it was all very positive” (FGD1, P1, April 12 2022). Another participant added: “In the case of XXX, we also worked in modules, and each time a module finished, there was an evaluation. When the whole project or the first phase, so to speak,

⁴² Messages taken from the materials shared by the capacity building facilitators.

finished, all the leaders were brought together with the different governmental entities of the municipality [...] and the evaluation was carried out in common agreement. The evaluation was very positive in terms of integration and communication. We hope that there will be a second phase and they don't leave us behind, but that they continue teaching us" (FGD1, P2, April 12 2022).

In contrast, a participant in the 2nd FGD said: "At no time did the organization XXX or the facilitator/trainer open a space for criticism or reflection on the process. In fact, I think that this was something that was missing. We didn't talk about this specifically, each of us did their own thing, then they sent some certificates [...] but the process wasn't closed, then nothing more could be said at any time" (FGD2, P10, May 3 2022). This participant explained the way the online capacity building program he participated in was designed: "[...] the organization XXX did not make a diagnosis or I think they didn't consider which communities were asking which things, but they simply launched the call for those who wanted to register wherever these people were in the country and they asked simply to develop a 'replicate', which was a specific task with the community" (ibid.) Another participant concluded the evaluation issue saying: "I would say that the evaluation was mostly done by ourselves, we shared what was hard, difficult, complicated, and we concluded it's challenging to be able to adapt to the digital networks" (FGD2, P8, May 3 2022).

Commitment to scaling-up and continuing with the projects and initiatives that emerged from the online courses: Although to a lesser extent, NGOs and FGD participants referred to their commitment to scaling-up, replicating and continuing with the projects and initiatives resulted from the online capacity building and activities developed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Angélica Pérez, executive director for Fundación para la Reconciliación, referred to the importance of installing capacities in the communities with a long-term approach. She said: "Not all our teams consist of professionals, we train people from the community itself to leave installed capacity, so that they can replicate and multiply what we have been doing in the territory, because if we generate dependence on the communities then this is definitely detrimental to the community itself. They are not

necessarily people with, let's say, high levels of schooling, but in some profiles they are [...]" (A. M. Pérez, personal communication, 17 January 2022).

An online capacity building facilitator elaborated on the continuation of the projects in the communities. This person began saying: "The organization XXX is no longer present in the territory, when I left, they were no longer there, but the foundations [of the projects] were laid [...] the leaders have continued working and managing the project on XXX [...] as far as I know, the other project on XXX hasn't had much follow-up or strength" (F3, online discussion, May 3 2022). Then, this facilitator added: "In the last meeting we had, we asked the participants if they considered it important to continue meeting regularly, [...] let's say that we set up a meeting plan for them. Another issue that makes things more complex is when new people join [...] because they might not have had as much contact with the process compared to others" (F3, online discussion, May 3 2022). This facilitator concluded saying:

If it is difficult for us as an organization to make good handovers, [...] in the communities there are also power struggles. [...] Although it is true that bonds were created, because one of the things they valued most was to say, 'Well, we met, we started to work together, we saw what is possible,' it is difficult to reach that strong point to say, 'We are going to continue meeting, we are going to do joint projects.' In order to generate this type of community process, two or three years is very little time; there will be results and beautiful things are going to happen, but for them to be sustainable over time, organizations that have studied this talk about a minimum of 10 years of intervention. Elements are provided and processes are strengthened, but sustainability is almost always lacking. (F3, online discussion, May 3 2022)

In the case of the FGDs, it's relevant to quote two participants who referred to the scale-up and multiplication of the online capacity building courses. One of them said: "[...] the project XXX has transcended, [...] we are on Instagram, on Facebook, it has reached the community, little by little, but it has managed to spread throughout the community, we are already being known, not only for the project XXX, but for the initiatives that the communities started from the project and appropriated them" (FGD1, P3, April 12 2022). Another participant pointed out: "The role of a leader is to receive the information and replicate it within the community, but believe me, not everything is going to stay in your mind [...]. What I do, I don't attend the capacity building alone but I invite other people from the [organization and community] because the more who go, even though sometimes the places are very limited, but I always try

to go with others, I know that two or three minds will understand more than one” (FGD2, P8, May 3 2022).

This research found that for some of the online courses the participants who took part in the online capacity building were mainly those with a leadership role and social trajectory in the communities. This is important for scaling-up and replicating social processes but it is required to expand the scope of participation to all members of communities integrating all populations segments. In this way, the work of the current leaders can be supervised and new leaders can emerge facilitating a rotating leadership.

To conclude with the component of appropriation of the communication process and with the second empirical chapter, there is evidence that the target populations appropriated the online communication process with the actions mentioned above. However, it seems that NGOs still tend to employ a top-down approach to communicate with their target populations and to include them in their capacity-building programs. Besides, the actions of appropriation weren't developed at the same level for each of the online capacity building courses.

Furthermore, even though there are examples of horizontal communication during the online modality of capacity building, big digital gaps still hinder the flow of communication. The results point out that some of the online courses and activities became more participatory and interactive than others according to the levels of digital literacy and digital infrastructures. Here, how participatory the capacity building is designed and developed and the role of the capacity building facilitators are key to encouraging participation and providing technical assistance.

It seems that the capacity building courses should be addressed in a hybrid way, which employs both in-person and online modalities. With respect to the online modalities, it is key to make use in particular of asynchronous micro-learning and gaming because of their user-friendly nature, flexibility and time management benefits.

With respect to the on-site approach, the capacity building should consider the target populations' context and be conducted in the places where the communities reside, in

particular for rural communities where the dynamics of communication and everyday life is different to urban areas. An in-person and on-site approach facilitates the construction of trust, emotional and pedagogical bonds.

Based on the empirical evidence of this research, an online modality of communication contributed to maintain the relationships between NGOs and their target populations and continue with the capacity building throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. NGOs and target populations gave a new use of ICTs to be close, network and implement their capacity building processes. With respect to the (online) capacity building courses addressed in this chapter, they helped target populations to both arise awareness on key topics for the development of their communities and to foster collective actions.

This research assumed that an online modality of mobilization and communication of the non-governmental sector (Empirical Chapter 1) and online capacity building involving target populations (Empirical Chapter 2) might make possible transformative action in a country like Colombia which faces multiple crises. There are opportunities and pitfalls in the use of ICTs to bring about transformative action and a summary of them will be found in the concluding chapter. One of the most relevant opportunities is related to the geographical expansion of the activities of NGOs through online mobilization and (online) capacity building processes leading to an increase in the number of participants and the optimization of economic resources that became scarcer during the COVID-19 pandemic. With respect to the pitfalls, two of the most relevant were already addressed in the current chapter, namely the loss of the on-site approach and the lack of emotional and pedagogical connection when using online communication.

8. CONCLUSION: SHAPING TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION IN COLOMBIA

The first section of this chapter addresses the central research question of the dissertation. In doing so, I bring together the findings from both empirical chapters to discuss transformative action. This chapter revisits the conceptual pillars of networks for transformation and development communication, highlighting how they together inform the transformative action pillar.

In the second section, I present a broader discussion on the linkages between the 2021 social outcry, the results of the 2022 presidential elections in Colombia, and the role of the country's non-governmental sector.

The last section includes final remarks, highlights the contributions and limitations of the study, and suggests recommendations for future research.

8.1. DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The central research question of this research was: How did online communication and mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector and their target populations during the COVID-19 pandemic shape transformative action in the country?

This research found out that there are opportunities and pitfalls in an online modality of communication and mobilization employed by these civil society actors to shape transformative action in the country.

Transformative action is defined in this research as both a process and an outcome itself, consisting of two dimensions: A dimension of reflection and learning in which understanding and knowledge of the social reality is (co)created/produced and a dimension of agency in which there is an active involvement at individual and collective level to transform it⁴³

As for the opportunities, digital technologies enabled horizontal communication networks that were crucial for the communication processes examined in this research. These included the online mobilization of the non-governmental sector and the online capacity-building courses for their target populations, examined in the dissertation's first and second empirical chapters, respectively. I could demonstrate

⁴³ The definition of transformative action builds on the fields of popular education, participatory action research, and the framework of education for sustainable development.

that ICTs cautiously used and employed for very particular objectives can contribute to mobilize, build networks and spread capacities. This research makes clear that the adequacy of ICTs depends on the content, on the context, and on who is using them and this is what the research confirmed through a practical instrumental case.

Secondly, even though mobilization of the Colombian non-governmental sector was not expected to occur due to the COVID-19 disruptions that limited physical contact introducing lockdowns, NGOs quickly learned how to mobilize collectively using social networks. They advocated for better working conditions amid the uncertainty. NGOs also encouraged their target populations in urban and rural areas to give a new use to ICTs in order to continue their interaction and capacity building processes. Indeed, online communication provided new tools to interact and learn to the extent that (online) communication was reinforced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic creating new systems of interlocution among NGOs and with their target populations with the use of ICTs such as WhatsApp and its groups, videoconferencing, social network and learning platforms. In this way, the areas of communications of the NGOs were given a crucial and crosscutting role for their work.

Furthermore, an unusual phenomenon also occurred on the ground, namely that local NGOs established new forms of online networking and coordination with national organizations due to the implementation of lockdowns. At the same time, target populations had to become more autonomous since it was not possible for NGOs to be on-site. In addition, capacity building facilitators assumed a key role to encourage target populations to participate in the online courses. They also solved technical issues related to the installation of hardware and software. As a result, capacity building facilitators became the contact point of national and local NGOs as well as for the target populations.

Thirdly, online communication can broaden geographically the participation of NGOs and target populations in the diverse online mobilizations and capacity building processes. NGOs were able to expand their activities to reach more places and connect with existing and new target populations. Here, the study could confirm that thanks to an (online) communication national, regional and local NGOs, and their diverse target groups could organize, mobilize and act collectively to raise awareness and initiate transformative action in their communities.

Fourthly, the use of ICTs is key to optimizing economic resources of NGOs that were scarcer during the COVID-19 pandemic. NGOs realized that they can be more efficient with their resources, not everything has to be done by travelling, and not everything needs to be face-to-face. NGOs agree that they can save time and resources when some of their activities, in particular meetings, trainings, mobilization and fundraising campaigns are managed based on an online modality. Online communication and mobilization resulted cost-effective throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted organizations to implement austerity measures in order to tackle the financial burdens. Although material resources were limited, non-material resources such as trust, solidarity, legitimacy, and identity linkages expressed through memberships and affiliations played a crucial role in sustaining their relationships, networking, and capacity-building processes.

However, there are also potential pitfalls that should be considered when employing online communication and online mobilization to shape transformative action. Firstly, the digital gaps found in this study, in particular in rural and distant areas, reinforce the principle of inclusion and exclusion of the information society. It became evident that national and local NGOs with sufficient economic and human resources were more likely to be fully integrated into the online mobilization and capable of delivering online capacity-building. In contrast, grassroots organizations and target populations lacking financial means, digital literacy, or reliable internet access either were completely excluded or could participate only to a limited extent, thereby reinforcing existing inequalities.

Digital gaps involve the lack of access and infrastructure to employ ICTs, low levels of digital literacy and a lack of a digital culture. Therefore, democratization of access and usage of ICTs become essential when employing communication technologies. National and local governments as well as private and telecommunications operators have a key role to close the existing digital gaps. Besides, development agencies and the non-governmental sector should maintain their role as key advocacy players to promote digital equity in the country.

Another pitfall found in this research is related to the risk of losing the on-site approach when employing online communication and mobilization. According to the results of this study, increasing online communication and mobilization might lead to a

disconnection with the environment and socio-economic conditions of local NGOs and target populations in their territories. Relationships exclusively based on an online modality hinder the experiential sense/meaning of an every-day exchange. This might affect the construction of trust, affection, synergy and pedagogical bonds between NGOs and their target populations, which are crucial to engage in transformative action. Despite the fact that coordination, networking and capacity building can be performed online, an additional on-site approach within a physical setting might be needed to implement actions for transformation.

As for transformative action, the third conceptual pillar of this research, the evidence gathered shows that the construction of a shared identity, as well as changes in mentality and attitudes, should move from the individual to the collective level and ultimately occur locally or on site. Furthermore, while ICTs are a component of the broader communication infrastructure involved in online mobilization and capacity building in the NGO sector and among its target populations, it is the dynamics of these processes that provide deeper insight into how transformative action is shaped at the collective level.

Facilitators of the capacity building courses and FGD participants mentioned some projects and initiatives during this research that can be referred to as examples of transformative action(s) advanced by the target populations' communities. These transformative actions arose from the capacity building courses explored in the second empirical chapter of the dissertation and are mentioned as follows:

In the course of the series of the radio soap opera entitled "Stories from the future 2.0", a project of sustainable economy arose, namely a micro-enterprise that commercialize recyclable materials. A group of members of a Junta de Acción Comunal - JAC⁴⁴ (in English Community Action Board) decided to create this small business after having heard this soap opera. They are planning to build their own headquarters with the revenues of the micro-enterprise.

⁴⁴ In accordance with the Law 743, 2002 a Junta de Acción Comunal – JAC, translated in English by Cubides et al. (2018) as community action board, is a civic, social and community-based organization with a non-governmental, non-profit and solidarity character that has their own legal status and assets. It is composed of the residents of a place who join forces and pull resources voluntary towards seeking a comprehensive sustainable development (Función Pública, 2002, Artículo 8).

Under the social component of the capacity building process entitled “Strengthening capacities of communities of coffee growers through coffee value chain innovation”, community life plans have been created. These are documents that describe from the perspectives of the rural communities what they desire to implement in their territories in the future and which activities they have been doing to get there. Coffee growers establish here what their priorities are and how they can work together to achieve them. Two of the projects they are working on are about reforesting the roads and building tertiary roads⁴⁵. For the reforestation project, communities have already requested trees to a foundation and for the tertiary roads project they have requested a topographic study and materials such as plates for roads. Both projects were presented to the municipal governments and require a permanent mobilization with the corresponding public institutions to implement them. Communities have established mingas de trabajo⁴⁶ to advance these projects in their communities.

The course “Peace from a Youth Perspective: A Legacy for Reconciliation and Non-Repetition” included an awareness-raising and mobilization component implemented with local communities. This involved workshops and activities such as peace circles, murals, photo exhibitions, and multi-stakeholder dialogues, designed and led by young people using cultural, artistic, and dialogic approaches to raise awareness of topics such as sustainable peace and the functions of the truth commission. While this course is a strong example of youth-led transformative action, its implementation revealed a limitation: most of the activities were conducted in capital cities of regions affected by the armed conflict, but few of them were conducted in rural municipalities where the consequences of the conflict are more noticeable. This responded to the security of the participants and the complex logistics to reach these places. However, the empirical evidence collected in this study shows that it’s important to connect with youths and communities residing in these places, as well as to give the opportunity to the participants of the course to first develop a connection with the territories and after this develop more context-appropriate activities.

⁴⁵ Tertiary roads refer to the transport infrastructure that connect municipalities and small towns in Colombia. This road network is considered the longest in the country with 142.284 Km, but it’s at the same time, a very heterogeneous network with large parts of the country, which do not have a minimum transport infrastructure (Narvaez, 2017).

⁴⁶ “Minga comes from the Quechua language "minka", which refers, in this native language of the Peruvian Andes, to an old tradition of community work for the benefit of society as a whole and the good life of society” (as.com, 2020, para. 3).

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the relevance of involving the national government and local authorities to shape (lasting) transformative action. From a bottom-up approach, there must be feedback provided by target populations and NGOs to the public institutions on what they have achieved in their territories and what it's still missing so that the public institutions can support them by filling/closing these gaps. In the same way, NGOs should consider the opinions and interests of target populations in order to develop their programs and mobilizations. As for the participation of the national government and local authorities, this research emphasizes that it's about communities initiating transformative action accompanied by the corresponding public institutions, and if it's the case accompanied by private entities too and not from a top-down direction.

According to the previous observations, the conceptual framework of this research can be extended in order to include the state represented by national and local governments and other stakeholders such as the private sector. In this way, each actor becomes co-player shaping transformative action from a bottom-up perspective.

8.2. BROADER DISCUSSION

In the course of my doctoral research, Colombia experienced an unprecedented change in its political trajectory, as a result of the congress and presidential elections in 2022. The victory of Gustavo Petro as President, with Francia Márquez as Vice-President, marked a milestone in Colombia's history (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). Considering the fact that leftist leaders, together with racial and gender minorities, were historically excluded from the political system and treated as targets of violence (ibid., p. 16), the election of a former member of the M-19 Guerrilla Group and an Afro-Colombian human rights activist as heads of state constituted a significant development in the country's political journey. Furthermore, this event initiated the transition from traditional parties' administrations to an alternative governmental project.

After a fierce political battle, the candidacy of Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez (Historic Pact Coalition) defeated that of Rodolfo Hernández and Marelen Castillo (League of Anti-Corruption Governors) in the second electoral round, with 50.44% to 47.31% (Uribe Mendoza, 2022). With around 11.2 million votes, the Historic Pact Coalition won the elections (Directorio Legislativo, 2022). There was a high level of

citizen participation in the 2022 presidential elections, increasing from 54.91% in the first round to 58.09% in the runoff, and amounting to a total of 22,658,694 voters (Uribe Mendoza, 2022). The percentage of voters participating in the election was the highest recorded since 1998 (Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil, 2022).

There are certain linkages between the 2021 social outcry and the subsequent change of government in Colombia. In this context, the strong potential for increased physical and digital mobilization in 2019, 2020, and 2021 may have contributed to the political shift in 2022. This observation was central to the research process and will be further explored in this section. Moreover, the role of the non-governmental sector during the social outcry, as well as the relationship between the NGO sector and Petro's administration, will be examined.

Demonstrators took to the streets in both 2020 and 2021, with the 2021 nationwide protests being particularly noted for their strength, intensity and duration (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a; Rojas, 2022). Around 1.5 million people are estimated to have participated (*ibid.*, p. 32). Although the policies of former Iván Duque's government (2018-2022) were the immediate trigger, the protests also highlighted deeper historical and social concerns (*ibid.*, p. 32). This series of protests is also referred to as a social outcry (in Spanish *estallido social*), a term employed in this research to describe their manifestation as a response to Colombia's interconnected crises and their pursuit for social change (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.1).

It is not possible to establish direct causality or two-way correspondence between the mobilization in 2019 and 2021, and the results of the 2022 election (Velásquez C., 2024). However, such mobilization is part of Colombia's new political reality, in which the rise of a coalition between left and center-left parties, known as the "alternative bloc", has transformed the political offer and awakened interest among new citizen sectors in alternative projects for change (*ibid.*, p. 353). The mobilization between 2019 and 2021 accelerated this trend and contributed to reshaping the country's political landscape in 2022 (*ibid.*, p. 353).

Furthermore, Gustavo Petro's election as president was supported by numerous community-based and social movements (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). Petro's campaign placed particular emphasis on supporting groups that had long felt marginalized by politics and neglected by the state, including young people, ethnic

minorities, and social activists, as well as environmental advocates and feminist organizations, among others (Bitar et al., 2023). Many of them were at the forefront of the social outcry that shook the country in 2021 (Uribe Mendoza, 2022).

The Colombian youth emerged as one of the most relevant actors in the 2021 social outcry, rapidly assuming leadership of the protests (Velásquez C., 2024). Beyond negotiating with the government, young citizens sought to express their anger and indignation at a social and political order that both denied them opportunities to fulfil their expectations of well-being and widened the social gap on a daily basis (ibid., p. 171). Their role as political actors was consolidated through mobilization.

Young people were at the helm of disruptive protests, facilitated by digital networks (Velásquez C., 2024). Forms of protest included street blockades, popular assemblies, demolition of monuments, and the creation of “resistance points” as permanent gathering places located next to working-class neighborhoods, where demonstrators engaged in daily artistic, cultural, musical, sporting, and deliberative activities (ibid., p. 238-239). With regard to digital literacy, young people are much more embedded in digital technologies. That is why, digital networks helped them to coordinate the different forms of protest (ibid., 387). Integrating online and offline tools played an important role in implementing mobilization, as well as in developing messages and organizational processes (ibid., p. 387). Besides, the optimal digital skills of young people made them one of the main targets and facilitators of NGOs programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mobilization was marked by an excessive use of force against the young protesters, causing great outrage within various segments of public opinion and the general population (Velásquez C., 2024). This led new groups to participate in the protests, including women and young people from low-income neighborhoods, middle- and upper-class sectors, non-organized citizens, peasant communities, and informal workers, among others (ibid., p. 13). NGOs capacity building and support programs are designed for and with the participation of these groups. That is why, the non-governmental sector did involve in the course of the protests. What began as a national strike organized by the traditional counterpowers (labor unions, human rights organizations, left-wing movements and related groups), gradually turned into a

massive phenomenon that challenged Duque's government and exposed the deep distrust in political institutions (ibid., p. 21).

As for the young, they played an important part in Petro's election as President and were decisive in his victory (Bitar et al., 2023). Petro established a strong connection with both the country's youth and lower-income populations, while also managing to gain support from individuals with a more privileged educational background who believed in his governmental project (ibid., p. 128).

With regard to the role of the non-governmental sector during the social outcry, NGOs advocated the civil and political rights of citizens during the protests. They also served as facilitators and mediators of social dialogue among the actors involved in the social outcry and other sectors of society. The social outcry was not initiated by NGOs, but rather by organized communities, social movements, Indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombian groups, and the youth to demand their rights. NGOs intervened according to their field of work and the target populations they worked with.

NGOs quickly understood the distinctive features of the demonstrations that moved from rural regions to urban areas and involved outraged young people who were completely skeptical of any mediation. The NGOs' main actions were to provide humanitarian aid to the protesters, establish a relationship with the young demonstrators through participatory activities, and promote social dialogue among various actors, such as universities, private institutions, cultural centers, business people, human rights defenders, youth and citizens. They did this by co-developing and co-coordinating digital platforms that aimed to provide a dialogue agenda, and debate and collect proposals that could transform the country. The use of ICTs was crucial in coordinating the work of different actors and widening participation geographically. NGOs clearly demonstrated their social and political ability to create networks of dialogue and solidarity for transformative action in the country.

Other factors likewise set the scene for Gustavo Petro's victory in the 2022 presidential elections, including growing citizen dissatisfaction, the Duque administration's lack of results, and persistent unsolved structural issues such as inequality and exclusion that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). Such an unprecedented development was also supported, as previously mentioned,

by the achievements of leftist movements and parties over the preceding years and the political shifts made possible by the 2016 Peace Agreement (ibid., p. 5).

Petro's government has appealed to social mobilization as a key tool in supporting its reform agenda since it came to power. Official calls for public mobilization have been made in several speeches, particularly in light of the opposition to the reforms in the Congress of the Republic. During Petro's inaugural speech delivered from the balcony of the Presidential Palace, he explained how Colombia's reforms - the change underway - were not about winning an election, but about permanent mobilization (García Sierra, 2023). Petro added: "...A society that moves is a society that lives; a society that falls silent is a society that dies" (García Sierra, 2023). This stance has ensured the protection of the rights to freedom of assembly and association under the current government. For NGOs, it opens new possibilities to foster citizen engagement with the state. The non-governmental sector has the political and social capacities to raise awareness among their target populations and to prepare them to position themselves within social mobilizations

The victory of Petro marked the rise of a left-wing government with strong ties to civil society organizations (CSO) (BTI Transformation Index, 2024a). Consequently, his administration was expected to give priority to strengthening civil society and enhancing its participation (ibid., p. 32). Social movements, NGOs, and other CSOs were confident that the social sphere could be leveraged during his mandate to enable their work to be effective. There was certainly massive civil society participation at the beginning of his presidential period with proposals for the National Development Plan 2022-2026, entitled "Colombia, World Power of Life" (in Spanish Colombia, potencia mundial de la vida). This is the first National Development Plan (in Spanish Plan Nacional de Desarrollo – PND) that acknowledges the key role of CSOs in the social, cultural, and economic shaping of the country (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2023). CSOs are frequently referenced in the PND as essential actors in the design and implementation of social and economic programs designed by the national government.

Both the implementation of the National Development Plan and the action of diverse forms of CSOs in driving it forward appear, however, to be slowing down. Firstly, the national government has increasingly centralized the functions of the CSOs. As a

result, a major break has occurred between what the NGOs were initially responsible for doing and what the government began to implement directly. Instead of being involved as strategic partners of the government, NGOs face an administration that primarily views them as operational actors or service providers. This has always been the case in their relationship with the government, but the issue has been exacerbated under this administration. Secondly, the government has prioritized the participation of particular forms of CSOs for the implementation of rural and urban projects. It appears that the communal movement (in Spanish *movimiento comunal*), organized through the Communal Action Boards (in Spanish *juntas de acción comunal – JAC*), has become the central social actor of the government. JACs are the second largest group of non-profit organizations in Colombia, after NGOs (see Chapter 3. section 3.1.1). A portfolio of projects and public contracts related to the school feeding program, secondary and tertiary roads, and farmers' markets has been drawn up between the government and JACs. Even though this has empowered rural communities greatly in driving their own transformation, there have been difficulties related to lack of capacity and supervision for implementing the projects. Furthermore, this has caused a weakening of other forms of CSOs, such as the non-governmental sector that relies on expertise and legitimacy to work with their target populations.

On the other hand, the political dialogue between the government and social and communal movements has been sustained, in particular labor unions, indigenous peoples and JACs. As for NGOs, they continue participating in public mechanisms of political participation, such as the planning and participation councils, although there appears to be limited communication with President Petro himself, which consequently restricts their political advocacy ability given his central decision-making power.

Furthermore, Petro's political discourse has been criticized for aspiring to push reforms through the Congress of the Republic without discussion or amendments (Velosa et al., 2023). This approach is seen as an effort to sideline democratic institutions and replace them with a model of plebiscitary democracy, backed by his supporters' street demonstrations (*ibid.*, p. 103). The position of Congress illustrates one of the challenges Petro's government was expected to face, namely its difficulty in ensuring governability due to a divided legislature, where the government initially lacked a

majority and struggled to consolidate one in the long term (Malamud & Núñez Castellano, 2022).

Mobilization against his social reform has also occurred during his term. In April 2024, a widely supported demonstration was held in the main cities of Colombia, namely Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, and Bucaramanga, among other cities (France 24, 2024). Protesters from medical organizations, the opposition, centrist political forces, and former allies demonstrated against the health reform and the ongoing violence in the country, despite peace negotiations with armed groups (ibid.).

Whether Gustavo Petro's government, whose term ends in August 2026, can ultimately be regarded as a transformative step toward equality and lasting peace in Colombia remains a subject for further research. Key reforms related to the labor and pension systems have been approved during his administration, and social justice programs have also been reinforced. Furthermore, Petro's international agenda has advanced key issues such as climate change, biodiversity protection, and the restructuring of financial and multilateral systems. However, this governmental project still faces significant challenges rooted in the dominant development, which remains centered on export-oriented, resource-dependent growth and the promotion of extractive industries. Additional obstacles include the crisis of public institutions, the persistence of violence in the country, and ruptures within Petro's coalition. In this context, NGOs continue to play a key role in shaping transformative action, together with their target populations who are increasingly involved in decision-making processes as well as in the design and implementation of programs.

Although the 2021 social outcry is not the core focus of this research, it nonetheless forms part of its broader background. Since the movement marked a significant turning point in Colombia's political trajectory, the linkages between the mobilization taking place and the results of the 2022 presidential elections are discussed here. This discussion contributes to situating social mobilization within the wider context of the country itself. Such a broad perspective contrasts with the detailed examination of the case study selected for this research. A zoom-out and zoom-in approach to social mobilization facilitates the analysis of their interdependencies and potential to shape transformative action at various levels.

8.3. FINAL REMARKS

Communication is a social process based on dynamic relationships and interactions. It plays a key role for civil society actors such as NGOs and their target populations. This considering that they are very relational by building relationships and performing exchanges as a crucial aspect of their mobilization, networking and capacity building.

This study could confirm that the COVID-19 pandemic had a distancing effect between NGOs and their target populations. In this sense, the COVID-19 pandemic produced a communicative interruption between NGOs and their target populations. The loss of contact pushed both NGOs and target populations to increase the use of ICTs for their communication and mobilization. I explored through an instrumental case study developments on how NGOs and target populations shifted their mobilization and communication from an in-person to an online modality. For this, a joint petition followed by a social media campaign implemented by the Colombian non-governmental sector and six (6) capacity building courses involving their target populations were studied.

This research assumed that online communication and mobilization of these civil society actors might contribute to shape transformative action within a country that experiences interconnected crisis, exacerbated at the moment of the study by the COVID-19 pandemic. As it was discussed in the previous subsection, there are opportunities and pitfalls in the use of (online) communication and mobilization in engaging in transformative action. According to the empirical evidence of this research, it seems that a hybrid form of communication that alternates between online and in-person activities, is preferred by both NGOs and target populations and it might be adequate for their collective transformative action. For lasting transformation, it is also key constant feedback from target populations to NGOs, and from both of these civil society actors to national and local governments and to other stakeholders such as the private sector.

With respect to the sub-chapters of the dissertation, the sixth chapter of this study explored the online mobilization of the non-governmental sector via the online petition followed by the social media campaign with the hashtags #PiezaClaveparaColombia (in English #aKeyPieceForColombia) and #UnaONGes (in English #anONGis). A total

of 256 Colombian NGOs subscribed to the joint petition and 55 NGOs joined the social media campaign.

Under a qualitative network analysis (QNA), a network-actors infrastructure was visualized in order to present the linkages between actors and localize the network features proposed by the QNA, namely actors, resources, coordination and timing, organizational learning and identity linkages. Even though the online mobilization was instrumental and short-lived, it left a network infrastructure that might be reactivated by the mobilization of the involved non-governmental actors and exchange of material and non-material resources. Besides, there is an interplay among the features of the network: the number, type and position of the actors in the network, as well as the availability and mobilization of resources might determine or influence how timing and coordination, organizational learning, and identity linkages take place. Results from the empirical analysis also show that even though the network was back up by identity links provided by the memberships and affiliations of the actors involved, and there was a reinforcement of such linkages throughout the online petition and social media campaign, it seems that a shared identity of the non-governmental sector is still under construction. Besides, there is a lack of involvement of the target populations in such mobilizations.

In the eighth chapter, the focus was given to the communication of the non-governmental sector with their target populations. The chapter departed from the memberships and affiliations among NGOs and between NGOs and target populations, which expand to the different communities and territories in which they are. These (identity) linkages were disrupted because of the physical distancing measures and restrictions to mobility implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter, six (online) capacity building courses addressing democracy and critical development topics were analyzed drawing on the components of the development communication approach, namely participation and interaction, adequacy of ICTs and appropriation of the communication process.

The research revealed that even though ICTs broaden geographically the participation on the different online courses and activities, the participation and interaction is influenced by different levels of digital literacy and personal characteristics of participants. That is why and horizontal flow of communication hasn't been achieved.

With respect to the adequacy of ICTs, the more sophisticated the online activities and mechanisms were, the more they required specialized digital infrastructures and good levels of digital skills. In particular, the mechanism of micro-learning and gaming transmitted through WhatsApp groups was identified as the most suitable and preferred by target populations to maintain the communication and capacity building due to its affordability and flexibility. WhatsApp and the WhatsApp groups were designated as a potential system of interlocution that facilitates coordination and networking.

Finally, this research considers the component of appropriation/ownership of the (online) communication process decisive in shaping transformative action since it leads to the strengthening of the communities. Based on the results from the empirical analysis, following actions indicated there was such appropriation: target populations increased their knowledge and sense of awareness through the (online) capacity building, some of them could participate in the design and evaluation of the courses and they are committed to scale up and multiply the initiatives that have emerged.

8.3.1. Contributions and limitations of the study

This research contributes to the debate on development and digitalization involving civil society actors. I showed through a rigorous but practical case study how NGOs and target populations could overcome the communication barriers imposed by the physical distancing and mobilization restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic to continue mobilizing and shaping transformative action in a country that faces interconnected crises.

The research makes visible the work of national and local Colombian NGOs and foregrounds the active involvement of their target populations. The study reveals how they employed ICTs creatively to mobilize, maintain their relationships and conduct their capacity building processes. Ultimately, the study is a contribution to acknowledge civil society actors in bottom-up transformations.

With respect to the contributions to literature, this study validates Manuel Castells thesis on the consequences of the network/information society for civil society. Here, Castells refers to a special way of communication through the social networks that allow people and organizations to think, organize, and act independently from political and financial institutions. For Castells, there is a new public sphere consisted of global

and horizontal networks of communication enabled by digital technologies in which different forms of civil society engage in collective dialogue and debate. For him, non-state actors, such as NGOs have taken advantage of these technological means to mobilize their causes and foster social change. Moreover, this research confirms Castells' principle of inclusion and exclusion in the network society.

The case study developed in this research addressed and validated previous premises of the information society based on the joint petition and social media campaign conceived and implemented on behalf of the Colombian non-governmental sector that mobilized national and local NGOs during the COVID-19 pandemic to raise awareness on the implications of the pandemic crisis to their work and to look for acknowledgement and financial support from public and private institutions. Besides, this study contributed with a practical example to fill a gap of the information society theory by focusing on the communication process from all the actors involved, rather than the communication infrastructures. Here, a rich description from a qualitative network approach was provided on how the social media mobilization occurred, which network features were involved and how target populations mobilized in urban and rural areas. Even though target populations didn't participate directly in the social media campaign, they could maintain their relationships with NGOs through the capacity building processes which were converted to an online modality. Here, the study presented practical implications of each of the components studied under the approach of Development Communication, namely participation and interaction, adequacy of ICTs and appropriation of the communication process.

Another contribution to literature is the novelty of the conceptual framework that incorporates various concepts through the use of conceptual pillars, which are interrelated and build on each other. The use of conceptual pillars allows to zoom in and zoom out in each of them through the selected case study. These pillars were networks for transformation, development communication and transformative action.

As for the research design, it is important to acknowledge the exploratory and experimental approach of the study. New research practices had to be considered, taking into account that the study was conceived and developed during the acute phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly altered how research could be conducted. These practices included internet-based research, an online survey, and

fully online fieldwork. In this regard, the study constitutes a methodological contribution by implementing a completely online field research strategy, which at times overlapped with elements of digital ethnography.

As for the methods employed, this research introduced a robust qualitative network analysis (QNA) in the first empirical chapter arguing that a QNA facilitated a better understanding of the networking practices that occur in collective action processes. This by emphasizing the narratives and communication among the network actors. This means that it's not only the network's infrastructure, but how actors communicate, exchange and (dis)connect what contributes to the formation of the network and its level of integration. In the second empirical chapter, the target populations were included in the study. This attempted methodologically the same level of participation of NGOs and target populations in order to foster a horizontal production and exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Finally, this research advances knowledge on the NGO sector in Colombia and contributes to positioning Latin America within the international research landscape, particularly in the expanding field of reflexive and critical development studies that seek to make research more inclusive of the Global South. Colombia offers a compelling case for such inquiry, given its context of conflict and peacebuilding and its recent turn toward a progressive governmental project.

With respect to the limitations of the research, following aspects affected the design and conduction of the study. Firstly, there was a low level of participation of NGOs that signed the joint petition but did not participate in the social media campaign. Even though an online survey was conducted in order to include them with a 47% reply's rate, this study found out that the digital divide, lack of contact details, and other priorities of these organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic affected their participation in the study. Secondly, target populations were not involved since the beginning of the research considering the initial design of the case study. Once they were included, it was difficult to receive their contact details due to data protection regulations of the NGOs and ethical concerns about the data use and communication of the research results. Thirdly, there were logistics and digital barriers to carry out the online FGDs. Even though the online modality of the FGD made possible to bring together different segments of target populations who reside in diverse regions of the

country, this research acknowledges the relevance of an on-site field research accompanied by online activities in order to facilitate the participation of target populations and deepen the understanding of the research context.

8.3.2. Recommendations for further research

This study demonstrates that including NGOs and their target populations in the same research design enables participatory knowledge production and shared learning, which is essential for critically addressing bottom-up development processes. Therefore, this study recommends further empirical research in critical development studies that brings civil society actors together rather than separating them by research interests. To support this, more comprehensive participatory research methodologies should be developed and promoted. Although civil society actors are diverse, they interact regularly; therefore, context-sensitive research approaches that examine their relationships and interlinkages can generate more insightful findings.

Furthermore, it might be relevant to conduct further research on the social backgrounds of target populations, since preliminary results point out that they might influence the sustainability, multiplication and scaling-up of transformative action processes inside the communities. Related research topics can be leadership, volunteering, and affiliations to social organizations. Additionally, studying the collective identity of the non-governmental sector and conducting comparative analyses of (online) mobilizations across Latin American countries could contribute to a deeper understanding of their transformative action potential.

Finally, it is essential to conduct empirical research that engages governmental institutions, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders in the field of critical development studies, as they play a co-responsible role in development processes. A multi-stakeholder or also known as plural approach facilitates the meaningful involvement of all actors in shaping transformative action. This approach also contributes to maintain the neutrality of the research to a certain extent.

More broadly, it is important to continue reflecting on the use of ICTs in development and research, given that their role in shaping society socially, culturally, and politically is becoming increasingly significant.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Petition of the Colombian non-governmental sector amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

DECLARACIÓN DE ORGANIZACIONES SOCIALES EN TORNO A LA SITUACIÓN ACTUAL Y SUS EVENTUALES CONSECUENCIAS

Las Organizaciones Sociales que firmamos la presente declaración, queremos expresar algunos elementos sobre la crisis desatada por el Covid-19 en Colombia, y sobre las eventuales consecuencias que podría tener el manejo de la misma en nuestras organizaciones y en el cumplimiento de su misión¹.

- La emergencia que ha provocado el Covid-19 ha agudizado y puesto de presente la inequidad del país y ha afectado varios procesos de fortalecimiento organizativo y social liderados por diversas Organizaciones Sociales, muchas de las cuales hacen presencia en los territorios más apartados y vulnerables de Colombia.
- Nuestras organizaciones constituyen un valor esencial para la sociedad y para la democracia. Aportan con su acción a diversos sectores del desarrollo social, económico y cultural en los territorios, en los ámbitos productivo, de salud, educación, vivienda, paz, protección del medio ambiente, gobernabilidad, defensa de los derechos humanos, acceso a la justicia y promoción de la igualdad y la inclusión, entre otros.
- Las Organizaciones Sociales hemos contribuido a la transformación social mediante ejercicios de coordinación, de empoderamiento, de responsabilidad social empresarial, de filantropía y de organización social y comunitaria. Mediante ello hemos aportado activamente en la agenda de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS).
- En las agendas internacionales sobre Desarrollo Sostenible y sobre Eficacia de la Cooperación al Desarrollo, de las cuales el Estado Colombiano es signatario, se hace explícito el reconocimiento del rol de nuestras organizaciones en los procesos de desarrollo. Quedando claro que, para desplegar todo nuestro potencial, se requiere de un “ambiente habilitante” en donde no solamente se reconozca nuestro valor y se escuche nuestra voz, sino que se promuevan mecanismos para nuestro fortalecimiento y permanencia en el tiempo.
- En cumplimiento de nuestros objetos sociales, hemos estructurado y ejecutado proyectos a lo largo y ancho del país, muchos de los cuales se han constituido en innovaciones y modelos demostrativos que han generado grandes impactos en las comunidades.
- En nuestro modelo de operación no se generan ganancias. Los excedentes, cuando los hay, en lugar de distribuirse se reinvierten para seguir cumpliendo nuestros objetivos misionales.

¹ Las Organizaciones Sociales hacen parte del universo de las Entidades Sin Ánimo de Lucro (ESALES) en Colombia, y se caracterizan por ser expresiones de ciudadanía activa y por promover misiones relacionadas con el bien común. Más acerca de qué es una ESAL y sus características en: https://ccong.org.co/files/728_at_Lo%20que%20hay%20que%20saber%20de%20las%20ESAL,%20agosto%20de%202016.pdf.

- En desarrollo de la actual pandemia nuestro sector se encuentra en un estado de alta vulnerabilidad. Ello se debe no sólo a los riesgos propios de las poblaciones con que trabajamos, sino también a que, para el cumplimiento de nuestros objetivos, establecemos alianzas, acuerdos y contratos con entidades del Estado, con actores de la cooperación internacional y con actores empresariales. Todos ellos sujetos a contracciones y cambios en sus prioridades de inversión y ayuda. Además, es previsible que esta vulnerabilidad continúe aún después de finalizada la crisis, en el entendido de que la recuperación definitiva se consolidará en el mediano plazo.
- **Nuestro sector es un aliado formidable y un par ideal para atender la emergencia actual, para paliar sus efectos y para contribuir a la reconstrucción del tejido social en los territorios y de la vida económica, social y cultural. Tenemos la disposición, la vocación y el deseo de contribuir con este propósito nacional.**

Por lo anterior, hacemos un llamado al Gobierno Nacional, a los Gobiernos Territoriales al Sector Empresarial y a la Cooperación Internacional para que se reconozca nuestro aporte como actores del desarrollo, se valore la labor de nuestras entidades, y para que, en la actual coyuntura, se tomen las medidas necesarias para potenciar nuestro aporte y proteger nuestra sostenibilidad.

Para ello, hacemos las siguientes propuestas:

1. Incorporar de manera expresa a las Organizaciones Sociales como actores y/o beneficiarias en las reglamentaciones derivadas de las disposiciones y medidas expedidas con ocasión de la Emergencia Económica, Social y Ecológica.
2. Aumentar los incentivos al sector privado para mantener las donaciones que realizan a las Organizaciones Sociales durante y después de la Emergencia, mejorando, por ejemplo, el beneficio por descuento tributario si continúan haciendo los mismos aportes a dichas entidades, y con un incentivo similar para nuevos aportes a diferentes Organizaciones Sociales luego de la emergencia.
3. Facilitar, cuando aplique, la renegociación y ajuste de los convenios de cooperación y contratos suscritos con las Organizaciones Sociales, de modo que los alcances y los métodos se ajusten a la realidad material que implica la pandemia, mientras los contratos y convenios se protegen.
4. Promover, en desarrollo de mecanismos de cooperación público - privados y comunitarios, la suscripción de nuevos contratos y convenios con Organizaciones Sociales, cuando estos faciliten la ejecución de las metas trazadas por las entidades del Estado.
5. Garantizar los procesos institucionales que hagan efectivo el derecho de acceso a la información pública y la promoción del diálogo de políticas públicas. Para ello es vital favorecer el correcto ejercicio de control social por parte de Organizaciones Sociales y promover y hacer uso de las capacidades, posibilidades e información propia de las Organizaciones Sociales, tanto en la rendición pública de cuentas de las entidades del Estado, como en los procesos de diálogo con las autoridades.
6. Fortalecer la Oferta de Valor y favorecer la sostenibilidad de las Organizaciones Sociales, reconociendo y apoyando sus buenas prácticas, sistematizando y escalando los resultados,

metodologías e instrumentos, impactos, y lecciones aprendidas. Esto con el fin de aportar a la situación actual y construir nuevo conocimiento que sirva para el fortalecimiento del sector.

7. Instamos a los donantes a tomar en consideración que la labor que desarrollamos tiene vigencia e importancia más allá de la pandemia. Por ello, llamamos a realizar esfuerzos para seguir impulsando los proyectos orientados a la atención de los distintos desafíos de desarrollo social, económico, social e institucional que tiene nuestro país. Desafíos en torno a los cuales las Organizaciones Sociales estamos prestos a colaborar.

Creemos que en una coyuntura como la actual, la alianza entre Organizaciones Sociales, Estado, Sector Empresarial y Cooperación Internacional contribuirá al fortalecimiento del tejido social, promoverá la confianza, estimulará la cooperación y nos permitirá afrontar el futuro con optimismo y resiliencia.

Suscriben:

Agencia de Desarrollo Local de Nariño Alianza
por la Niñez Colombiana
Asociación Agroecología Nuevas Raíces
Asociación Ámese
Asociación Amigos con Calor Humano
Asociación Cívica Social Prodesarrollo Integral del Viejo
Asociación Colombiana de Jardines
Asociación Colombiana de Micro, Pequeña y Mediana Empresa – ACOPI Nariño
Asociación Colombiana del Teléfono de la Esperanza
Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Bogotá
Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Cali
Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Quindío
Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Risaralda
Asociación Cristiana de jóvenes de Tolima
Asociación de Becarios de Casanare
Asociación de Clubes de Leones Distrito F-2 de Colombia
Asociación de Familias Unidas por un solo Dolor
Asociación de Mujeres Afrocolombianas Palenqueras Negras y Raizales de Baranoa
Asociación de Organización Social Rural y Urbana de Cali y el Valle del Cauca
Asociación de Pedagogos Reeducadores Egresados de la Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigo
Asociación Democracia Hoy
Asociación Ekilybre
Asociación Futuro para Todos
Asociación Gota de Leche
Asociación los Llaneritos del Oriente
Asociación Minga
Asociación Nacional de Emprendedores Retornados Sin Fronteras
Asociación Nacional de Usuarios del Sistema de Riesgos Laborales Afiliados y Beneficiarios
del Sistema de Seguridad Social
Asociación por los Derechos de las Comunidades Negras de la Zona sur Oriental
Asociación Red de Proyección Social para el Ser Humano ProsoSerh

Asociación Santa Rita para la Educación y Promoción Funsarep
 Asociación Social Afro
 Asomuña
 Avina
 Caja de Compensación Familiar de Antioquia Comfama
 Campaña Colombiana contra las Minas
 Casa de la Mujer
 Casa de Nuestra Señora de Chiquirá
 Casa Mamá Margarita
 Casadepaz
 Centro de Estudios Regionales del Magdalena Medio
 Centro de Estudios Regionales del Sur
 Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular - Programa por la Paz - Cinep
 Centro De Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional
 Centros de Formación Familiar de Medellín
 Ciudad Don Bosco
 Club de Leones Medellín Monarca
 Colectivo de Mujeres Comuna 11 Laureles Estadio Medellín
 Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz
 Comité Privado de Asistencia a la Niñez
 Confederación Colombiana de ONG
 Consorcio
 Corporación ACD Consultores
 Corporación Ambiente y Desarrollo
 Corporación Antioquia Presente Corporación
 Calor de Hogar
 Corporación Casa Taller Artesas
 Corporación Colectivo Sociojurídico Orlando Fals Borda
 Corporación Colombiana Transiciones Crecer
 Corporación Compromiso
 Corporación Conciudadanía
 Corporación Crear Unidos
 Corporación Creser
 Corporación Cultural Canchimalos
 Corporación Cultural Nuestra Gente
 Corporación Cultural y Artística Canto Arena
 Corporación de Integración Vecinos del Cerro Nutibara
 Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica – Ciase
 Corporación de Asociaciones Voluntarias del Atlántico
 Corporación de la Sagrada Familia
 Corporación de Sociólogos de la Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana
 Corporación Deispaz
 Corporación Desarrollo para la Paz del Piedemonte Oriental - Cordepaz
 Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Tolima - Tolipaz
 Corporación Ecosesa
 Corporación Educativa Combos Comunidades Educativas de Base
 Corporación Encausa

Corporación Fondo de Apoyo de Empresas Asociativas
 Corporación Futuro para la Niñez
 Corporación Granito de Arena
 Corporación Hogar
 Corporación Hombres Hermanos
 Corporación Interactuar
 Corporación las Cometas
 Corporación Makaia Asesoría Internacional
 Corporación Mariana
 Corporación Nueva Sociedad de la Región Nororiental de Colombia
 Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris
 Corporación para el Desarrollo de Caldas
 Corporación para el Desarrollo de la Microempresa en Colombia
 Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de la Fosa del Patía
 Corporación para el Fomento de las Finanzas Solidarias
 Corporación para la Educación y Autogestión Ciudadana Corporación
 para la Gestión Ambiental Biodiversa
 Corporación para la Investigación y el Desarrollo Social
 Corporación para la Vida Mujeres Que Crean
 Corporación para el Desarrollo Integral de la Ciénaga de Ayapel
 Corporación PBA
 Corporación Podion
 Corporación Proyectarte
 Corporación Pueblo de los Niños
 Corporación Reconciliación Colombia
 Corporación Red de Mujeres de Casanare
 Corporación Red Somos
 Corporación Región para el Desarrollo y la Democracia
 Corporación Reiniciar
 Corporación Síndrome de Down
 Corporación Social para la Asesoría y Capacitación Comunitaria
 Corporación Superarse
 Corporación Surgir
 Corporación Taller Prodesal
 Corporación un Ser Feliz
 Corporación Viva la Ciudadanía
 Diócesis de Pasto
 Ecoseres Unidad
 El Comité de Rehabilitación de Antioquia
 Enda Colombia
 Escuela Nacional Sindical
 Federación Ambiental del Tolima
 Federación Antioqueña de ONG
 Federación Colombiana de Ymca
 Federación de ONG del Caribe Colombiano
 Federación ONG de Caldas
 Foro Nacional por Colombia

Fundación Acción Ambiental
Fundación Acción Cultural Popular
Fundación Activistas Constructivos
Fundación Alberto Echavarría Restrepo
Fundación Andecol
Fundación Antioquia Infantil
Fundación Apego
Fundación Apostolado la Aguja
Fundación Apoya al Deportista Antioqueño
Fundación Ayuda a la Infancia Hogar Bambi Chiquitines
Fundación Balms para la Infancia
Fundación Barrios de Jesús
Fundación Beatriz Londoño
Fundación Berta Martínez de Jaramillo
Fundación Botánica y Zoológica de Barranquilla
Fundación Brillos del Sol
Fundación Búsqueda y Rescate Fundación
Casa de Colombia
Fundación Casa de las Burbujas
Fundación Casa Ronald McDonald de Colombia
Fundación Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano - Cinde
Fundación Cívico Social Pro Cartagena-Caribe
Fundación Conciencia Social
Fundación Confiar
Fundación Confluencia de Mujeres
Fundación Coopcentral
Fundación Coprous
Fundación Creando Bienestar
Fundación Creeser para el Futuro
Fundación Cruzada Social
Fundación Cultura Democrática Fundación
Dame la Mano
Fundación de Atención a la Niñez
Fundación Desaffo a las Naciones
Fundación Educar Luz y Esperanza
Fundación el Buen Pastor
Fundación el Samán
Fundación Ellen Riegner de Casas
Fundación Emssanar
Fundación Equipo Scout de Emergencia
Fundación Escuela Deportiva Kiyoshi
Fundación FANA
Fundación Gacelas Running
Fundación Hablamos
Fundación Hogares Juveniles Campesinos de Colombia
Fundación Huellas en la Arena

Fundación Ideas para la Paz – FIP Fundación
 Inclusión Global
 Fundación Integral Agua De Vida
 Fundación Integrar
 Fundación Internacional Dios y Vida Verde
 Fundación Internacional Green
 Fundación Kunsamu
 Fundación las Abejitas de Oriente
 Fundación las Américas
 Fundación las Golondrinas
 Fundación Lupines
 Fundación Mónica Uribe por Amor
 Fundación Música para la Paz
 Fundación Nacional de Trasplantados Fundación
 Natalia Ponce de León
 Fundación Opción Colombia Fundacol
 Fundación Óyeme
 Fundación Pangea
 Fundación para el Bienestar Humano
 Fundación para el Desarrollo de Antioquia - Antioquia por Colombia
 Fundación para el desarrollo de Género, el Emprendimiento y la Reconciliación
 Fundación para el Desarrollo del Magdalena Medio
 Fundación para el Desarrollo Rural
 Fundación para el Niño Sordo Ical
 Fundación para la Reconciliación
 Fundación Pascual Bravo
 Fundación Patadeagua – Programa de Desarrollo y Paz de la Mojana Fundación
 Patronato María Auxiliadora
 Fundación Paz y Bien
 Fundación Planeación Estratégica y Desarrollo Institucional - Peydi
 Fundación ProBono
 Fundación Procrear
 Fundación Profomento de las Vocaciones - Los Pomos
 Fundación Pucura
 Fundación Puerto Colombia
 Fundación Ratón de Biblioteca
 Fundación Redprodepaz
 Fundación Resignificar
 Fundación Restaura Colombia
 Fundación San Antonio
 Fundación Sembrando Semillas de Esperanza
 Fundación Sephira
 Fundación Si Futuro
 Fundación Sicklemia
 Fundación Simiente Fruto de Amor
 Fundación Sinergia
 Fundación Social Más Oportunidades

Fundación Social Sembrar
Fundación Socya
Fundación Solidaria Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana
Fundación Sotavento
Fundación una Promesa para Ti
Fundación Único
Fundación Universidad de Antioquia
Fundación Urdimbre
Fundación Vased
Fundación Verde Olivo
Fundación Vive para Servir
Fundación Vivir y Aprender con Amor
Fundación Zaranda
Huipaz
Institución Social De Ayuda Para Vivienda
Instituto de Capacitación los Alamos
Instituto Popular de Capacitación
Justapaz
Liga Colombiana Autismo
Mesa de trabajo sobre Envejecimiento, Vejez y Transcurso de la Vida
Plataforma Sur de Organizaciones y Procesos Sociales
Presencia Colombo Suiza
Profamilia
Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Cesar
Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio
Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Occidente de Boyacá - Boyapaz
Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Sur del Chocó – Ciederpaz Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del
Vichada – Alvipaz
Promotora de Comercio Social
Red Adelco
Red Agrícola y Ambiental del Huila
Red Nacional de Iniciativas Ciudadanas por la paz y contra la Guerra - Redepaz
Red Nacional en Democracia y Paz
Secretariado Nacional De Pastoral Social - Cáritas Colombiana
Sociedad San Vicente De Paul De Medellín
Techo – Colombia
Tierra de Colores
Tierra de Vida al Socorro de la Inocencia Herida
Vallenpaz

Appendix 2 Revision of 12 studies on the responses of CSOs to the COVID-19 pandemic (sample of the table)

Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
1	Nonprofit Service Continuity and Responses in the Pandemic: Disruptions, Ambiguity, Innovation, and Challenges	2020	The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted a wide range of social, political, and organizational processes.	Reviews of websites and interviews with officials in only a few nonprofit organizations in one metroplex area of the United States	This study provides a starting point for creating useful models to understand nonprofit service delivery and crisis responses . Our model includes four dimensions: disruptions, ambiguities, innovations, and challenges.	Organizational history helps create stability: familiarity and experience in offering needed services. This provides a stable foundation from which to adapt and innovate in responding to government mandates or other disruptions and to continue to provide for their clients' needs	Pandemics defy routine planning strategies and require extraordinary adaptations and innovations. It may be difficult or impossible to plan for or sustain effective collaborations or respond to excessive service demands when existing routines, staffing, and technologies are disrupted. More research is needed to learn how nonprofits can adapt and sustain mission-related activities under conditions of high uncertainty and anxiety.
2	Crisis as opportunity, disruption and exposure: Exploring emergent responses to crisis through digital technology	2021	Crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, are significantly impacting our societies, organizations and individuals and dramatically shifting the use of, and dependence on, digital technology.	We propose and discuss three interrelated perspectives on crisis in the digital age; opportunity, disruption, and exposure , to explore and develop theoretical insights while paying attention to key practical and policy implications that ensue from digital response to crisis.	Examining crisis as opportunity reveals how digital technologies enable experimentation and accelerate innovation while raising coordination challenges and risky implementation. Viewing crisis as disruption highlights how digital technologies enable the rapid shifting of organizational and occupational practices to new digital spaces, allowing work continuity, yet potentially distorting work practices and raising challenges of over-dependence..	Taken together, the eight articles included in this special issue shed new light on the complexities and tensions that are inherent in emergent organizational and societal responses to crises in the digital age. Collectively, these studies raise a number of issues and generate a series of questions that require the attention of both organizational and IS scholars.	The sociology literature has theorized how digital technologies are creating a "high speed society" (Rosa, 2013), yet we lack a deeper understanding of the temporal dynamics and implications of acceleration. To improve our understanding requires exploration of the temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013)involved in accelerating innovation in and across organizations in general and the "golden rush" to AI in particular.

Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
3	Technology in the time of corona: a critical institutional reading	2021	The coronavirus crisis seems to deepen the profound impact of technology in shaping our lives (e.g., Brammer, Branicki, and Linnenlucke, 2020; George, Lakhani, & Puranam, 2020; Hwang & Hollerer, 2020).	We offer a phenomenon-driven problematization of technology (Gkeredakisa & Constantinides, 2019) by exploring technology-enabled responses to COVID-19 as institutional dynamics	We draw on institutional theory , the central theoretical school within organization theory (Greenwood, Oliver, Lawrence, & Meyer, 2017), to examine with critical eyes what happens in this intricate interface of technology usage and the COVID-19 disease.	The COVID-19 crisis brought to the fore ethno-class and racial divisions, tensions, and inclusion/exclusion dynamics in other locales worldwide, impacting the understanding of, and the technological responses to, the crisis.	Further research can dive more deeply into the inter-relations between the material and other modalities, like emotions, which were clearly central to the very construction of the coronavirus crisis and its implications. Research can also take a more longitudinal approach and explore how early and mid-pandemic technological interventions (like vaccinations – which started as we finalize this paper) unfolded and their long-term impact on the institution of technology and technologies-in-use.
4	Research with Marginalized Communities: Challenges to Continuity During the COVID-19 Pandemic	2020	COVID-19, has caused massive disruptions in the lives of people all over the globe, and has brought research focused on addressing health inequities, such as HIV, largely to a halt.	In transgender and gender diverse communities within which our team works, we are seeing this (exacerbation of the experience of marginalization) play out in our reduced ability to sustain connection with our research participants and maintain continuity of our research efforts.		There are new and intensified barriers to maintaining research continuity with marginalized populations due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical that research teams not only get creative about ways of reaching, engaging, and reimbursing our participants during this crisis, but also find ways to come together with communities to create, identify, and disseminate resources to those most in need. In order to do this, we must receive robust support from our institutions and funders to meet the needs of our participants, especially those from marginalized communities	

Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
5	Best practices of Non Governmental Organizations in Combating COVID-19	2020	Combatting the COVID-19 pandemic entails the distribution and implementation of the best available practices to support employees from the medical and social protection system, the unemployed, but especially socially vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions (OECD, 2020).	The aim of the research is to identify the best practices of NGOs that help to combat the COVID-19 crisis and to support the public medical system on an emergent market – Romania. Based on the Resource Dependence Theory , the authors underline the role and responsibilities of NGOs in a crisis such as a pandemic. At the same time, the authors underline some of the best practices employed by NGOs in Romania. Finally, recommendations are put forward, which can be extrapolated to other relevant markets.	Humanitarian aid initiatives have been previously studied from a Resource Dependence Theory standpoint (Prasad et al., 2016). The aim is to monitor the manner in which NGOs obtain the necessary resources to achieve their assumed mission or to support humanitarian causes (Prasad et al., 2016) due to the fact that, by its own structure, the NGO does not have sufficient resources to reach their goal (Salamon, 1987). This theory illustrates the manner in which organisations obtain and preserve resources (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). At the same time, this theory allows the research of the NGOs' reliance on the resources of other parties interested in fulfilling their mission and offering humanitarian aid, contributing to the understanding of operational processes from the perspective of a dependency relationship between NGOs, state institutions, business environment, and the community (Prasad et al., 2016).	The messages conveyed by the interested parties regarding the resource attraction through social media and own websites, or third-party websites, revolve around two main topics (Table 3): supporting public hospitals and supporting the community. The call to action regarding the involvement of interested parties took into consideration results that involve donations, volunteering, supply of free services, population information campaigns, and the development of technological infrastructure.	Future research will be able to analyze not only qualitatively but also quantitatively the dimensions and especially the effects of the actions of these NGOs in emergent and developed states, highlighting the most effective and swift solutions. In the future, as a consequence of some extreme situations – such as the COVID-19 pandemic – the reporting process of NGO actions ought to be transparentized, and the development of tools that analyze the processes undertaken by these NGOs for the legitimization of social and humanitarian initiatives, respectively.

Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
6	Convergence innovation in the digital age and in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis	2021	The current unprecedented pandemic crisis is prompting many organizations to be in a state of urgency for innovation, e.g., re-purposing businesses, products, materials, etc. to quickly deploy innovative solutions to such problems as the limited testing and treatment capacity for preventing the virus from spreading, key material shortages due to supply chain disruptions, helping people in need, and safely reopening the economy (Bello, Collins, Dreischmeier, & Libarikian, 2020; Stoll, 2020).	Present a model of Convergence Innovation as response to Covid 19	Innovation has been defined in different ways, based on purpose, process, or disciplinary perspectives. In this paper, innovation is defined as "deployment of new ideas and/or technologies in fundamentally different ways to create new or additional value for continued success of the organization and its stakeholders" (Adner & Kapoor, 2010; Lee, 2018)	Activities of CI: Seamless flow of data, analytics, and information for decision making: The key to innovation success is that the valuable information extracted from data analysis is quickly applied to decision making Collaboration network: COVID-19 is a global pandemic. It cannot be controlled, nor can its treatment and vaccine be effectively implemented, by just one country in isolation. International collaboration among public health organizations, governments, and medical professionals is essential to share information Agile innovation: The pandemic crisis has brought human tragedy, economic damage, and social torment. However, one success story of the current experience with the pandemic would be how organizations have learned to innovate fast in crisis. There have been many examples. Exponential power of convergence: This is where the true exponential power of convergence is being found when different objects, technologies, disciplines, companies, industries, or talented people come together (Ip, 2020). This is where the true exponential power of convergence is being found when different objects, technologies, disciplines, companies, industries, or talented people come together (Ip, 2020).	The conceptual idea and structure of CI we proposed in the paper needs empirical research for its practical applications.

Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
7	Leadership and Governance in Times of Crisis: A Balancing Act for Nonprofit Boards	2020	The unprecedented scale and pace of changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic have challenged nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in multiple areas of their work.	Employing a contingency approach to governance, we present a model of boards of directors' leadership and management roles under four governance configurations as organizations navigate through the stages of the pandemic.	Contingency approaches to theorizing governance suggest that there is no one "best" governance structure, but that organizations should consider their external context (including funding, relevant stakeholders, the legal/institutional environment), and their organization's characteristics (age, size, degree of complexity) (Bradshaw, 2009; Cornforth, 2003; Donaldson, 2001; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Ostrower & Stone, 2010). Evidence from previous studies demonstrates that these contingency factors play an essential role in determining the effectiveness of boards, and an organization's overall survival and success depends upon its ability to adapt its structures, decision-making processes, and strategies to respond to these various contingencies (Bradshaw et al., 1992; Brown & Iverson, 2004).	As our model proposes, organizations under these four governance configurations will see different shifts in the management versus leadership activities of boards through the phases of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.	We call for more empirical research that applies our model to study these phenomena in practice.

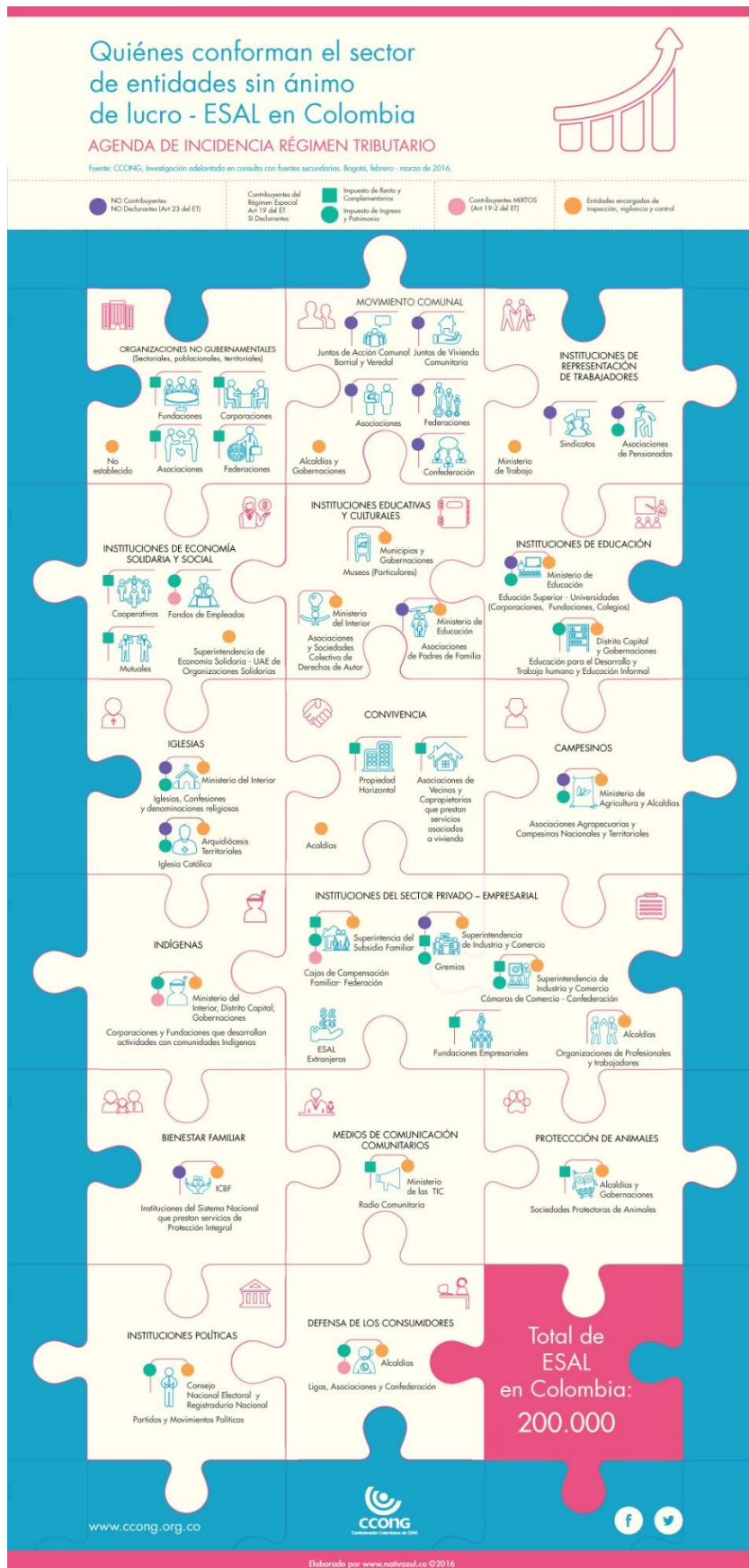
Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
8	Fiscal Responses to COVID-19: Evidence from Local Governments and Nonprofits	2020	Undertaking financial and managerial actions in coping with COVID-19 is demanding and full of uncertainty. While it is still too early to fully grasp the extent of this pandemic, government and nonprofit leaders are closely monitoring and mitigating the financial impacts of COVID-19. From the perspective of nonprofit and public entities responsible for service provision, this pandemic is also unprecedented	<p>This Viewpoint essay discusses the fiscal impacts of COVID-19 on public and nonprofit organizations, current responses, and strategies. Using data collected from a recent survey, we propose a four-stage RISE model—which is designed based on stories and information from public and nonprofit organizations—with the goal of assisting and informing the public and nonprofit scholars and practitioners</p> <p>The authors offer a RISE (Resilience, Intension, Sustain, Endurance) framework for navigating the fiscal effects of COVID-19 and rely on recent surveys to assess the response strategies of local governments and nonprofit organizations.</p>	Fiscal condition, in this study, is generally defined as an entity's ability to meet its current and future obligations (Maher and Nollenberger 2009). More specifically, fiscal health focuses on the ability of governments and nonprofits to fulfill "short-term financial obligations . . . obligations over a budgeted fiscal year . . . long-term obligations . . . and service requirements" (McDonald 2018, 47; see also McDonald, Decker, and Johnson 2020).	Respondents were asked to self-evaluate their organization's current financial condition ⁵ on a scale from 1 (perfect fiscal health) to 10 (financial crisis). Overall, 36.6 percent of the respondents reported good financial condition, scoring 1–3; 26.0 percent reported medium financial health, scoring 4–6; and 31.1 percent were in financial difficulty, scoring 7–10. By organizational type, municipalities had the highest percentage of good financial health, while the financial prospects of county governments and nonprofit organizations were more concerning.	

Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
9	'All eyes are on local actors': Covid-19 and local humanitarian action. Opportunities for systemic change	2020	The ongoing global pandemic of Covid-19 has caused a substantial shock across economies and industries, including the humanitarian sector. Travel and access restrictions mean that international staff and initiatives cannot be deployed, affecting many operations (ACAPS, 2020). This has led to a renewed focus on the role of local humanitarian actors.	This briefing note considers the early implications of Covid-19 for driving systemic change towards more local humanitarian action and leadership, and more complementarity between international and local actors.		Considering existing local capacity and only using international surge when necessary seems an obvious way of working, and yet the humanitarian sector has long been reluctant to recognise, understand, map and harness local capacity to that end. The operational constraints placed on international humanitarian actors by Covid-19 restrictions are starting to challenge this.	
10	Civil Society and the Coronavirus: Dynamism Despite Disruption	2020	Government responses to the new coronavirus pandemic are disrupting civil society globally. Many civil society organizations have been forced to put planned activities on hold; others are scrambling to shift their work online	This article draws on comparative insights and examples provided by members of Carnegie's Civic Research Network. See here for a list of network members.		The trends highlighted above are encouraging, but one must be cautious about drawing any definite conclusions from such emerging developments. Several questions will be crucial in determining whether green shoots grow into trees—whether the pandemic ends up undercutting or rejuvenating civil society in many countries over time.	One question going forward is thus the extent to which governments will be willing to work with and encourage local initiatives, rather than try to maintain top-down control.

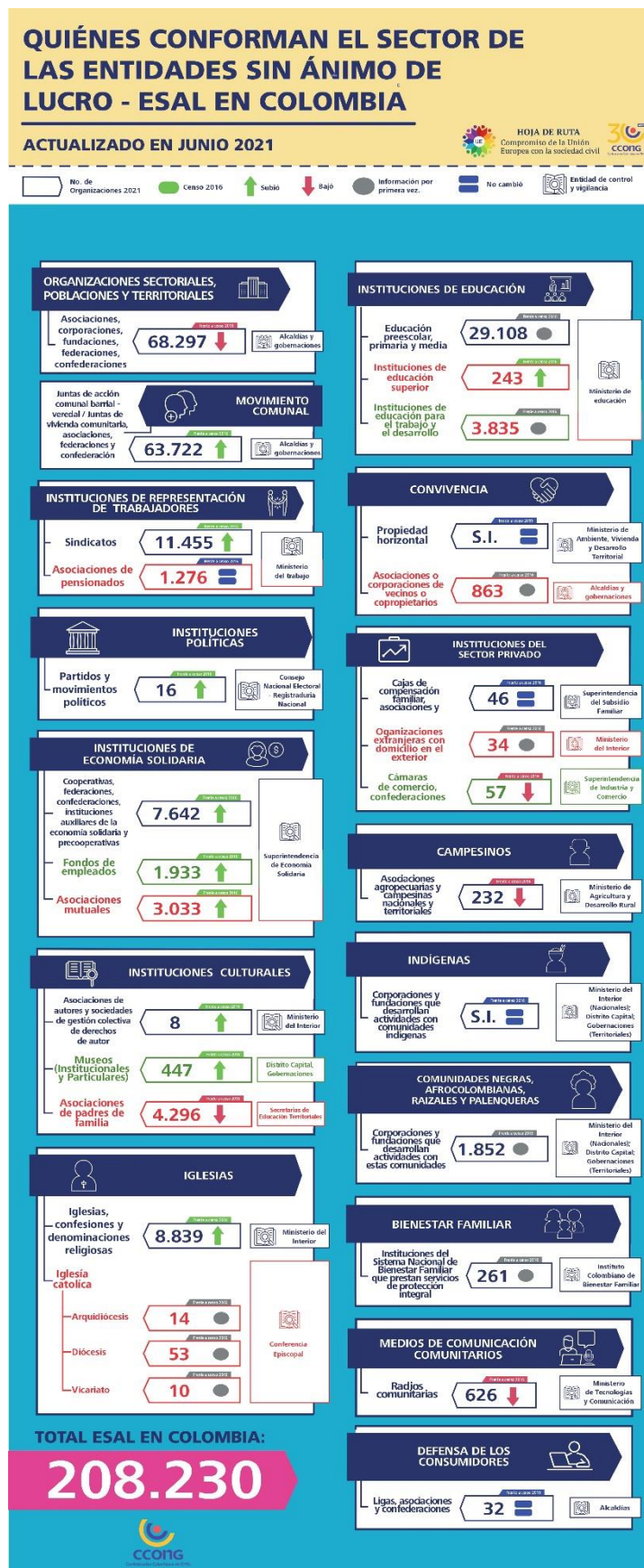
Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
11	COVID-19 as a nonprofit workplace crisis: Seeking insights from the nonprofit workers' perspective	2021	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, nonprofit organizations face increased demands for services alongside decreased revenues and must make tough choices on how to weather these stressors	<p>This paper outlines a research agenda to understand how the pandemic impacts nonprofit workers and their commitment to working in the sector.</p> <p>We outline in the following a research agenda about how sector commitment overlaid with the lenses of critical incidents, sensemaking, and reactions to change affords a promising means to investigate how nonprofit workers are personally and professionally navigating the effects of the pandemic. This research agenda focuses on COVID-19 as a workplace crisis impacting nonprofit workers.</p>	We define nonprofit sector commitment as the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in the nonprofit sector. Said another way, sector commitment refers to a dedication to stay, while sector choice is about an initial engagement or entrance to the sector. Most often sector choice and sector commitment are aligned, but as we discuss below, there are cases in which this is not the case. Given the sector's dependence on its workforce, these committed nonprofit workers are a promising prospect for leadership development and cultivation. Yet, sector choice and commitment are complex phenomena that may be impacted by different factors including external events and career shocks.	Nonprofit workers in the current workforce may have experienced the Great Recession or 9/11, but the fatigue experienced under the protracted pandemic at all levels – international, national, systems, even personal – also make it unprecedented and “extraordinary.” The sector, nonprofit workplaces, and nonprofit workers have experienced organizational changes and adaptations unforeseen during previous critical incidents, such as social distancing adaptations for programming, universal work-from-home practices, and the personal demands of parenting in a pandemic with virtual school. Thus, the impact of the pandemic will hold reverberations both in the short- and long-term for workers in the nonprofit sector that is critical to understand.	Several areas for future research are identified including human resource policy, leadership development, generational differences, gender effects, nonprofit graduate education, and mission-specific work effects.
12	Effectiveness of resource management of Lebanese NGOs in response to COVID-19 and the Syrian crisis	2023	The COVID-19 outbreaks in Lebanon occurred at a time when the country was hosting approximately one million Syrian refugees living in precarious conditions (Bartels et al., 2021), with an ongoing distributive political environment, an unsteady economic condition, and a depreciated health system (Fouad et al., 2021). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted refugees	The paper is based on qualitative data. Forty representatives from NGOs in Lebanon participated in semi-structured interviews. They reported on (i) the influence of COVID-19 on NGOs' activities, (ii) effective strategies for supporting Syrian refugees and the host community, and (iii) evaluation of NGOs'	A resource dependency theory was developed and supported by stakeholder perspectives.	Data disclosed that COVID-19 enhanced the need for different activities to support refugees and the host community but failed to procure funds and get the necessary support from the funding agencies. The paper suggested that both government and donor agencies should enhance support for NGOs during crisis times, with better communication among stakeholders being crucial.	The current research findings invite scholars to reconsider their approach to crisis management in the face of exogenous shocks such as COVID-19 within non-profit organizations, as theoretical models must include these resources and managerial practices for an effective intervention to respond to any upcoming crisis.

Nr.	TITLE	DATE	ASSUMPTIONS/FACTS	METHODS	THEORIES/CONCEPTS	FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS	FURTHER RESEARCH
			and host communities in Lebanon, exacerbating the Syrian refugee crisis in the country.	achievements and failures to provide services for the community during COVID-19.			

Appendix 3 16 subgroups of non-profit organizations in Colombia



Appendix 4 Updated figures of the non-profit organizations in Colombia (2021)



Appendix 5 Sample of the 545 Tweets recalled from the social media campaign #PiezaClaveParaColombia (in English #aKeyPieceforColombia)

Created_at	Screen_name	Text	Url	Followers
2020/05/21 23:07:03	casaronaldcol	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos a @infopresidencia https://t.co/tWCD2uQXfe	http://www.casaronald.org.co	750
2020/05/21 23:39:53	redsomos	"Nuestras organizaciones constituyen un valor esencial para la sociedad y para la democracia..." Declaración de organizaciones sociales en torno a la situación actual y sus eventuales consecuencias. Las organizaciones sociales somos una #PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes #apoyo https://t.co/0n3tMbsgQe	http://www.redsomos.org	4146
2020/05/21 16:24:21	corprodinco1	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos al Gob. Nacional nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social del país https://t.co/wxvfyGi7EE	http://corprodinco.org	396
2020/05/21 23:28:44	fedeongcaldas	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales en la que ACPO se suma. Queremos seguir trabajando por #Col y pedimos al Gob. @IvanDuque nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social https://t.co/gWg2mkEPOA	https://fongc.org	534
2020/05/21 23:42:28	ProBonoColombia	Las organizaciones estamos aportando al desarrollo social de colombia porque hemos entendido que todos merecemos oportunidades, protección y derechos. Porque es el bienestar del ser humano lo principal. Somos #PiezaClaveparaColombia. Toda la declaración: https://t.co/4KrxwCsEio . https://t.co/38vtMGYpS0	http://www.probono.org.co	1320

Created_at	Screen_name	Text	Url	Followers
2020/05/21 23:09:32	ProBonoColombia	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? Una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos a @infopresidencia que nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por #Covid_19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social del país. https://t.co/OWkAuB9h9S	http://www.probono.org.co	1320
2020/05/21 23:40:47	fundacionacpo	Las organizaciones sociales somos una #PiezaClaveParaColombia. Trabajamos para disminuir las brechas sociales, económicas, educativas, entre otras y por ello pedimos al Gob. Nacional nos escuche e incluya en sus políticas ante la realidad que plantea la #Covid_19 https://t.co/OBD7m5Cs9C	http://www.fundacionacpo.org	1180
2020/05/22 15:35:13	CCONGcolombiana	Invitamos a las ONG-OSC de Colombia a unirse a la Campaña #PiezaClaveParaColombia porque #UnaONGEs https://t.co/8owNiCnYv6	http://www.ccong.org.co	1972
2020/05/22 03:37:02	redsomos	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos al Gob. Nacional nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social del país. https://t.co/LyclureoFu	http://www.redsomos.org	4146
2020/05/22 13:39:04	Felixavilezp	La Covid-19 ha evidenciado la inequidad y ha afectado los procesos liderados por diversas organizaciones sociales, muchas de ellas presentes en territorios apartados y vulnerables.#PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGEs #corporacionencausa #habilidadesparalavida #fortalezasdelcaracter https://t.co/RUQblaKdF9		1635
2020/05/22 10:25:48	yeymi_g	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos al Gob. Nacional nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-		58



Created_at	Screen_name	Text	Url	Followers
		19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social del país. https://t.co/LyclureoFu		
2020/05/22 07:33:45	ColectivaRefugi	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos al Gob. Nacional nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social del país. https://t.co/LyclureoFu	http://www.colectivaexiliorefugio.org	557
2020/05/22 07:28:12	Yasiva2	En Fundación Apego trabajamos para promover vínculos afectivos sanos para niñas, niños y adolescentes en diversos territorios del país. Así contribuimos con la mejora de la calidad de vida y la realidad en la que viven las comunidades. #UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/WAtx71QUwx		89
2020/05/28 01:21:54	fundacionacpo	En ACPO trabajamos por aportar un cambio a las comunidades a las que llegamos con educación. Aportamos a la disminución de la brecha en el acceso a la educación. Por eso somos #PiezaClaveParaColombia y queremos ser incluidos en la políticas ante la #COVID19 https://t.co/XsraF24KMo	http://www.fundacionacpo.org	1180
2020/05/28 00:53:11	vicky90001	Exigimos se valoren las acciones que realizan las ONG-OSC para hacer efectivos los ODS en los territorios con las comunidades porque @CCONGcolombia #UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/cdDsLi7cjJ	https://inclusionlegal.org/	1342
2020/05/29 23:42:29	fellenriegner	#UnaONGes una organización que llega a los territorios del país con su oferta de valor aportando a mejorar la calidad de vida de su población destinataria y la realidad en la que viven las comunidades #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/sqlKx8Ra2U	http://www.fundacionellenrcasas.org	249
2020/05/29 23:26:15	vicky90001	Las ONG contribuimos en la construcción de una sociedad solidaria e incluyente. #UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/HBlc9dxsfK	https://inclusionlegal.org/	1342

Created_at	Screen_name	Text	Url	Followers
2020/05/29 00:27:39	vicky90001	#UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia. https://t.co/bS18mvIYCV https://t.co/TBt2rkCL2e	https://inclusionlegal.org/	1342
2020/05/29 23:19:35	fedeongcaldas	#UnaONGes una organización que llega a los territorios del país con su oferta de valor aportando a mejorar la calidad de vida de su población destinataria y la realidad en la que viven las comunidades #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/sqlKx8Ra2U	https://fongc.org	534
2020/05/29 23:19:32	fedeongcaldas	#UnaONGes una organización que promueve procesos de solidaridad, justicia social, integración, equidad, participación y control social #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/L1ULGOR6OV	https://fongc.org	534
2020/05/29 23:19:31	fedeongcaldas	#UnaONGes un actor corresponsable del desarrollo y de la paz en los territorios y regiones del país porque somos #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/bdri47awzC	https://fongc.org	534
2020/05/29 23:03:35	Ligautismo	Las ONG contribuimos en la construcción de una sociedad solidaria e incluyente. #UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/HBlc9dxfK	http://www.ligautismo.org/	2511
2020/05/29 22:52:33	Ligautismo	#UnaONGes un actor corresponsable del desarrollo y de la paz en los territorios y regiones del país porque somos #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/bdri47awzC	http://www.ligautismo.org/	2511
2020/05/29 22:46:14	CCONGcolombiana	#UnaONGes un actor corresponsable del desarrollo y de la paz en los territorios y regiones del país porque somos #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/bdri47awzC	http://www.ccong.org.co	1972
2020/06/02 17:21:56	NanaMGNS	Estas son algunas de las peticiones que más de 100 Organizaciones Sociales hicimos a @infopresidencia ante la coyuntura del #Covid19. #PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes https://t.co/Rjla15TGJf		11112
2020/06/02 17:19:57	likeanoldwine	Estas son algunas de las peticiones que más de 100 Organizaciones Sociales hicimos a @infopresidencia ante la coyuntura del #Covid19. #PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes https://t.co/Rjla15TGJf		902

Created_at	Screen_name	Text	Url	Followers
2020/06/03 22:50:53	Corpuebloninos	La YMCA trabaja para llevar bienestar, alegría y esperanza a diversos territorios del país aportando a la mejora de la calidad de vida y la realidad diversa en la que viven nuestras comunidades. #PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes #YMCA Foto por @YMCARisaralda @Ymca_Colombia https://t.co/LEpiFUoW7K	http://www.pueblodelosninos.org	161
2020/06/03 22:50:44	Corpuebloninos	Somos más de 257 organizaciones sociales las que exigimos a @infopresidencia el ser tenidos en cuenta en las políticas contempladas en medio de la emergencia sanitaria por la pandemia de #COVID19 en el país. #PiezaClaveParaColombia → Lee la nota aquí: https://t.co/BlpB7GX2Ny	http://www.pueblodelosninos.org	161
2020/06/03 22:50:38	Corpuebloninos	En cumplimiento de nuestros objetos sociales, hemos estructurado y ejecutado proyectos lo largo y ancho del país, muchos de los cuales se han constituido en innovaciones y modelos demostrativos que han generado impactos en las comunidades #PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes https://t.co/HsyevFdS2Y	http://www.pueblodelosninos.org	161
2020/06/03 22:50:32	Corpuebloninos	La Fundación Oleoductos de Colombia le ha apostado a la transformación del territorio mediante la generación de capacidades que contribuyen al desarrollo sostenible de las comunidades #UnaONGEs #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/LWuoj3fTMw	http://www.pueblodelosninos.org	161
2020/06/03 22:50:26	Corpuebloninos	En Fundación Apego trabajamos para promover vínculos afectivos sanos para niñas, niños y adolescentes en diversos territorios del país. Así contribuimos con la mejora de la calidad de vida y la realidad en la que viven las comunidades. #UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia https://t.co/WAtx7lQUwx	http://www.pueblodelosninos.org	161

Appendix 6 Sample of the 57 Facebook publications recalled from the social media campaign #PiezaClaveParaColombia (in English #aKeyPieceforsColombia)

Created at	Name	Text	Url
28/05/2020	ACJ - YMCA Puerto Boyacá	<p>👩👦👧👦 Las #ONGs estamos aportando al tejido social de Colombia y hemos construido una propuesta presentada al Gobierno Nacional, solicitando que se nos incluya en las medidas de acción por la actual coyuntura.</p> <p>👉 Los invitamos a que conozcan una #PiezaClaveParaColombia, donde más de 250 organizaciones realizan acciones mitigando los efectos de la actual crisis. ¡Juntos somos más!</p> <p>YMCA Cali - YMCA Risaralda - ACJ - YMCA Puerto Boyacá - YMCA Bogotá - YMCA Santander - Acj-Ymca Quindío Colombia - Acj Ymca Barranquilla - YMCA Medellín - YMCA Tolima</p>	https://www.facebook.com/ACJPuertoBoyaca/photos/pcb.773468013188241/773467983188244/
22/05/2022	Fundación Trabajando Por Amor	<p>La Fundación Trabajando Por Amor trabaja para apoyar la educación y formación de más de 80 niños y adolescentes, aportando a la mejora de la calidad de vida y la realidad en la que viven las comunidades, aportando al tejido social de Colombia.</p> <p>Más de 250 Organizaciones hemos solicitado al Gob. Nacional nos incluya y nos tenga en cuenta en las medidas que son tomadas por la actual coyuntura #PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes</p>	https://www.facebook.com/trabajandoporamor/photos/a.660920720686397/2722944077817374/
28/05/2020	Fundación Casa Ronald McDonald	<p>👉 En La Casa Ronald Colombia! 🙌🙌😊🥰 Un #HogarLejosDelHogar 🥰 en el que diferentes familias pueden hospedarse gratis, por el tiempo que sea necesario, mientras acompañan a sus hijos en tratamientos médicos 🏥🚗🏠. ❤️</p> <p>#familiasUnidas #CasaRonaldColombia #UnaONGes #piezaclaveparacolombia</p>	https://www.facebook.com/casaronaldcolombia/photos/a.316531005102522/3232530086835918/

Created at	Name	Text	Url
04/06/2020	Fundación 33 sueños	La unión de docenas de personas, empresas, fundaciones, aliados, amigos, padrinos, comunicadores, ha hecho posible que #ToneladasDeAmor haya entregado 6.010 mercados entre marzo 24 y junio 3. Jornadas exigentes física y emocionalmente. Reconocimiento especial a todos los empleados de diferentes empresas, grupos de amigos que desde el inicio han apoyado esta iniciativa que semana a semana sigue creciendo para apoyar población vulnerable. #TraposRojos visibilizó la realidad en tiempos de Pandemia dando como resultado la entrega a todo un barrio y a cada una de sus familias. Los invito a ver esta crónica que nos llena de esperanza y donde la palabra Abajo los trapos rojos #Solidaridad es la protagonista. #PiezaClaveParaColombia Testigo Directo #Soacha #Bogota https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=057dstgzsKw	Solange Rocha Directora
22/05/2020	Fundación Levántate Y Anda	#UnaONGes -¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos al Gob. Nacional nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por el COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al desarrollo del país.	
06/06/2020	CORPORACION RED SOMOS	Las Organizaciones Sociales somos #PiezaClaveParaColombia debido al apoyo que brindamos a nuestras comunidades. #UnaONGes una fuerza que através de  #LaSolidaridadCambiaVidas 	https://www.facebook.com/redso moscol/photos/pcb.10157768706729608/10157768687734608/
25/05/2020	LICA Liga Colombiana de Autismo	Nos unimos a la Campaña #PiezaClaveParaColombia porque #UnaONGes @CCONG @techo_col @fundacionprobonocolombia	https://www.facebook.com/LigaautismoColombia/photos/a.261063060603216/3049191788456982
01/06/2020	Fundación Natalia Ponce De León	En cumplimiento de nuestros objetivos sociales, hemos ejecutado iniciativas como el programa #PorMiPorTiPorLosDos en todo el país, el cual se ha constituido como un modelo exitoso para prevenir violencias contra las mujeres, y que ha generado grandes impactos en las comunidades. Queremos continuar siendo una #PiezaClaveParaColombia, por eso elevamos nuestras peticiones al Gobierno Nacional.	https://www.facebook.com/OrgNataliaPoncedeLeon/photos/a.1630337110519061/2707883519431076/

Created at	Name	Text	Url
05/06/2020	Fundown Caribe	Fundown Caribe se suma a la campaña #PiezaClaveParaColombia #unaonges Una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos al @infopresidencia nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al desarrollo de nuestro país.	https://www.facebook.com/fundowncaribe/photos/pcb.2370363563067289/2370362239734088/
28/05/2020	YMCA Colombia	<p>👩👨👦 Las #ONGs estamos aportando al tejido social de Colombia y hemos construido una propuesta presentada al Gobierno Nacional, solicitando que se nos incluya en las medidas de acción por la actual coyuntura.</p> <p>👉 Los invitamos a que conozcan una #PiezaClaveParaColombia, donde más de 250 organizaciones realizan acciones mitigando los efectos de la actual crisis. ¡Juntos somos más!</p> <p>co</p> <p>YMCA Cali</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YMCA Risaralda - ACJ - YMCA Puerto Boyacá - YMCA Bogotá - YMCA Santander - Acj-Ymca Quindío Colombia - Acj Ymca Barranquilla - YMCA Medellín - YMCA Tolima 	https://www.facebook.com/YMCAColombia/photos/pcb.3273674202644662/3273671005978315/
26/05/2020	CORPORACIÓN ECOSESA	<p>¿Crees que #UnaONGes importante para Colombia? co 😞</p> <p>#PiezaClaveParaColombia es una campaña en la que cientos de organizaciones sociales queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y pedimos al Gobierno Nacional nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social del país. co</p> <p>Cómo lo es "Un Lugar Posible" para la pacificación de adultos y jóvenes con discapacidad mental, bajo un modelo de atención psicoterapéutica centrado en la Dignidad Humana, que a partir del cuidado integral, la persona va logrando disminuir su angustia, permitiendo restablecer los vínculos con otros, alcanzando su propia estabilidad y construyendo desde sus criterios y elecciones personales una vida más digna y autónoma.</p> <p>#UnaONGes #PiezaClavesParaColombia</p>	https://www.facebook.com/CorporacionEcosesa/photos/pcb.2632671246838499/2632671120171845/

Created at	Name	Text	Url
2/05/2020	Fundación Natalia Ponce De León	#UnLugarPosible #CorporacionEcosesa #Educarparaproteger #Protegerparadignificar	https://www.facebook.com/OrgNataliaPoncedeLeon/photos/a.1630337110519061/2697035203849241/

Appendix 7 Interview guides for the 1st and 2nd round of online interviews

Pimera ronda de entrevistas

Perspectivas de movilización en línea como sector sin ánimo de lucro a la luz de la declaración seguida de campaña en redes sociales

1. ¿Cómo se enteró su organización de la declaración conjunta y/o campaña en redes sociales bajo los hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia #Una ONGes y por qué decidieron sumarse?
2. ¿A quién se involucró en la movilización de la declaración y/o campaña y de qué forma? (involucramiento a nivel interno, poblaciones objetivo, destinatarios de la campaña).
3. ¿Cómo evalúa la participación de la organización y cómo evalúa el diseño, realización y resultados de la campaña? (Dificultades)
4. ¿Considera que el sector sin ánimo de lucro debe seguir promoviendo este tipo de campañas conjuntas utilizando medios tecnológicos? ¿Por qué?

¿Cuáles son sus ventajas o beneficios? ¿cuáles los riesgos?
5. ¿Tuvo conocimiento sobre otras declaraciones/pronunciamientos/campañas en redes sociales durante la pandemia? De ser así, se sumó su organización a alguna de ellas y cómo las compara frente a PiezaClaveParaColombia, Una ONGes?

Grado de adaptación/ a la virtualidad en el ejercicio de la acción (ambiente laboral, en los programas, vinculación población objetivo)

6. ¿Considera que la pandemia ha acelerado las transformaciones digitales dentro de su organización? ¿De ser así, qué tipo de transformaciones se han dado?
7. ¿Estas transformaciones digitales han permitido continuar con el cubrimiento de las poblaciones objetivo o se han hecho visibles brechas tecnológicas u otro tipo de limitaciones?

¿Cómo mantener a la población actual y cómo llegar a nueva población objetivo?
8. ¿Cómo ha cambiado el ambiente laboral y trabajo en equipo teniendo en cuenta el modo de trabajo en línea o home office?
9. ¿Cómo describe su rol como director en temas como el manejo de personal, comunicación, interacción con su equipo y con otros actores bajo estas transformaciones digitales? ¿Qué tipo de retos o cambios ha experimentado?
10. ¿Cómo evalúa entonces la adaptación de la organización y de la población objetivo frente a las transformaciones digitales? ¿Cuál es el escenario post-pandemia?

Segunda ronda de entrevistas

1. ¿Qué tipo de alteraciones ha experimentado su organización en su trabajo o actividades a lo largo del Covid-19?
2. ¿Qué respuestas o cuáles estrategias ha implementado su organización para hacer frente a las perturbaciones generadas por el Covid-19?
3. ¿De qué forma las condiciones externas (políticas, sociales, económicas, legales) del país/región e internas de su organización (cultura organizacional, empleados, sostenibilidad) han influenciado la forma en la que su organización ha manejado la crisis por la pandemia?
4. ¿Qué rol ha tenido la digitalización para su organización durante la pandemia?
5. ¿Cómo ha cambiado el ambiente laboral en términos de motivación, comunicación y trabajo en equipo en tiempos de home office o trabajo a distancia?
6. ¿Cómo describe su rol como director(a) ejecutivo(a)/coordinador(a) de área para abordar las transformaciones digitales? ¿Ha experimentado algún reto?
7. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo en red tenía su organización antes de la pandemia?
8. ¿En qué medida el trabajo en red ha aumentado o no empleando herramientas en línea o virtuales a lo largo de la pandemia?
9. ¿Qué tipo de oportunidades y retos ofrece el trabajo en red de modalidad virtual para responder a alteraciones/perturbaciones¹ de carácter externo?
10. ¿Qué lecciones aprendidas le deja la crisis por la pandemia a su organización?

Las siguientes preguntas están relacionadas con la [declaración conjunta](#) que su organización suscribió en abril de 2020 sobre la situación actual y las posibles consecuencias de la pandemia para las organizaciones sociales, seguida de la campaña en redes sociales realizada de Mayo 22 a Junio 6 del mismo año bajo los hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia and #UnaONGes en la cual su organización participó:

11. ¿Cómo se enteró su organización de la declaración conjunta y campaña en redes sociales y por qué decidieron sumarse?
12. ¿Qué tipo de relación tiene su organización con los organizadores principales? ¿Siguen en contacto con ellos después de esta iniciativa?

¹ En este estudio alteraciones o perturbaciones externas se refieren a eventos que son difíciles de predecir y que tienen efectos dañinos de largo plazo como por ejemplo una pandemia o cualquier otro desastre natural, pero también eventos o condiciones externas que perturban las actividades normales u obstaculizan el desarrollo del potencial, en este caso, de las organizaciones no gubernamentales en Colombia.

13. ¿Quién se involucró en la movilización de la declaración y campaña en su organización?
¿Hasta qué punto involucraron a su población objetivo?
14. ¿Cómo evalúa tanto su participación en esta iniciativa como el diseño, desarrollo y resultados de la campaña?
15. ¿Considera que el sector no gubernamental en Colombia debe seguir promoviendo y realizando estas campañas conjuntas utilizando medios tecnológicos? ¿Cuáles son sus beneficios pero también sus limitaciones?

Appendix 8 Online Survey Form

Estimadas Organizaciones Sociales,

En el marco de la investigación doctoral titulada: *“Campañas de movilización social en línea durante la crisis por el COVID 19: El caso de las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONGs) colombianas”*, las invitamos cordialmente a que respondan la siguiente consulta virtual.

Responde aquí: LINK CONSULTA VIRTUAL

La Confederación Colombiana de ONG – CCONG respalda el desarrollo de esta investigación valorando los esfuerzos de realizar una aproximación científica al sector sin ánimo de lucro en el país.

El programa de doctorado se cursa en el Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo (ZEF) adscrito a la Universidad de Bonn en Alemania con el apoyo del Servicio Alemán de Intercambio Académico (DAAD). La tesis doctoral será pública y podrá ser consultada por los y las ciudadanas, cuando esté finalizada.

Muchas gracias por sus aportes.

Cordialmente,

Liliana Rodríguez Burgos

Directora

Confederación Colombiana de ONG - CCONG

Mayra Martin Espinosa

Candidata a Doctorado en Filosofía con énfasis en desarrollo

La consulta en línea reunirá información sobre la Declaración conjunta que 256 organizaciones de diferentes territorios del país suscribieron en torno a las implicaciones que la crisis por el COVID-19 ha tenido y sus eventuales consecuencias en el desarrollo de las actividades del sector, y su posterior movilización a través de redes sociales.

CENTRO DE INVESTIGACION PARA EL DESARROLLO (ZEF)

Universidad de Bonn, Alemania

Consulta virtual relacionada con la Declaración suscrita por Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONGs) de Colombia con respecto a las implicaciones que la crisis por el COVID-19 ha tenido en sus actividades y la posterior campaña en redes sociales para movilizar dicha declaración.

Esta consulta virtual se realiza en el marco de la investigación doctoral titulada: “Campañas de movilización social en línea durante la crisis por el COVID 19: El caso de las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONGs) colombianas”.

El objetivo de la investigación es brindar perspectivas sobre la movilización social en línea en el sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia durante la crisis del Covid-19, en una época de creciente virtualidad y evaluar cómo el sector está navegando ante estas nuevas realidades mediante el uso de herramientas digitales.

La declaración fue suscrita por 256 ONGs de diferentes territorios del país y difundida por diferentes medios a finales de abril de 2020. Por su parte, la campaña en redes sociales para hacer visible y sensibilizar a los diferentes actores del desarrollo sobre la Declaración se llevó a cabo entre el 21 de mayo y el 6 de junio de 2020 a través de Facebook y Twitter bajo los hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia y #UnaONGes.

Los objetivos específicos de la consulta virtual son:

- i) Reconocer la experiencia de las ONGs que suscribieron la Declaración sobre la situación actual y las eventuales consecuencias de la crisis de Covid-19, en su Oferta de Valor.
- ii) Identificar las dificultades y perspectivas de la movilización social, mediante el uso de herramientas digitales, teniendo en cuenta que las organizaciones aquí encuestadas suscribieron la declaración pero no participaron en la campaña en redes sociales.
- iii) Identificar el incremento en el uso de estrategias digitales por parte de las ONGs para mantener el ejercicio de su acción en tiempos de pandemia.

El programa de doctorado se cursa en el Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo (ZEF BIGS-DR) adscrito a la universidad de Bonn en Alemania con el apoyo del Servicio Alemán de Intercambio Académico (DAAD). La tesis doctoral será pública y podrá ser consultada cuando esté finalizada.

La tesis doctoral será pública y podrá ser consultada por los y las ciudadanas, cuando esté finalizada.

Igualmente, y por ser un resultado de las realidades de las ONG en Colombia, los resultados harán parte de las recomendaciones que entregará la Confederación Colombiana de ONG – CCONG al Gobierno Nacional, en el marco de los lineamientos de política pública en el año de 2021.

¡Agradecemos su participación! Le tomará alrededor de 15 minutos responder la consulta que estará disponible hasta el 26 de febrero de 2021.

POLÍTICA DE TRATAMIENTO DE LA INFORMACIÓN Y LOS DATOS

Antes de comenzar, por favor indique a continuación su consentimiento para el procesamiento de los datos recopilados como se describe y conoce en la Política de manejo de datos e información que le solicitamos leer a continuación:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OIBoITLbNnT0VY4hbNigWP-RoLfomGSv/view?usp=sharing>

Autorizo el procesamiento de los datos recolectados como se me dio a conocer y se describió en la Política de manejo de datos e información

SI

NO

1. EXPERIENCIA CON LA SUSCRIPCIÓN* DE LA DECLARACION

* Puede ser consultada aquí: https://ccong.org.co/files/934_at_COMUNICADO%20DEL%20SECTOR%20SOCIAL_FINAL.pdf

1.1 ¿Considera pertinente y oportuna la declaración conjunta suscrita por ONGs de diferentes territorios del país con respecto a la situación actual y las eventuales consecuencias que la crisis del Covid-19 ha tenido para sus actividades y su oferta de valor?

SI

NO

1.2. ¿Cómo se enteró la organización de la declaración?

Información entregada por uno de los promotores principales (CCONG-PROBONO-RECONCILIACION-TECHO)

Información entregada por la Federación o Red a la cual la organización pertenece

Información entregada por una organización aliada

OTRO: _____

1.3. ¿Cómo suscribió la organización la declaración?

CLIC EN EL LINK PARA DILIGENCIAR EL FORMULARIO DE SUSCRIPCION

SUSCRIPCION ENVIADA POR WHATSAPP

SUSCRIPCION HECHA TELEFONICAMENTE

SUSCRIPCION ENVIADA POR CORREO ELECTRONICO

OTRO: _____

1.4. ¿La Organización promovió, visibilizó y socializó la Declaración entre sus pares y otros actores a través de medios digitales?

SI _____

NO _____

1.4.1 Si la respuesta es SI, marque de la siguiente lista en que medios digitales se difundió:

Correo electrónico

Página web

Redes sociales

Medios comunitarios (radio, prensa)

Otros: Cuáles?

1.4.2. Si la respuesta es NO, por cuál de las siguientes razones no difundió la declaración:

No se cuenta con página web

No se cuenta con redes sociales

Deficiente o nulo acceso a internet

Falta de personal para esta tarea

Otras prioridades relacionadas con la crisis de Covid-19 de las que preocuparse

Temor a ser expuesto frente a los diferentes actores

Otros:

1.5. Por favor, estime en una escala de 1 - totalmente en desacuerdo - a 5 - completamente de acuerdo - en qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

1. TOTALMENTE EN DESACUERDO 2. EN DESACUERDO 3. NO ESTOY SEGURO 4. DE ACUERDO 5. COMPLETAMENTE DE ACUERDO

1.5.1. La Declaración fue el mecanismo pertinente que le permitió a las ONGs exponer ante el gobierno nacional las peticiones y propuestas del sector con respecto a las implicaciones de la crisis en la Oferta de Valor del sector en tiempos de la Pandemia por el COVID-19

Si marcó entre 1 y 3, ¿qué otro mecanismo podría haberse implementado?

1.5.2. La Declaración reflejó las realidades, propuestas, y recomendaciones con respecto a las implicaciones de la crisis en la Oferta de Valor del sector en tiempos de la pandemia por el Covid-19

Si marcó entre 1 y 3, ¿qué debió haber sido incluido o enfocado de diferente manera en la declaración?

2. DIFICULTADES Y PERSPECTIVAS DE LA MOVILIZACION SOCIAL EN LINEA EN TIEMPOS DE COVID-19

2.1. A continuación le solicitamos indicar de los siguientes factores cuáles influyeron para que su organización no participara en la Campaña promovida por redes sociales bajo los hashtags: PiezaClaveParaColombia, UnaONGes

No se cuenta con la infraestructura ni recursos humanos (sin cuentas de redes sociales, poco o nulo acceso a internet, falta de personal para esta labor)

No se tuvo información sobre la campaña (no se recibió información ni el ABC de la campaña)

Poco interés (no fue lo suficientemente atractiva / creativa / innovadora)

Sin percepción de impacto (poca convicción en el poder de incidencia de las redes sociales)

Otras prioridades relacionadas con la crisis de Covid-19 de las que preocuparse

Temor a ser expuesto frente a los diferentes actores

Otros:

2.2. ¿Participaría la organización en una campaña en línea a futuro si estas limitaciones se superarán?

SI

NO

2.3. Teniendo en cuenta que las ONGs juegan un rol importante junto a los demás actores del desarrollo para mitigar los riesgos/la crisis que conlleva la pandemia, por favor indique a continuación si su organización está o no de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

El sector sin ánimo de lucro debe seguir promoviendo campañas utilizando medios tecnológicos

El sector debe promover que los gobiernos nacional y territorial realicen acciones para garantizar el acceso a internet a todas las ONGs

Las Declaraciones conjuntas públicas, son una buena estrategia de movilización para el sector sin ánimo de lucro

Las declaraciones conjuntas públicas, tienen un mayor grado de incidencia, si se promueven y movilizan a través de campañas colectivas utilizando las redes sociales

2.4. Si estuvo de acuerdo con alguna de las afirmaciones anteriores, por favor estime de 1 a 5 el nivel de relevancia que representan las campañas de movilización en línea para:

1. Poco relevantes 2. Algo relevantes 3. No estoy seguro 4. Muy relevantes 5. Extremadamente relevantes

Promover articulación (intercambio y difusión de información, de conocimiento, capacidades, recursos)

Construir identidad colectiva como sector sin ánimo de lucro (compartir valores e intereses comunes)

Fomentar el sentido de pertenencia al sector sin ánimo de lucro (vínculo estrecho con la naturaleza del sector)

Cooperar a través de proyectos/programas conjuntos (iniciativas conjuntas a corto/mediano/largo plazo)

Movilizar acciones conjuntas con otros actores del desarrollo (Gobierno, organismos de cooperación internacional, sector privado)

Involucrar a los grupos de interés (participación de la población destinataria)

2.5. ¿Reconoce las siguientes campañas de movilización en redes sociales en tiempos de Covid-19? Por favor para campaña estime el grado de involucramiento de la organización de acuerdo con la siguiente escala:

1. NO CONOCIMOS SOBRE LA CAMPAÑA 2. CONOCIMOS SOBRE LA CAMPAÑA PERO NO PARTICIPAMOS 3. NO ESTAMOS SEGUROS 4. CONOCIMOS LA CAMPAÑA Y PARTICIPAMOS ESPORÁDICAMENTE 5. CONOCIMOS LA CAMPAÑA Y PARTICIPAMOS REGULARMENTE

#RENTABÁSICA

#MATRÍCULACERO

#COLOMBIAENALERTAROJA

#MINGASINESMAD

OTRA: _____

2.5.1. Si su organización conoció o participó en alguna de las anteriores campañas, por favor explique brevemente cómo percibió la organización y desarrollo de las mismas.

2.5.2. ¿Considera que la movilización social en línea puede influir en las decisiones de los siguientes actores? Estime usando la siguiente escala de acuerdo con el nivel de incidencia:

1. NULO NIVEL DE INCIDENCIA 2. NO ESTOY SEGURO 3. BAJO NIVEL DE INCIDENCIA 4. ALTO NIVEL DE INCIDENCIA

GOBIERNO

ORGANISMOS DE COOPERACION INTERNACIONAL

SECTOR PRIVADO

GRUPOS DE INTERÉS/POBLACION DESTINATARIA

MEDIOS DE COMUNICACION

3. HERRAMIENTAS DIGITALES EN MEDIO DEL COVID-19

3.1. Por favor, estime cuál de las siguientes herramientas digitales emplea la ONG en una escala de 1 a 4 donde la escala significa:

1. NO TIENE – 2. USO ESPORADICO – 3. USO REGULAR – 4. USO CONSTANTE

SITIO WEB

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

CANAL DE YOUTUBE

WHATSAPP

BLOG(S)

TELEGRAM

OTRO: _____

3.2. Seleccione de las anteriores herramientas digitales aquéllas cuyo uso se ha incrementado en tiempos de Covid-19

SITIO WEB

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

CANAL DE YOUTUBE

WHATSAPP

BLOG(S)

TELEGRAM

NINGUNA

OTRAS: _____

¿Por qué? (Explique brevemente su respuesta)

3.3. ¿Qué tipo de estrategias digitales está implementando la organización durante la pandemia para continuar prestando sus servicios? Seleccione todas las que correspondan:

PRODUCCION DE CONTENIDOS DIGITALES (videos, material en línea, podcasts, encuestas)

REALIZACIÓN DE CAMPAÑAS EN LINEA (recaudación de fondos, incidencia, campañas pedagógicas)

USO DE PLATAFORMAS EN LINEA PARA INTERACTUAR ENTRE LOS MIEMBROS DE LA ONG (reuniones, hangouts, cursos de fortalecimiento de capacidades, coaching)

USO DE PLATAFORMAS EN LINEA PARA INTERACTUAR CON LA POBLACIÓN DESTINATARIA (video llamadas, diálogos, seminarios, cursos)

NINGUNA ESTRATEGIA DIGITAL

OTRAS: _____

3.4. Por favor, estime en una escala de 1 – inefectivas- a 4 – muy efectivas qué tan eficaces han sido las estrategias digitales para prestar los servicios a la población destinataria

1. INEFECTIVAS 2. ALGO EFECTIVAS 3. NO ESTOY SEGURO 4. MUY EFECTIVAS

3.4.1. Si marcó de 1 a 3, ¿Qué limitaciones se han experimentado y se han podido contrarrestar?

3.4.2. Si marcó 4, ¿A qué atribuye el buen desempeño de las estrategias?

4. DATOS DE LA PERSONA QUE RESPONDE LA ENCUESTA

Nombre de la organización: _____

Nombre de la persona que responde la encuesta: _____

Cargo: _____

e-mail: _____

Ciudad o municipio: _____

Appendix 9 Summary of the main results of the online survey elaborated by the Colombian Confederation of NGOs (CCONG)



**ARTICULACION Y MOVILIZACION
SOCIAL PARA LA INCIDENCIA:
LAS OSC Y EL USO DE LOS MEDIOS
TECNOLÓGICOS**

**DOCUMENTO SISTEMATIZACION DE
EXPERIECIAS**

BOGOTA, JULIO DE 2021

CONFERACION COLOMBIANA DE ONG – CCONG

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

LILIANA PATRICIA RODRIGUEZ BURGOS

Directora Ejecutiva CCONG

LUZ ANGELA RAMIREZ RUIZ

Coordinadora de Programas – CCONG

MAYRA MARTIN

Investigadora Junior - ZEF

GISEL PEDROZA

Investigadora CCONG

Bogotá, Colombia, julio de 2021

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ARTICULACIÓN Y MOVILIZACIÓN SOCIAL PARA LA INCIDENCIA: LAS OSC Y EL USO DE LOS MEDIOS TECNOLÓGICOS

Documento de sistematización de la experiencia

PRESENTACIÓN

La Confederación Colombiana de ONG-CCONG¹, como plataforma nacional, en asocio con sus pares Fundación PROBONO², Corporación RECONCILIACION³, y Fundación TECHO⁴, promovieron como acción de incidencia: movilización social en línea, la “Declaración Pública: algunos elementos sobre la crisis desatada por el Covid-19 en Colombia, y las eventuales consecuencias que podría tener el manejo de la misma en el cumplimiento de la misión de las OSC, mayo de 2020”, y la campaña en redes sociales, de dicha declaración, para hacer visible y sensibilizar a los diferentes actores del desarrollo, adelantada entre el 21 de mayo y el 6 de junio de 2020, a través de Facebook y Twitter bajo los hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia y #UnaONGes.

Este acción de incidencia, utilizó la movilización social en línea, basado en el uso de la tecnología como un instrumento - medio que permite, de manera virtual, reconocer la importancia de la articulación (redes y alianzas), la comunicación asertiva, y el relacionamiento entre las diferentes formas de Entidades Sin Ánimo de Lucro – ESAL, para evidenciar la realidad y aportar en los momentos de crisis (Pandemia) con su Oferta de Valor, como actor corresponsable del desarrollo sostenible.

El presente documento, contiene los resultados de un proceso de sistematización de esta importante acción de incidencia, en lo que se relaciona con la IMPLEMENTACION de los medios tecnológicos para la movilización, el relacionamiento y la articulación de las organizaciones, y que se espera, le sirvan a las OSC, a sus redes y plataformas nacionales y territoriales, a las ESAL, y a otros actores, como un ejemplo para fortalecer el rol político en su Oferta de Valor.

Los invitamos a seguir aportando.

¹ Confederación Colombiana de ONG. <https://ccong.org.co/ccong/>

² Fundación Probono, <https://probono.org.co/>

³ La Corporación Reconciliación Colombia; <https://www.google.com/search?q=reconciliaci%C3%B3n+colombia&oq=recon&aqs=chrome>

⁴ Fundación Techo Colombia; <https://colombia.techo.org/>

I. ALCANCE DE LA SISTEMATIZACIÓN DE LA PRÁCTICA

1.1. Objetivo General y Objetivos Específicos

Sistematización de la práctica: Acción de Incidencia -movilización social en línea del sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia, evidenciando las realidades en el uso de medios tecnológicos y herramientas digitales, que fue implementada para la construcción y difusión (en redes sociales) de la “Declaración Pública: algunos elementos sobre la crisis desatada por el Covid-19 en Colombia, y las eventuales consecuencias que podría tener el manejo de la misma en el cumplimiento de la misión de las OSC⁵”, mayo de 2020 .

Los objetivos específicos:

- i. Reconocer la experiencia de las ONG-ESAL, que suscribieron y participaron en la Declaración Pública, como una acción de incidencia, que se denomina movilización social en línea. 256 ONG-ESAL suscribieron la Declaración Pública. Este documento de sistematización corresponde a una consulta en línea que se dirigió a las ONG-ESAL que suscribieron la Declaración Pública pero no participaron en la movilización a través de la campaña realizada en redes sociales (201 ONG-ESAL). El porcentaje de respuesta fue de 44.7% (90 ONG-ESAL).
- ii. Identificar las dificultades y perspectivas de la acción de incidencia -movilización social en línea, mediante el uso de herramientas digitales tanto para la suscripción de la declaración como en la campaña de visibilización y sensibilización en redes sociales.
- iii. Identificar uso de medios tecnológicos y digitales por parte de las ONG, para mantener el ejercicio de su Oferta de Valor, en tiempos de pandemia, y sus retos para el momento de la post-pandemia.

1.2. Información base y fuentes de trabajo

Para alcanzar el propósito se han definido:

1. Una encuesta virtual, que se basa en la metodología de la Indagación Apreciativa (IA)⁶, como una herramienta que impulsa la auto - valoración de una práctica que tiene como medio el uso de herramientas digitales y tecnológicas para la Incidencia. (**Anexo No. 1: Instrumento Auto - Valoración: Encuesta en Línea**).

Ver encuesta

2. Los resultados obtenidos en la aplicación de la Encuesta Virtual, diligenciada por 90 ONG de diferentes territorios del país.

⁵ Ver copia de la Declaración Pública, mayo de 2020.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/3547rxrk8w5mt1d/Declaraci%C3%B3n%20de%20Organizaciones%20Sociales.pdf?dl=0>

⁶ Instituto Diálogos e Indagación Apreciativa – IDEIA, <http://www.institutoideia.es/indagacion-apreciativa/para-que-la-indagacion-apreciativa/>, revisado en mayo de 2021.

3. Respuesta del gobierno nacional⁷ frente al comunicado, el cual fue presentado por el Director de Prosperidad Social, dirigido a Acciones frente al COVID.

II. LOS HALLAZGOS EN LA SISTEMATIZACIÓN DE LA PRACTICA

La CCONG ha venido construyendo, implementando y fortaleciendo el rol político y la Incidencia en las Políticas Públicas de las OSC, a partir de promover y aplicar Acciones de Incidencia - Movilización Social en Línea.

Movilización Social⁸:

Difundir, con herramientas de pedagogía social, entre amplios sectores de ciudadanos y ciudadanas, sus organizaciones y los otros actores de desarrollo, las decisiones públicas adoptadas por los tomadores de decisiones que impactan y afecta al colectivo.

Promover acciones colectivas, que manifiestan sistemáticamente las posturas, los puntos de vista y las perspectivas de las OSC y otros actores del desarrollo, frente a las decisiones públicas adoptadas por los tomadores de decisiones, que impactan y afecta al colectivo.

En este marco de acción, la CCONG en asocio con sus OSC pares Fundación PROBONO, Corporación RECONCILIACION, y Fundación TECHO, frente a las decisiones que se adoptaron por parte del ejecutivo nacional en el año de 2020 para dar respuesta a la Pandemia, proponen, como incidencia, la construcción y visibilidad colectiva de una “Declaración Pública” con la que se busca:

“... expresar algunos elementos sobre la crisis desatada por el Covid-19 en Colombia, y sobre las eventuales consecuencias que podría tener el manejo de la misma en nuestras organizaciones y en el cumplimiento de su misión”

Esta práctica es común en el sector (las Declaraciones Públicas), pero se decide adelantar la sistematización de esta experiencia, ya que:

A. El contexto, en el que se promueve, presentaba:

⁷ El Gobierno valora el apoyo y la solidaridad de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil (OSC) para mitigar esta contingencia, las acciones que han venido adelantando como pilares sociales para el desarrollo económico del país es un importante aporte para superar unidos esta pandemia. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/m5nqxubrr0ukmym/Respuesta%20Dapre.pdf?dl=0>

⁸ CCONG, Acciones de Incidencia, Bogotá, 2018-2021.

1. Un momento en el cual la Pandemia seguía exigiendo el distanciamiento social; por tanto, la virtualidad era el medio que, algunas de las ESAL, estaban implementando para seguir construyendo acciones colectivas.
2. El estado de alta vulnerabilidad del sector social por: i) la situación en que se encontraban las poblaciones con las que se gestiona la Oferta de Valor, ii) por las suspensiones o cambios en los objetos contractuales establecidos con los actores públicos y privados con los que las OSC gestionaban procesos; y iii) por las decisiones que se tomaban por parte del Gobierno Nacional, que no contemplaba a sector de las ESAL como un actor, sino que lo entendía como parte del sector privado-empresarial.
3. La necesidad del sector de expresar públicamente el rol, la disponibilidad, y los aportes (técnicos, sociales y políticos) para hacer frente común, en asocio con los otros actores del desarrollo, a la atención integral de la Pandemia.

B. La comunicación y el uso de TIC entre las OSC para la articulación, presentaba:

1. Dificultades por los bajos índices de conectividad, que según la OCDE⁹ en “Colombia se está quedando rezagada en cuanto a uso generalizado de internet, ya que en 2017 este servicio solo llegaba a un 64% de la población, un nivel alcanzado por la mayoría de países de la OCDE a mediados de la primera década de 2000.
2. La obsolescencia de los equipos de cómputo y de información de las OSC.
3. Los bajos niveles de alfabetización digital, de las comunidades y de los líderes y lideresas que se encuentran en los territorios, especialmente aquellos con mayores vulnerabilidades y alejados de la centralidad.

C. Las preguntas obligadas de las OSC frente a las incertidumbres que, en el momento, la Pandemia exigía:

1. ¿Es necesario que se revise las formas con las que tradicionalmente me relacionaba con los diferentes actores del desarrollo?, y a partir de reconocerlos ¿Cómo fortalecerlas para que reconozca a las ONG como pares?
2. ¿Qué instrumentos debo fortalecer para hacer visible la Oferta de Valor, y que esta sea reconocida por los diferentes actores de desarrollo?
3. ¿Cómo le hacemos para que las medidas que toma el ejecutivo estén alineadas y reconozcan al sector social como un actor corresponsable, autónomo y diferente a los otros actores del desarrollo?

D. La decisión de construir colectivamente una Declaración Pública y que en todo su proceso se utilizaran los medios tecnológicos y herramientas digitales; además de:

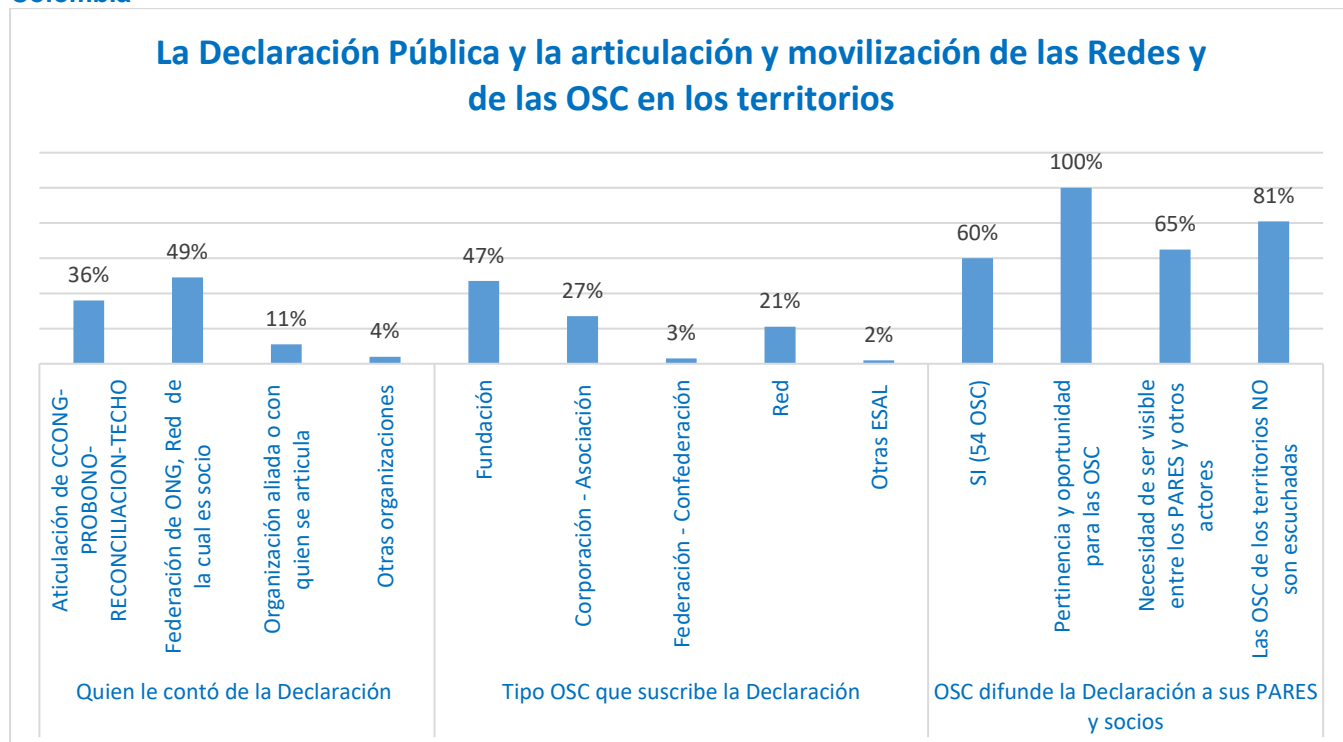
1. Ser difundida, especialmente, entre las redes, alianzas y otras formas asociativas de las OSC – ESAL, en todos los territorios del país, en donde fuese posible.
2. Suscribirla, si se estaba de acuerdo la OSC, y contar con la responsabilidad ética de difundirla entre los socios y otras OSC.
3. Si le era posible, acompañar la campaña de difusión de Declaración mediante el uso de redes sociales (Facebook y Twitter bajo los hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia y #UnaONGes), entre el 21 de mayo y el 6 de junio de 2020.

⁹ OCDE; Colombia debe impulsar la transformación digital y adoptar medidas adicionales para garantizar que toda la población comparta los beneficios; 25/10/2019. <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/colombia-debe-impulsar-la-transformacion-digital-y-adaptar-medidas-adicionales-para-garantizar-que-toda-la-poblacion-comparta-los-beneficios.htm>. Revisado en 2019.

2.1. Los Resultados

Resultado 1: La Declaración movilizó a las redes de OSC y a sus OSC socias, para la articulación y ampliación de voces, sobre las realidades y consecuencias en la Oferta de Valor, por las decisiones tomadas para el manejo de la Pandemia por parte del Gobierno Nacional (**Tabla No. 1:** Declaración Pública y la articulación y movilización de las redes de OSC en Colombia)

Tabla No. 1: Declaración Pública y la articulación y movilización de las redes de OSC en Colombia



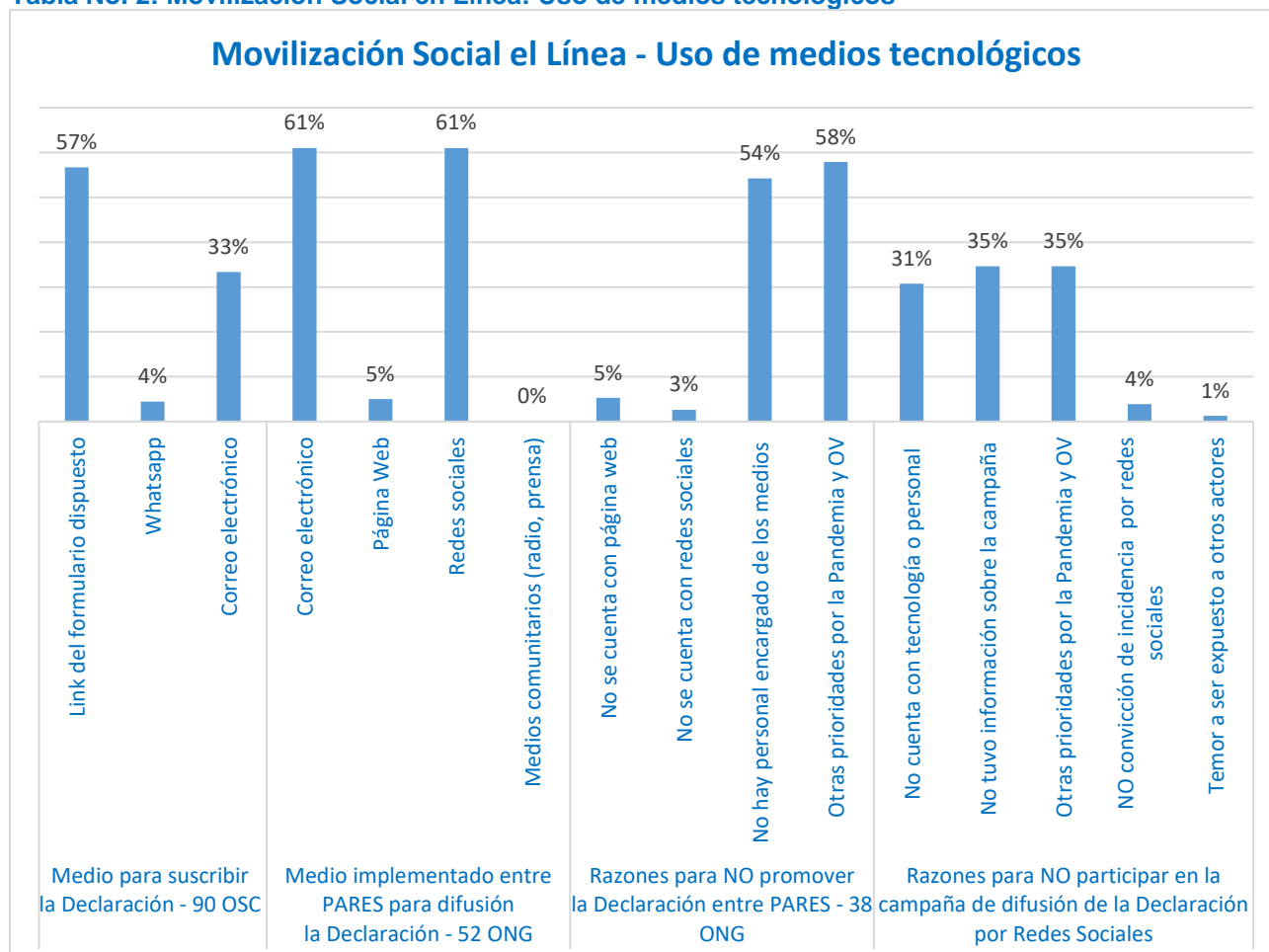
Fuente: CCONG, encuesta adelantada entre los meses de febrero – marzo de 2021, Bogotá- Colombia.

Los resultados permiten reconocer:

1. El uso de los medios digitales permitió, la movilización de la acción colectiva para conocer, firmar y hacer visible la declaración pública.
2. El uso de los medios digitales, permitió adelantar un proceso de “cascada”, que fue eficiente en el tiempo, en el conocimiento, y en la suscripción de la misma.
3. El uso de medios digitales, permitió que las organizaciones que están en los territorios, especialmente los que tienen dificultades de acceso a la información, pudieran suscribir la declaración y por tanto tener una percepción positiva frente a la acción colectiva del sector, y “ampliar sus voces” con el gobierno.

Resultado 2: La Declaración implementó una acción de Incidencia – Movilización social en línea, a partir del uso de los medios tecnológicos y digitales (**Tabla No. 2:** Movilización Social en Línea: Uso de medios tecnológicos).

Tabla No. 2: Movilización Social en Línea: Uso de medios tecnológicos



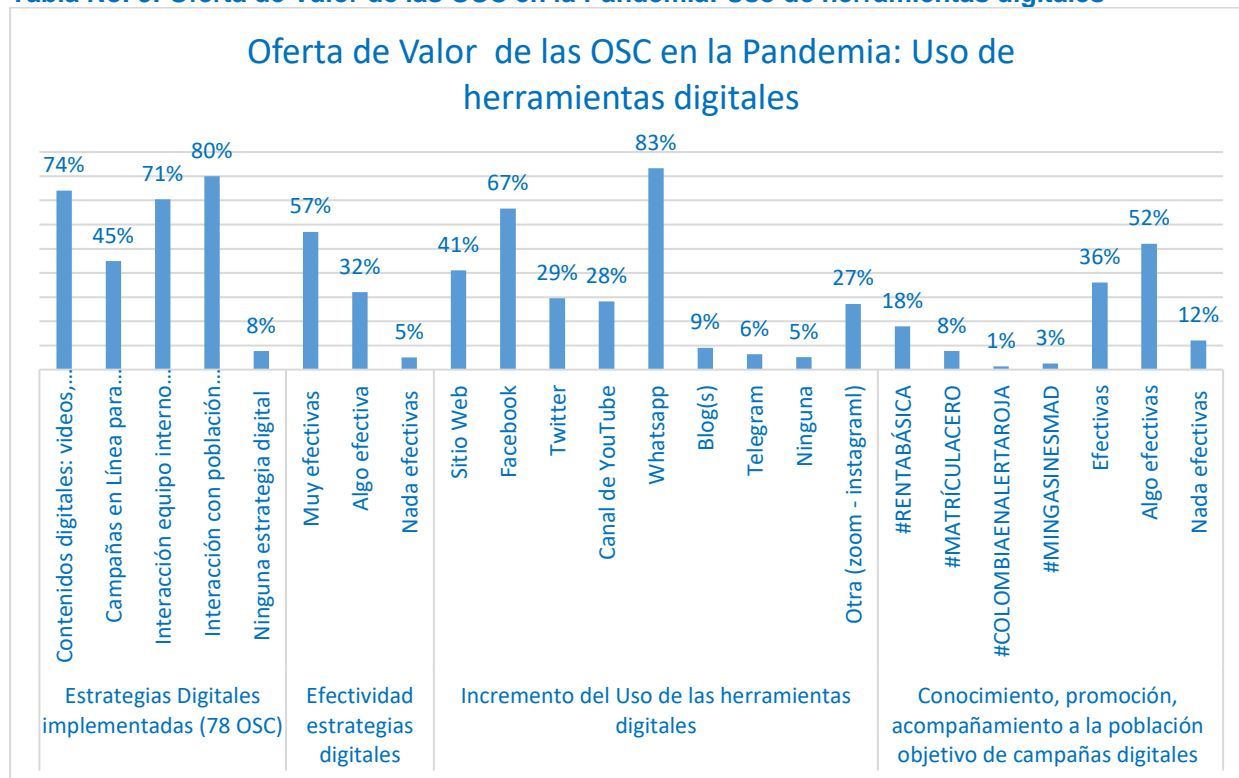
Fuente: CCONG, encuesta adelantada entre los meses de febrero – marzo de 2021, Bogotá- Colombia.

Los resultados permiten reconocer:

1. La movilización social en línea, hizo que las OSC utilizaran y reconocieran que los medios tecnológicos son estratégicos para la articulación y el relacionamiento con sus PARES y otros actores del desarrollo
2. La movilización social en línea le permitió a las OSC reconocer canales digitales estratégicos para la acción colectiva, significándole su participación voluntaria, autónoma, eficiente, con cero costos, y con una visibilidad frente a sus PARES y otros actores del desarrollo.
3. La movilización social en línea, evidenció que las OSC deben seguir trabajando y fortaleciendo los escenarios que permitan su articulación y relacionamiento a partir de la asociatividad solidaria y la acción colectiva, que se reflejan en las federaciones de ONG, y las redes de OSC nacionales y territoriales.

Resultado 3: La Declaración motivó a las redes y sus OSC socias, a identificar y reconocer como están frente al uso de medios tecnológicos y herramientas digitales en su Oferta de Valor durante la Pandemia (**Tabla No. 3:** Oferta de Valor de las OSC en la Pandemia: Uso de herramientas digitales).

Tabla No. 3: Oferta de Valor de las OSC en la Pandemia: Uso de herramientas digitales



Fuente: CCONG, encuesta adelantada entre los meses de febrero – marzo de 2021, Bogotá- Colombia.

Los resultados permiten reconocer:

1. El uso de herramientas digitales, como MEDIOS que les permite la interacción con la población objetivo, y que fue necesario su implementación para poder seguir gestionado su Oferta de Valor durante la pandemia.
2. El uso de herramientas digitales, son efectivas, si la población objetivo tiene y puede acceder a ellas. Se hizo evidente los límites en el acceso, especialmente en los territorios rurales, en las poblaciones más pobres y con menos educación, y el bajo alfabetismo tecnológico.
3. El uso de herramientas digitales, en campañas promovidas por el Gobierno Nacional y por las OSC; fueron algo efectivas, ya que las poblaciones objeto de las mismas no tienen acceso, son las más pobres y con menos educación, y el bajo alfabetismo tecnológico.

Resultado 4: La Declaración, como acción de movilización social en línea, es considerada como un MEDIO ESTRATEGICO para poder influir en las decisiones de los actores de desarrollo (**Tabla No. 4:** La oportunidad de las Declaraciones Públicas en Línea como medio para la movilización social).

Tabla No. 4: La oportunidad de las Declaraciones Públicas en Línea como medio para la movilización social



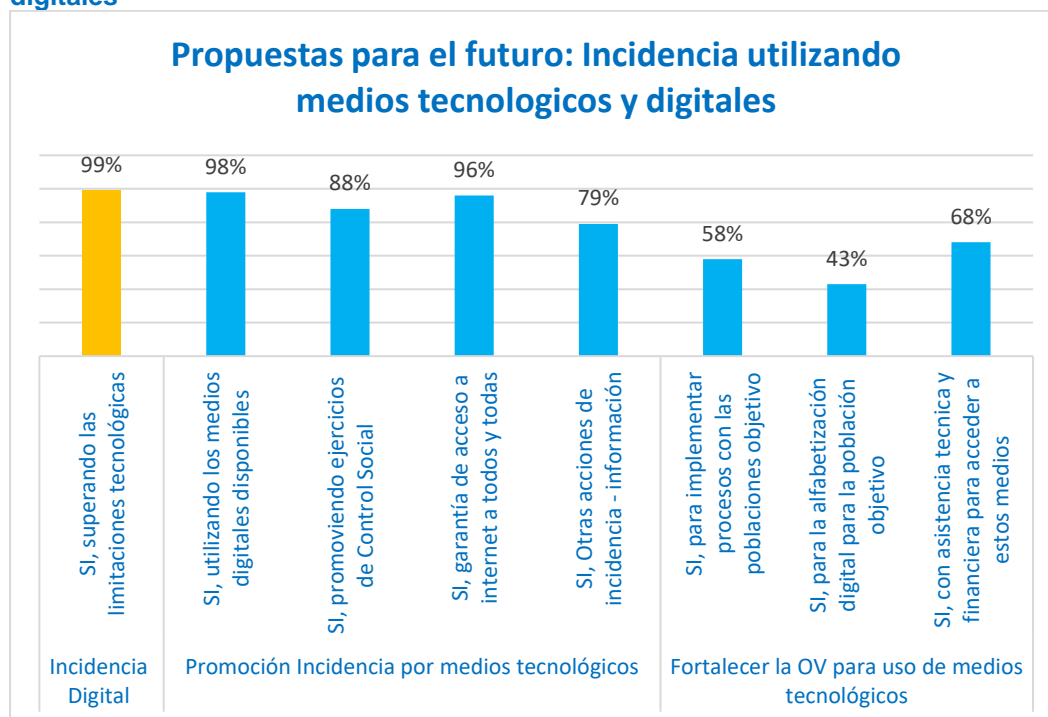
Fuente: CCONG, encuesta adelantada entre los meses de febrero – marzo de 2021, Bogotá- Colombia.

Los resultados permiten reconocer:

1. Que la movilización social en línea, es pertinente para promover acciones de incidencia frente a los tomadores de decisiones, como fue el caso de la declaración pública
2. Que la movilización social en línea es estratégica, y permitió la movilización y visibilización de las acciones articuladas en redes y colectivos de las OSC.
3. Que la movilización social en línea es oportuna, porque permite construir identidad, sentido de pertenencia, involucra a los grupos de interés, y permite la difusión de la información.

Resultado 5: La movilización en línea y otras acciones de Incidencia para ser utilizadas en el futuro (**Tabla No. 5:** Propuestas para el futuro: Incidencia de las OSC utilizando medios tecnológicos y digitales)

Tabla No. 5: Propuestas para el futuro: Incidencia de las OSC utilizando medios tecnológicos y digitales



Fuente: CCONG, encuesta adelantada entre los meses de febrero – marzo de 2021, y otras encuestas implementadas durante el año 2020-2021. Bogotá- Colombia.

Los resultados permiten reconocer que para el futuro:

1. Las OSC consideran pertinentes el uso de herramientas digitales para el ejercicio político de la incidencia, siendo imprescindible superar las limitaciones técnicas de acceso, oportunidad, y calidad; además del analfabetismo digital de las poblaciones de interés y objetivo
2. Las OSC, consideran que se deben promover ejercicios de monitoreo y control social y ciudadano, a las decisiones y recursos públicos destinados a garantizar el acceso y uso de medios tecnológicos para todos y para todas.
3. Las OSC, consideran que deben fortalecer su Oferta de Valor adoptando medios digitales; además de acompañar procesos de alfabetización digital a su población objetivo; siempre y cuando se garanticen las condiciones.

III. REFLEXIONES FINALES

El uso de tecnologías digitales, como medios facilitadores, están siendo una necesidad para todas las acciones y procesos que gestionan todos los actores del desarrollo, lo que implica que hay que transformar e impulsar tanto su dotación como la implementación de las mismos en la Oferta de Valor de las OSC.

En este sentido, las 256 OSC, gestionan un ejercicio de movilización social en línea en el 2020, que permitió la construcción de una Declaración Pública, que activó y alertó sobre la importancia del relacionamiento y trabajo articulado en federaciones, redes y otras formas de asociatividad, y sobre todo “amplio las voces”, **incluso de aquellas OSC que están aisladas no solo por la falta de conectividad, sino por lo lejos de los territorios y la centralidad.**

La construcción de una Declaración Pública, que surge como una necesidad del sector en los tiempos de Pandemia, sin tener este objetivo, sirvió para poner en práctica y reconocer el uso de herramientas digitales para ejercer la acción de MOVILIZACION SOCIAL, que tuvo como apellido EN LINEA, motivando la participación, no solo por la facilidad para poder firmarla, sino porque ella contenía elementos centrales del estado del sector y por supuesto las apuestas del mismo para ser actor que hace frente a la crisis.

Y finalmente, la encuesta, diligenciada por 90 OSC, permitió RECONOCER, no solamente lo que representa la acción de INCIDENCIA, sino el estado actual del uso de medios tecnológicos en la Oferta de Valor de las OSC, los límites y dificultades que No garantizan el acceso y la oportunidad de acceder a ellos por parte de los ciudadanos y ciudadanas; y las apuestas que a futuro pueden ofrecer las OSC como actor corresponsable del desarrollo, para fortalecer en su Oferta de Valor este componente y habilitar a las mujeres y a los hombres para que puedan acceder y garantizarse sus derechos, no solo en la Pandemia, sino en la nueva realidad que exige ponernos al día frente al desarrollo tecnológico COMO UN MEDIO para el fortalecimiento de la DEMOCRACIA ([Anexo No. 2: Agenda Digital 2022 – CEPAL](#)).

ANEXO No. 2

Agenda Digital 2022 – CEPAL¹⁰

Áreas de políticas

1.- Infraestructura digital

La infraestructura digital es el elemento habilitador de los procesos de transformación digital. Es por este motivo que es crítico impulsar políticas y agendas que busquen mejorar las condiciones de acceso a la banda ancha en condiciones de asequibilidad y de calidad en todos los ámbitos geográficos y en los distintos segmentos socioeconómicos.

2.- Transformación digital y economía digital

Las tecnologías digitales están impactando todas actividades económicas transformando procesos, modelos de negocios, productos y cadenas de valor. Para potenciar el impacto de estas tecnologías en la economía, se requiere impulsar su adopción en el tejido productivo, con foco en las pequeñas y medianas empresas y promover el emprendimiento de base tecnológica y la innovación.

3.- Gobierno digital

Las tecnologías digitales ofrecen diversas oportunidades para mejorar la provisión de servicios de gobierno, incrementar la transparencia, facilitar canales de comunicación con la ciudadanía e impulsar la innovación pública. Con este objetivo los gobiernos deben adoptar estrategias de transformación digital a nivel de gobierno, mediante la definición de normas de interoperabilidad y el diseño de sistemas integrados que favorezcan estos cambios.

4.- Inclusión, competencias y habilidades digitales

El desarrollo de competencias y habilidades digitales son clave para promover los procesos de transformación digital en las organizaciones y las empresas. Esto requiere de una capacitación continua de trabajadores en los ámbitos técnicos y profesionales, pero también de un sistema educativo de calidad que otorgue los conocimientos básicos necesarios para el desarrollo del capital humano.

5.- Tecnologías emergentes para el desarrollo sostenible

Las tecnologías emergentes como la inteligencia artificial, el Internet de las cosas y las redes 5G, se están convirtiendo en un recurso cada vez más importante para impulsar nuevas industrias, procesos y productos. Las economías que estén mejor posicionadas para aprovechar este contexto y la nueva revolución industrial podrán impulsar su productividad, crecimiento y empleo.

6.- Confianza y seguridad digital

Los crecientes incidentes en materia de ciberseguridad a nivel global están evidenciando las vulnerabilidades existentes en el ámbito digital. La seguridad es un elemento central para mantener la confianza en las tecnologías digitales. Si bien existe un consenso amplio sobre el panorama de las amenazas en ciberseguridad, atender estos desafíos es un tema complejo que requiere de acciones en diversos ámbitos y esfuerzos de cooperación a nivel local e internacional.

7.- Mercado digital regional

Las tecnologías digitales ofrecen diversas oportunidades para fortalecer el intercambio comercial con base en las similitudes lingüísticas y culturales de la región. Fomentar una estrategia de mercado digital regional, que reduzca las barreras comercio digital, debe ser parte de la estrategia de los

¹⁰ CEPAL, Agenda Digital 2022. <https://www.cepal.org/es/proyectos/agenda-digital-america-latina-caribe-elac2024>, revisado en 2021.

mecanismos de integración subregional, mediante una mayor integración de la infraestructura digital, la armonización normativa, el libre flujo de datos, la facilitación del comercio y la mejora de los servicios de logística, entre otros.

8.- Cooperación regional digital

El carácter transfronterizo de las tecnologías digitales y los desafíos en diversos ámbitos requieren promover una cooperación regional digital fortalecida para apoyar los procesos de gobernanza de internet, mejorando los mecanismos de diálogo nacionales, regionales y subregionales, con la participación de actores del ámbito público y privado.

Enfrentar la pandemia y facilitar la recuperación y reactivación económica.

La pandemia del COVID-19 produjo una crisis económica y social sin precedentes. Las tecnologías digitales han sido instrumentos esenciales para enfrentar la pandemia y mejorar la resiliencia de la economía. Estas tecnologías también pueden ser claves para la reactivación económica y transformación digital productiva.

Appendix 10 Summary of the first findings of the research sent to NGOs in order to invite target populations to FGDs

Investigación doctoral Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo – Universidad de Bonn, Alemania Reporte de hallazgos preliminares y siguiente fase de recolección de datos

Título provisional: transformación digital de las prácticas comunicativas del sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia a lo largo de la crisis del COVID-19.

De acuerdo con los hallazgos preliminares de esta investigación, el sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia ha experimentado varias repercusiones en el ejercicio de su acción durante las diferentes fases de la pandemia por COVID-19 que estalló en Marzo de 2020. Los efectos de las restricciones de movilidad y distanciamiento social que se implementaron durante la pandemia han generado principalmente barreras en el relacionamiento y ejercicio de la acción de las organizaciones con sus grupos poblacionales, así como una coyuntura administrativa, financiera y tecnológica causada por el cese o suspensión de actividades, programas y/o proyectos, la falta de recursos humanos, técnicos, financieros para realizar transiciones tecnológicas de ser pertinentes, así como las condiciones adversas para mitigar la crisis como aliados idóneos al lado del gobierno nacional, sector privado y cooperación internacional. A pesar de este escenario, el sector sin ánimo de lucro sigue demostrando su respuesta rápida en momentos de una crisis humanitaria, así como su capacidad para adaptarse, reinventarse y trabajar solidariamente en el cumplimiento de su rol como facilitador de procesos sociales.

De igual forma, este estudio considera que las repercusiones de la pandemia en el sector sin ánimo de lucro no pueden ser abordadas aisladamente. En este sentido, Colombia atraviesa por una serie de crisis prolongadas que se encuentran interconectadas, y de las que el COVID19 puede entenderse como un factor que ha exacerbado o agudizado la situación por la que atraviesa el país. Las organizaciones coinciden que estas crisis incluyen una crisis social enmarcada en las protestas sociales de 2019 y 2020 que tuvieron su momento cumbre en 2021 con la proclamación del paro nacional, una crisis económica caracterizada por la pérdida de empleos, aumento de la pobreza e inequidad social, la crisis política que responde a la corrupción y falta de legitimidad que tienen las instituciones públicas en el país, una crisis de seguridad y violencia en territorios no solo de tipo rural pero también urbano y una crisis migratoria.

La metodología utilizada en esta investigación es la de estudio de caso aplicando un conjunto de instrumentos de recolección de datos en línea. El estudio parte de una iniciativa que el sector social impulsó dadas las implicaciones que estaba trayendo la pandemia al ejercicio de su acción. Esta iniciativa fue la única en su tipo que logró reunir en muy corto tiempo a diversas organizaciones sociales sin importar su área de trabajo, tamaño o lugar del ejercicio de su acción. La iniciativa fue una [declaración conjunta suscrita por 256 organizaciones no gubernamentales - ONG](#) en Abril de 2020 en donde se mencionan propuestas para asegurar que estas organizaciones pudieran continuar con su trabajo. En un segundo momento, esta declaración se movilizó y visibilizó a través de una campaña en redes sociales (Facebook y Twitter) con los hashtags *PiezaClaveparaColombia* y *UnaONGes*. Las organizaciones suscriptoras de esta declaración y que participaron en la campaña de redes sociales son los participantes del estudio. De acuerdo con el campo de trabajo¹ de la ONG, así como su lugar

¹ Los campos de trabajo de las organizaciones se dividen según la categorización usada por el Centro de Estudios de la Sociedad Civil de la Universidad John Hopkins en su proyecto de estudio comparativo del sector, a saber: educación, medio ambiente, incidencia-paz y justicia, servicios sociales, desarrollo, cultura, equidad de género y otros.

de operación, se procedió a elegir las organizaciones para la recolección de datos. El objetivo fue tener un grupo diverso de ONGs para reflejar de esta forma también la diversidad del sector en el país. En una primera instancia, una encuesta en línea fue aplicada durante los meses de febrero a abril de 2021 a aquellas organizaciones que firmaron la declaración pero no la difundieron en redes sociales (201 organizaciones). Los objetivos de la encuesta fueron conocer su experiencia con la suscripción de la declaración, identificar las dificultades por las cuales no participaron en la campaña en redes sociales y explorar el uso que estaban dando a recursos digitales para el ejercicio de su acción en medio de la pandemia. De igual forma, se realizaron diez² (10) entrevistas semiestructuradas exploratorias con directores de organizaciones no gubernamentales a través de zoom. En una segunda etapa, y luego de realizar ajustes al diseño de la investigación, 20³ entrevistas adicionales siguiendo el mismo formato fueron realizadas con directores, coordinadores y una experta en el sector. A través de las entrevistas se pudo obtener una descripción más detallada de cómo las organizaciones estaban viviendo y abordando las implicaciones de la pandemia.

A partir de los datos recolectados, este estudio encontró relevante profundizar en las prácticas comunicativas del sector sin ánimo de lucro a lo largo de la pandemia que se han venido transformando teniendo en cuenta la intervención digital generando nuevas dinámicas en sus relacionamientos y en el ejercicio de su acción. Tres niveles han sido identificados en los que han ocurrido cambios: grupos poblacionales, al interior y entre las organizaciones y con otros actores interesados.

Con respecto a las relaciones comunicativas con los grupos poblacionales, este estudio las aborda desde la comunicación para el desarrollo o conocida más recientemente como comunicación para el cambio social, entendida como el empleo de procesos y elementos de las tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación con el fin de promover transformaciones sociales⁴. En este sentido, las organizaciones realizan procesos formativos que durante la pandemia debieron ser fortalecidos o innovados empleando recursos digitales o suspendidos dadas las restricciones de movilidad y contacto social o porque no era pertinente continuar con una metodología virtual. Sin importar el campo de acción de las organizaciones que participan en el estudio, hay un componente de formación, capacitación, fortalecimiento, asesoría muy importante en su acción y esto respalda el carácter pedagógico que asume el sector para que sus poblaciones sean agentes de cambio.

A nivel interno las áreas o funciones de comunicación han adquirido un papel relevante dentro de las organizaciones considerándose una estrategia transversal para su buen funcionamiento. Así mismo prácticas comunicativas como la comunicación escrita a través de correos electrónicos o por medio de grupos de WhatsApp se ha incrementado, así como el trabajo en equipo se ha adaptado al uso de plataformas de trabajo colaborativo. El rol de liderazgo de los directores y juntas directivas ha sido notorio para comunicar, incorporar y hacer seguimiento a estas transformaciones y para motivar a sus colaboradores en momentos de crisis. Además, el relacionamiento entre las mismas organizaciones

² Fundación Cívico Social Pro Cartagena-Caribe FUNCICAR, Corporación Reconciliación Colombia, Asociación de Becarios de Casanare, Fundación un Techo para mi País– Colombia, Corporación de profesionales para el desarrollo integral comunitario CORPRODINCO,

Fundación Síndrome de Down del Caribe FUNDOWN, Fundación Acción Cultural Popular ACPO, Centro De Pensamiento Estratégico

Internacional CEPEI, Confederación Colombiana de ONG CCONG, Federación ONG de Caldas FEDECALDAS

³ Asociación de empresarios de Sibaté, Soacha y sur de Bogotá ASOMUÑA, Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social - Cáritas Colombiana, Fundación Hablemos, Corporación Red Somos (2), Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Tolima TOLIPAZ, Corporación Educativa Comunidades Educativas de Base Combos, Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Bogotá ACJ, Federación Antioqueña de ONG FAONG, El Comité de Rehabilitación de Antioquia, Fundación Probono (2), Asociación Gota de Leche, Fundación Aprender con Amor, Fundación Ronald Mc Donald de Colombia, Fundación Natalia Ponce de León, Experta Marta Bazzani, Fundación para la Cooperación y el Progreso de Usiacuri COPROUS, Asociación Profamilia, Fundación para la Reconciliación

⁴ Seminario sobre Comunicación para el Desarrollo, Prof. Dr. Devesh Kishore, 2020, Disponible en: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZXoo0cOnMU>

se ha caracterizado por el fortalecimiento de sus alianzas y redes. A nivel de las relaciones con otros actores, se pudo evidenciar que para algunas organizaciones se limitó a la renegociación de los términos contractuales para suspender, o proseguir con los proyectos o programas, mientras en otras organizaciones hubo coordinación y apoyo especialmente en etapas tempranas de respuesta a la crisis humanitaria causada por la pandemia.

Los diagramas a continuación ilustran los hallazgos preliminares de la investigación en los tres niveles de relacionamiento previamente mencionados. En el **Diagrama 1**. Niveles de relacionamiento del sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia durante la pandemia, se ilustra mediante una pirámide invertida estos relacionamientos que se han ido transformando con la implementación de herramientas e infraestructuras digitales. Es así como la relación ONG-Grupos poblacionales ocupa el escaño más amplio, seguido de las relaciones al interior de las ONG y con sus pares, para finalmente llegar a la relación ONG-Otros actores. En el primer escaño se encuentran los grupos poblacionales ilustrando la relevancia que ha tenido para las organizaciones durante la pandemia el mantener la comunicación con estos grupos, que permanezcan activos y reconociendo su contexto, necesidades y competencias al momento de migrar de la presencialidad a la virtualidad. Se trata de que como mencionan los participantes de la investigación que sean las organizaciones las que se adapten a sus grupos poblacionales y se construyan procesos de transformación con sus conocimientos y experiencias y no viceversa, y por ello la inversión en la pirámide. A continuación en un segundo escaño se encuentran las relaciones al interior de las ONG como entre pares caracterizadas especialmente por la solidaridad y fortalecimiento de las redes y alianzas y en donde se hará foco a la iniciativa conjunta implementada por el sector haciendo uso de la movilización en línea. Finalmente, en el último escaño se encuentran otros actores, con los que hubo especialmente procesos de negociación, coordinación e intercambio al inicio de la pandemia pero que aún requieren de fortalecimiento.

En el **Diagrama 2**⁵. Aspectos positivos y por mejorar de las transformaciones digitales en los relacionamientos del sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia durante la pandemia, se presentan los hallazgos preliminares identificados durante las entrevistas. En este punto, se hace necesario llegar a los grupos poblacionales que han participado en procesos formativos de carácter virtual con el fin de generar un espacio de diálogo en el que compartan sus experiencias y recomendaciones frente al uso de herramientas digitales y además describan las dimensiones de su comunicación con las ONG durante la pandemia.

⁵ Nótese que en este diagrama se presentan los aportes hechos por las organizaciones durante las entrevistas.

La monografía doctoral incluirá las respectivas referencias citando las organizaciones que hicieron los aportes

Diagrama 1. Niveles de relacionamiento del sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia durante la pandemia

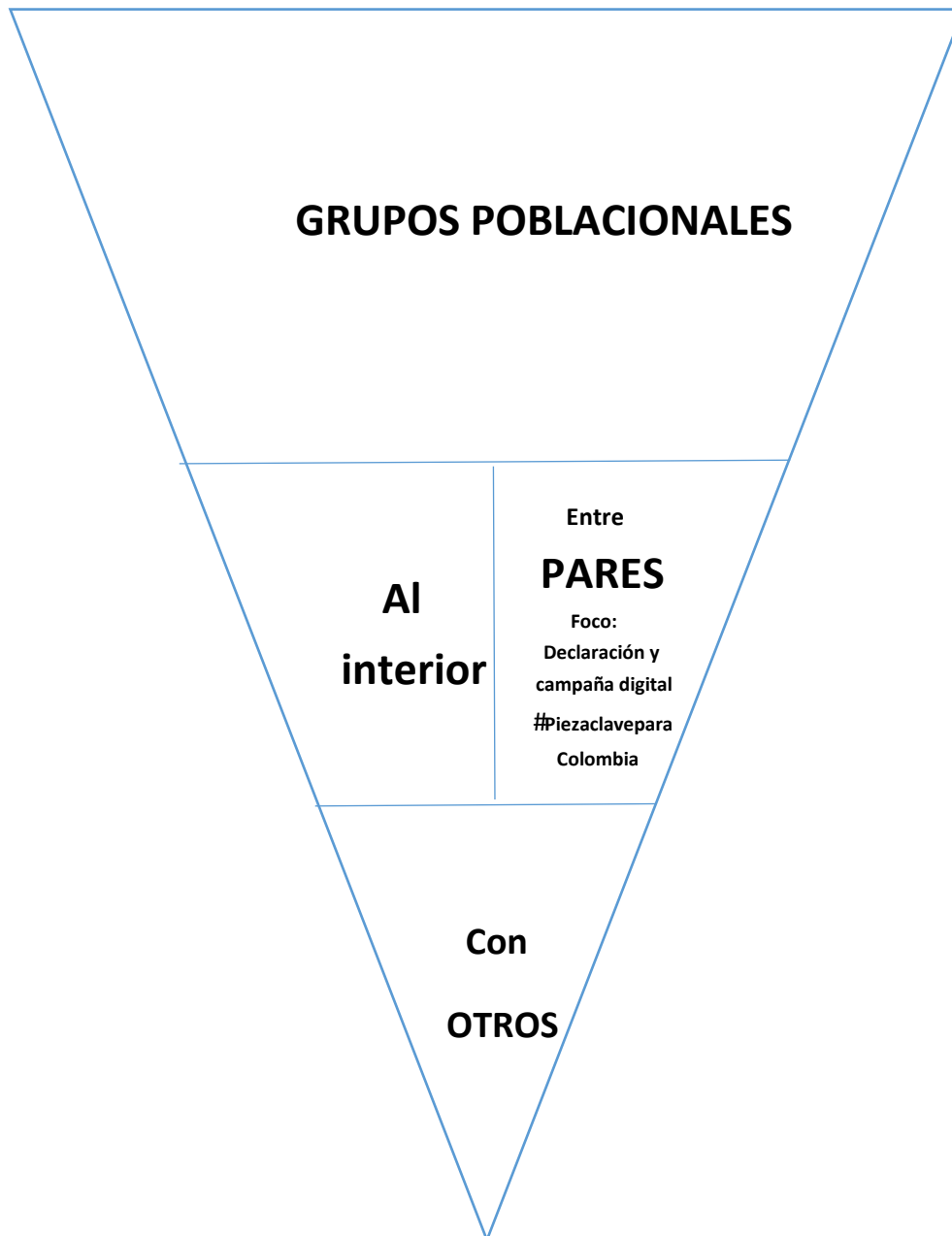


Diagrama 2. Aspectos positivos y por mejorar de las transformaciones digitales en los relacionamientos del sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia durante la pandemia

NIVEL DE RELACIONAMIENTO	ASPECTOS POSITIVOS DE LAS TRANSFORMACIONES	ASPECTOS POR MEJORAR DE LAS TRANSFORMACIONES
GRUPOS POBLACIONALES	<p>Multiplicidad de contenidos y recursos digitales: plataformas como Moodle, Zoom, Meet, podcasts, videos, piezas comunicativas, webinars, grupos de whatsapp, kahoot, chatbot, licencias, redes sociales, y otros desarrollos tecnológicos</p> <p>Whatsapp y sus grupos como herramienta de comunicación formativa, de interacción y como red de consultas procurando transmitir normas de etiqueta para su buen uso</p> <p>Recuperación de medios tradicionales de la comunicación como el teléfono, radio, prensa (guías pedagógicas), comunicación interpersonal (servicios domiciliarios)</p> <p>Conexión virtual amplifica capacidad y visibilidad. Por ejemplo, se logra un mayor número de participantes ampliando cobertura. Además, cualquier evento debe transmitirse mínimo por Twitter o Facebook</p> <p>Optimización de tiempo y recursos No hay necesidad de movilización física.</p> <p>Conocimiento de otros espacios como el domicilio que permite profundizar en planes de manejo</p>	<p>¿Pero, cómo hacer de la virtualidad una pedagogía?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ¿Si aprendo mientras me entretengo? - ¿Y el proceso vivencial y de construcción de confianza? - ¿Y cómo interactúo y participo activamente? - ¿Y la evaluación del proceso? - ¿Y la multiplicación y transferencia de capacidades? - ¿Y cómo somos más creativos? <p>Pérdida paulatina del enfoque territorial</p> <p>Diferencias difíciles de reconciliar de los grupos poblacionales</p> <p>Inequidad digital</p>

<p>AL INTERIOR Y ENTRE PARES</p>	<p>Optimización de procesos internos pasó por digitalización de los mismos y manejo de los datos de la organización</p> <p>Mayor autonomía de trabajo</p> <p>Fortalecimiento de roles de liderazgo de directores y juntas directivas</p> <p>Agenda digital con multiplicidad de webinars, capacitaciones, foros a nivel nacional e internacional</p> <p>Se promovió más el diálogo para compartir preocupaciones, experiencias de trabajo y reflexiones. Se fortaleció el relacionamiento e interacción con otras organizaciones así como las transferencias metodológicas</p> <p>Acercamientos de organizaciones nacionales con organizaciones en territorio. Teniendo en cuenta las restricciones de movilidad, las organizaciones territoriales fueron contactadas a través de correos o vía páginas web</p>	<p>Dinámica de trabajo similar a un call center deseando que la multiplicidad de llamadas, reuniones se redujeran</p> <p>La virtualidad genera una doble carga convirtiéndose como en un “espacio físico” en el que siempre se está presente</p> <p>Dificultades en los equipos para realizar procesos de co-creación</p> <p>La virtualidad erosiona las conversaciones incidentales, los momentos de compartir espacio y tiempo, en donde nacen las nuevas ideas, la cotidianidad va desapareciendo</p> <p>Surgimiento de problemáticas de salud mental</p> <p>El trabajo colaborativo se ve obstaculizado por celos y egoísmos dentro del sector</p> <p>Las redes, mesas, alianzas necesitan renovarse con propuestas creativas tanto a nivel político, pedagógico y social</p>
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<p>CON OTROS</p>	<p>Las alternativas virtuales funcionan bien con actores institucionales dados sus limitaciones de agenda optimizando tiempo y recursos</p> <p>La negociación para adaptar marcos lógicos y re-direccionar recursos se convirtió en una agenda de diálogo con las diferentes agencias de cooperación realizados de forma virtual</p> <p>Posibilidad de conectarse con campañas digitales globales de gran escala como las que realiza el Sistema de las Naciones Unidas</p> <p>Los eventos virtuales de recaudación de fondos tienen un alcance muy alto permitiendo además que otros públicos conozcan el trabajo de la fundación</p> <p>El voluntariado virtual surgió como alternativa al voluntariado presencial.</p>	<p>Desconexión de entes gubernamentales (alcaldías, gobernaciones, subsecretarías) que previamente brindaban apoyo y respaldo pero que por implicaciones de la pandemia no se hicieron presentes, lo que afecta continuidad de los proyectos e impide que la oferta institucional se conecte con grupos poblacionales</p> <p>Se venía con una dinámica importante de apoyo a los procesos de desarrollo por parte de la cooperación internacional pero parece sus propósitos cambiaron. Temas manejados por las ONG pasaron a segundo plano</p> <p>La cooperación internacional está volcada al COVID, es una oferta de emergencia intervención de emergencia. Se requieren intervenciones de cara al desarrollo</p> <p>La pandemia obligó a hacer coordinaciones por su carácter de emergencia pero demostró también que se estaba actuando separadamente</p>
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Appendix 11 Focus Group Discussion Guide

GUÍA DISCUSION GRUPO FOCAL

Título provisional de la disertación: *Transformación digital de las prácticas comunicativas del sector no gubernamental en Colombia a lo largo de la crisis del COVID-19.*

Día: Martes 12 de abril de 2022

Hora: 10:00 a.m. a 12:00 m

Plataforma: Zoom Universidad de Bonn

Link: <https://uni-bonn.zoom.us/j/8248313032?pwd=alo0dIJNQzBvKzJ1Tk56YUxHN0pjZz09>

APERTURA (15 min)

Información para los participantes (presentación investigadora principal y asistente de investigación)

Objetivo: Dialogar e intercambiar experiencias con los participantes sobre el uso de las tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación antes, durante la pandemia y en este momento como parte de su participación en programas y/o proyectos dirigidos por las organizaciones que participan en este estudio, así como compartir como ha sido el relacionamiento y comunicación con estas organizaciones.

Información breve sobre la investigación y cómo fueron invitados e indicar se hará grabación de voz y video. Sus datos serán presentados de forma anónima y las organizaciones no recibirán un reporte de lo que se hable, solamente al final el análisis se consignará en la disertación.

Explicación de la Metodología: Dos secciones, primero preguntas generales, luego sección para debatir, la investigadora realiza una pregunta o lee una afirmación, a continuación los participantes que deseen responden. Preferiblemente usar el botón para levantar la mano, o hacer una señal de pedir la palabra por videocámara. Hay un espacio de discusión. En este sentido, los participantes pueden retroalimentar lo que la modera u otro participante indique. Para ello se usará de nuevo la opción de levantar la mano, o escribir en el chat. La moderación será realizada por la investigadora, mientras que la asistente toma notas y ofrece ayuda en caso de problemas técnicos. Si hay participantes que no se animen a hablar, la moderadora incentivará su participación con preguntas directas.

Presentación de todos los participantes (nombre, edad, ocupación, donde viven, y nombre de la organización que los convocó)

Ice-Breaker: Julie

DESARROLLO

GENERAL (40 minutos) Guía de preguntas:

- ¿Cómo fue su comunicación con la organización durante la pandemia? y para aquéllos que antes de la pandemia ya tenían contacto con la organización, ¿cómo era antes y qué cambió en su relacionamiento?

- ¿De qué trató(a) el proyecto/programa/iniciativa del/la que hicieron/hacen parte, nombre, cómo los convocaron, modalidad, herramientas digitales usadas y en qué medida fue útil? (La moderadora se asegurará que se aborden los siguientes aspectos)
 - Participantes
 - Formadores
 - Duración
 - Canales, contenidos, actividades
 - ¿Qué les gustó(a), qué no les gustó(a) y que cambiarían?
 - ¿Cuál es la actividad/módulo/ que más recuerdan y por qué?
 - ¿Cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de los canales/plataformas usado(a)s? ¿Qué medio de comunicación es el más efectivo?
 - ¿Cómo fue pasar de conocerse físicamente a interactuar virtualmente o viceversa?
 - Evaluación
 - ¿Hay alguna evaluación del proceso?
 - ¿Cuáles son los resultados y cómo los han difundido?
- Aparte de ese programa/proyecto, ¿siguen involucrados con otras actividades promovidas por la organización, por otras, o participan en otros espacios en sus comunidades?
- ¿Tienen relacionamiento con?
 - Otros participantes del programa/proyecto
 - Institucionalidad u otros actores en el territorio, por ejemplo otras organizaciones sociales, empresas privadas, medios de comunicación
 - ¿Consideran que estos relacionamientos deben ser establecidos por las organizaciones sociales y no por ustedes?
- ¿Qué uso le han dado a las redes sociales como Facebook, Twitter, Instagram antes de la pandemia y cómo los emplean en la actualidad?
 - ¿Siguen a las ONG en redes, su sitio web?
 - ¿Recuerdan la campaña hashtag PiezaClaveParaColombia u otras en las que hayan participado en redes sociales?

DEBATE (50 min): Afirmaciones para generar reflexión y propiciar espacio para debatir

- **Intensidad horaria y manejo del tiempo (max 12 min)**

El curso fue demasiado corto, se necesitaba más tiempo para el desarrollo del mismo

Hubo dificultades para manejar el tiempo, eran muchas actividades, no fue fácil disponer tiempo, esto especialmente para las mujeres puesto que se duplicó el tiempo para las labores de la casa, para los hombres era más fácil conectarse a cualquier hora.

- **Nivel de interacción escaso? (max 12 min)**

En una formación con componentes digitales no todos participan, solamente los que se saben manejar esas herramientas y/o solamente los que tienen un rol de liderazgo

Los formadores/promotores son los que halan el proceso, los demás solo escuchan, se pierde fácilmente la atención, hace falta más diálogo

El curso ya está diseñado y hay poco espacio para hacer propuestas de contenido, canales, métodos

- **Enfoque territorial se pierde? (max 12 min)**

Como las organizaciones suspendieron los viajes al territorio durante la pandemia, así como hubo confinamientos, se perdió la parte vivencial de los procesos y el sentido de comunidad, me alejé de mis vecinos/compañeros de asociación

Nos hizo falta el acompañamiento de la ONG/ Nosotros fuimos más autónomos

Diferencias generacionales irreconciliables? (max 12 min)

Las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación son solamente para los jóvenes, entre mayor sea la persona, menor es el agrado por usarlas y mayores las dificultades para aprender

Los intercambios intergeneracionales mediados por herramientas digitales ofrecen una oportunidad única de aprendizaje y construcción colectiva

PREGUNTA DE CIERRE (15 min)

Ustedes vivenciaron dos mundos, uno bajo pandemia y otro en este momento en el que la pandemia está mitigada. Y por la pandemia aprendieron a usar herramientas digitales o realizaron procesos de formación virtual, no había en ese momento opción, si pudieran elegir, digamos que antes de la pandemia ya hubieran contado con esas habilidades digitales y hubiera acceso a internet, ¿volverían a usar esas herramientas o dirían que definitivamente debe ser un proceso presencial?

CIERRE (5 min)

Resumen de los principales puntos de la discusión

Pregunta: ¿Faltó algo por decir o abordar algo? Por favor, escribir correo electrónico

Agradecer a los participantes

Explicación del paso siguiente: analizar el desarrollo del grupo focal, estructurar la disertación, iniciar con su escritura

Appendix 13 Written consent used for the interviews with the directors, coordinators or experts of NGOs

Formulario de participación en la investigación y consentimiento informado

Título provisional de la disertación: “Campañas de movilización social en línea durante la crisis por el COVID 19: El caso de las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONG) colombianas”

1. Introducción

Mi nombre es Mayra Alejandra Martin Espinosa. Curso un programa de doctorado en el Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo (ZEF) adscrito la Universidad de Bonn en Alemania. Esta investigación se realiza con el apoyo del Servicio Alemán de Intercambio Académico (DAAD) con el fin de postularse al título de Doctorado en Filosofía con énfasis en Desarrollo.

Este formulario de consentimiento puede contener palabras que no comprenda. Por favor, pídamme que me detenga mientras revisamos la información y me tomaré el tiempo para explicarlo. Si tiene preguntas más adelante, puede hacérmelas.

2. Objetivo del estudio

El estudio tiene como objetivo brindar perspectivas sobre la movilización social en línea en el sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia en tiempos de pandemia y analizar las transformaciones digitales que las ONG están implementando para continuar con el ejercicio de su acción, especialmente relacionadas con su comunicación interna, trabajo en equipo y cobertura de las poblaciones objetivo.

El estudio analizará a la luz de un estudio de caso la dinámica de la firma de una Declaración y posterior campaña en redes sociales desarrollada por un grupo de ONG colombianas sobre las implicaciones que la crisis del COVID-19 ha tenido en sus actividades.

Se espera una mejor comprensión de la movilización social en línea en el sector sin ánimo de lucro examinando los actores involucrados y sus interacciones, así como las tácticas y estrategias implementadas, las iniciativas y perspectivas de lo que representa a futuro seguir implementando campañas de movilización usando medios tecnológicos en un escenario donde la virtualidad sigue en aumento. Además, se espera analizar el rol de las estrategias digitales de las organizaciones para seguir ejerciendo su acción durante la pandemia.

Me gustaría hacerle una serie de preguntas para este estudio y fomentar una discusión. El tipo de datos que recopilaré incluye información sobre su experiencia con la Declaración y/o Campaña en redes sociales. Además, se requerirán sus perspectivas relacionadas con la creciente digitalización en medio del Covid-19 para continuar con el ejercicio de la acción de su organización.

Valoro su opinión y no hay respuestas incorrectas a las preguntas que le haré. Necesitaremos aproximadamente una hora de su tiempo para completar la entrevista.

3. Beneficios por su participación

No habrá ningún beneficio directo para usted, con su participación contribuye a que se conozca más sobre las perspectivas de movilización social en línea en el sector sin fines de lucro en Colombia en tiempos de Covid-19 y si las adaptaciones digitales a nivel organizacional han sido efectivas. Este

estudio contribuirá a construir conocimientos científicos y prácticos del sector sin fines de lucro en Colombia bajo consideraciones teóricas.

4. Agradecimiento

Su participación será muy apreciada.

5. Derecho a retirarse o rechazar participación

Su participación en esta investigación es completamente voluntaria. Puede retirar su consentimiento y dejar de responder a las preguntas en cualquier momento. Le daré una oportunidad al final de la entrevista para revisar sus comentarios, y puede solicitar modificar o eliminar partes de ellos, si no está de acuerdo con mis notas o si no lo entendí correctamente.

5. Confidencialidad

Este estudio se realiza de forma anónima. Esto significa que cualquier información que conduzca a usted será anónima, excepto con su permiso explícito para difundir su información (ver más abajo). Por lo tanto, un investigador que use los datos nunca podrá identificarlo, excepto con su permiso explícito (ver más abajo). Esto es estrictamente exigido por las leyes nacionales e internacionales, ¡y ZEF / Universidad de Bonn nunca infringirá esa ley!

6. Use de los datos obtenidos de sus respuestas: Por favor marque SI o NO en cada una de las casillas a continuación otorgando o retirando su autorización:

Sus respuestas solo se utilizarán con fines investigativos. Usted da autorización para identificar en la disertación el nombre de la Organización No-Gubernamental (ONG) de la que es miembro.

Permite utilizar su nombre y cargo en la ONG de la que es miembro en la disertación.

Permite que ZEF realice potencialmente una segunda ronda de encuestas y/o entrevistas para generar datos de panel. Si ZEF intentara hacer esto, el nuevo entrevistador solo obtendría su nombre a través de mí. El nuevo entrevistador tendría que probarle su identidad, utilizando una autorización firmada por mí.

Permite que los miembros de ZEF utilicen los datos sin anonimato en caso de análisis de datos de panel. Los datos no se cederán a ningún otro tercero sin anonimato.

Permite el uso de grabaciones sonoras y visuales durante la entrevista.

PERSONA DE CONTACTO

Si tiene alguna pregunta, puede hacerla ahora o más adelante. Si siente que lo han tratado injustamente, o tiene preguntas o inquietudes, puede comunicarse con:

Mayra Alejandra Martin Espinosa

Center for Development Research (ZEF) c/o ZEFa

Genscherallee 3

53113 Bonn, Germany

Tel: +491631572913 Correo electrónico: s5mlmart@uni-bonn.de

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO:

Se me ha leído la declaración anterior (o yo misma la he leído) y el personal de investigación me ha explicado su significado. Acepto participar en esta investigación. Entiendo que soy libre de interrumpir la participación en cualquier momento si así lo deseo y que la persona de contacto responderá cualquier pregunta que surja durante el transcurso de la entrevista.

___ Sí, acepto participar.

___ No, no deseo participar.

Nombre del participante: _____

Firma del participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Mayra Alejandra Martin Espinosa

Observación: Prepare dos copias, una copia debe entregársele al participante

Appendix 14 Consent received orally from the capacity building facilitators and participants of the focus group discussions

Formulario de participación en la investigación y consentimiento informado

Título provisional de la disertación: “Transformación digital de las prácticas comunicativas del sector no gubernamental en Colombia a lo largo de la crisis del COVID-19”.

1. Introducción

Mi nombre es Mayra Alejandra Martin Espinosa. Soy candidata al Doctorado en Filosofía con énfasis en Desarrollo en Alemania. Curso el programa de doctorado en el Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo (ZEF) adscrito a la Universidad de Bonn, con el apoyo del Servicio Alemán de Intercambio Académico (DAAD).

Este formulario de consentimiento puede contener palabras que no comprenda. De ser así, por favor, pídamelo antes de que iniciemos el encuentro virtual que revisemos la información y me tomaré el tiempo para explicarlo. Si tiene preguntas, puede hacérmelas.

2. Objetivos del estudio

El estudio tiene los siguientes objetivos: (i) explorar las implicaciones que el COVID-19 ha tenido en el funcionamiento de las organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONG) a nivel de organización y a nivel de sector en Colombia haciendo énfasis en las transformaciones digitales de sus prácticas comunicativas que han sido desencadenadas por la pandemia, (ii) identificar las oportunidades, limitaciones y retos que han traído estas transformaciones en su comunicación considerando tres niveles de relacionamiento: ONG con ONG, ONG con grupos poblacionales y ONG con otros actores identificados como el gobierno, financiadores, juntas directivas y voluntarios (iii) estudiar la declaración y campaña en redes sociales realizada en conjunto por el sector no gubernamental en Colombia durante el estallido de la pandemia frente a las implicaciones de la misma en sus actividades como una de las formas de comunicación digital entre ONG que se manifestó durante la pandemia.

El estudio emplea la metodología de estudio de caso. En este sentido, se eligió una campaña realizada en redes sociales bajo los hashtags #PiezaClaveParaColombia y #UnaONGes previa formulación y suscripción de 256 ONG de diferentes territorios a la Declaración conjunta sobre la situación actual y las posibles consecuencias de la pandemia para las organizaciones sociales difundida en Abril de 2020.

Se espera una mejor comprensión de las transformaciones digitales que la pandemia ha traído en la comunicación interna y externa de las organizaciones no gubernamentales en Colombia.

Me gustaría hacerle una serie de preguntas para este estudio y fomentar una discusión durante el grupo focal. El tipo de datos que recopilaré incluye información sobre su experiencia antes, durante la pandemia y en este momento con el uso de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación para participar en programas y/o proyectos promovidos por las ONG y para comunicarse con ellas.

Valoro su opinión y no hay respuestas incorrectas a las preguntas que le haré. Necesitaremos aproximadamente dos horas de su tiempo para completar el grupo focal.

3. Beneficios por su participación

No habrá ningún beneficio directo para usted, con su participación contribuye a que se conozca más sobre las implicaciones de la pandemia en el sector no gubernamental en Colombia y como esta coyuntura puede fortalecer el trabajo en red en una época de creciente digitalización. Este estudio contribuirá a construir conocimientos científicos y prácticos del sector sin ánimo de lucro en Colombia bajo consideraciones teóricas.

4. Agradecimiento

Su participación será muy apreciada.

5. Derecho a retirarse o rechazar participación

Su participación en esta investigación es completamente voluntaria. Puede retirar su consentimiento y dejar de responder a las preguntas en cualquier momento. Le daré una oportunidad al final del grupo focal para revisar sus comentarios, y puede solicitar modificar o eliminar partes de ellos, si no está de acuerdo con mis notas o si no lo entendí correctamente.

5. Confidencialidad

Este estudio se realiza de forma anónima. Esto significa que cualquier información que conduzca a usted será anónima, excepto con su permiso explícito para difundir su información (ver más abajo). Por lo tanto, un investigador que use los datos nunca podrá identificarlo, excepto con su permiso explícito (ver más abajo). Esto es estrictamente exigido por las leyes nacionales e internacionales, ¡y ZEF / Universidad de Bonn nunca infringirá esa ley!

6. Use de los datos obtenidos de sus respuestas: Por favor diga SI o NO en cada una de las afirmaciones a continuación otorgando o retirando su autorización:

Sus respuestas solo se utilizarán con fines investigativos. En cualquier publicación científica sus datos se presentarán de forma anónima.

Usted da autorización para identificar en la disertación el nombre de la Organización NoGubernamental (ONG) de la cual recibió la invitación a participar y del proyecto(s)/programa(s)/iniciativa(s) de las que ha hecho parte.

Permite que ZEF realice potencialmente una segunda ronda de encuestas y/o entrevistas para generar datos de panel. Si ZEF intentara hacer esto, el nuevo entrevistador solo obtendría su nombre a través de mí. El nuevo entrevistador tendría que probarle su identidad, utilizando una autorización firmada por mí.

Permite que los miembros de ZEF utilicen los datos sin anonimato en caso de análisis de datos de panel. Los datos no se cederán a ningún otro tercero sin anonimato.

Permite el uso de grabaciones sonoras y visuales durante el grupo focal.

PERSONA DE CONTACTO

Si tiene alguna pregunta, puede hacerla ahora o más adelante. Si siente que lo han tratado injustamente, o tiene preguntas o inquietudes, puede comunicarse con:

Mayra Alejandra Martin Espinosa
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CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO:

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___ Sí, acepto participar.

___ No, no deseo participar.

Nombre del participante: _____

Firma del participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Mayra Alejandra Martin Espinosa

Appendix 15 Concept note of the social media campaign

ABC DE LA CAMPAÑA

#PiezaClaveParaColombia

Las organizaciones sociales que son parte de la campaña usaremos las redes sociales y las páginas web para hacer difusión de la declaración firmada por medio de la cual se dan a conocer algunos elementos sobre la crisis desatada por el Covid-19 en Colombia, y sobre las eventuales consecuencias que podría tener el manejo de la misma en nuestras organizaciones y en el cumplimiento de nuestra misión. Así como las exigencias al Gobierno para que seamos tenidas en cuenta en las políticas pensadas ante la coyuntura.

Para tal campaña debemos tener en cuenta lo siguiente:

Logo de la campaña: Desarrollamos un logo para que todas las piezas gráficas que usted vaya a emitir en sus canales digitales puedan ir acompañados de este. Así, lograremos un reconocimiento de la campaña. Puede ser incluido por ejemplo en una de las esquinas de alguna pieza gráfica que decida reutilizar.

Así mismo, día del lanzamiento de la misma, pedimos que todas las organizaciones sociales puedan lanzar el logo para los mismos fines.

Tono: Hemos definido que el tono de los mensajes que se emitan sean en positivo y evidencien de manera clara el aporte que como organizaciones sociales hacemos a la construcción, re-construcción de tejido social en Colombia y con ello, cómo nuestra posible desaparición ante la coyuntura podría agravar más el actual panorama del país (pobreza, desigualdad, falta de acceso a salud, saneamiento, entre otros temas).

Para tal fin es necesario que su organización social pueda evidenciar el trabajo importante que hace, a través de:

1. Cifras (Sabías qué),
2. Fotos en acción,
3. Videos previos con los que cuenta,
4. Frases de participantes/beneficiarios de sus proyectos

Posicionamiento: Siempre que publique algo con relación a la campaña en sus redes sociales, por favor use los numerales (#) **#PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes** y/o cualquier otro que su organización use dentro de su protocolo de manejo de redes sociales.

Así mismo, compartiremos con usted una base de datos de otras organizaciones que han sido parte de la campaña para que pueda mencionarlas, tagearlas o hacerlas parte de sus mensajes clave en redes sociales. Por lo anterior, pedimos a las demás organizaciones puedan compartir o re-publicar algunas de estas menciones para generar más reconocimiento/posicionamiento.

Periodicidad: Hemos dejado a discreción de cada organización el número de publicaciones que hagan en sus redes sociales, así como la red social que consideren deben usar. Sin embargo, pedimos que se realice **al menos una publicación al día.**

La campaña se lanza este jueves 21 de mayo a las 6:00 p.m. al 5 de junio de 2020. Fecha en la que el equipo se reunirá para evaluar las acciones retomadas.

Appendix 16 Dissemination kit and communication materials of the social media campaign for NGOs



KIT DE DIFUSIÓN

- #PiezaClaveParaColombia - #UnaONGes

- Las organizaciones sociales que son parte de la campaña usaremos las redes sociales y las páginas web para hacer difusión de la declaración firmada por medio de la cual se dan a conocer algunos elementos y peticiones generadas por la crisis desatada por el Covid-19 en Colombia.
- Desarrollamos un logo para que todas las piezas gráficas que usted vaya a emitir en sus canales digitales puedan ir acompañados de este. Así, lograremos un reconocimiento de la campaña. Puede ser incluido por ejemplo en una de las esquinas de alguna pieza gráfica que decida reutilizar.
- A continuación presentamos un set de piezas gráficas para su difusión en redes sociales:
 1. #UnaONGes: El objetivo de estas piezas es mostrar el trabajo y aportes que el sector social realiza en el país.
 2. Peticiones: El objetivo de estas piezas es hacer evidentes las peticiones que se enviaron al gobierno nacional.

NOTA: Recomendamos que todos los contenidos compartidos se asocien a #PiezaClaveParaColombia

#UnaONGes

Las piezas se comparten en el correo adjunto en versión JPGE

Cada organización firmante puede complementar las publicaciones, siempre haciendo alusión a los APORTES que se genera al país.

**PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA**

Aquí te dejamos algunas de las peticiones que mas de 100 Organizaciones Sociales hicimos al Gobierno Nacional ante la actual coyuntura de la COVID-19

#UnaONGEs

**PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA**

- 1. Incorporar de manera expresa a las Organizaciones Sociales como actores y/o beneficiarias en las reglamentaciones derivadas de las disposiciones y medidas expedidas con ocasión de la Emergencia Económica, Social y Ecológica.**
- 2. Aumentar los incentivos al sector privado para mantener las donaciones que realizan a las Organizaciones Sociales durante y después de la Emergencia.**

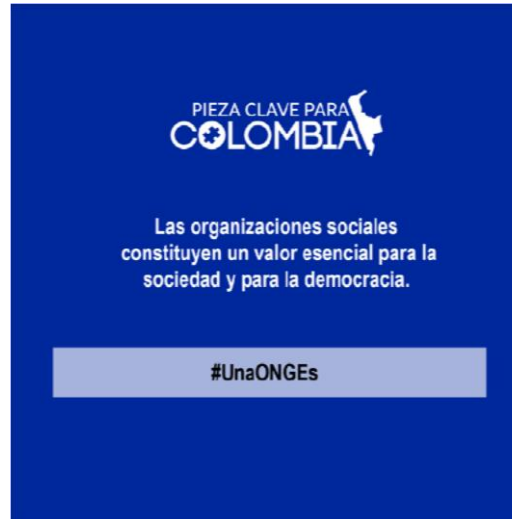
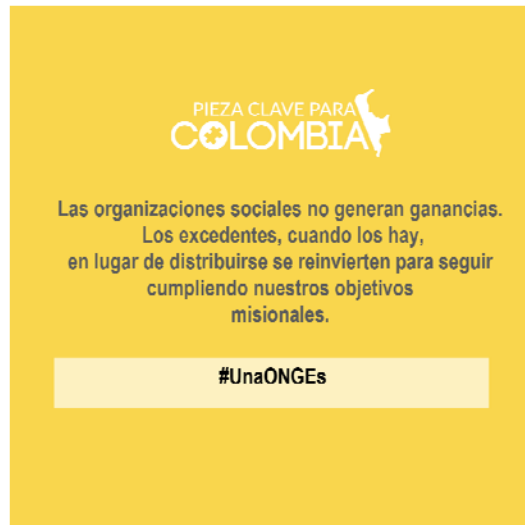
**PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA**

- 3. Facilitar, cuando aplique, la renegociación y ajuste de los convenios de cooperación y contratos suscritos con las Organizaciones Sociales, de modo que los alcances y los métodos se ajusten a la realidad material que implica la pandemia, mientras los contratos y convenios se protegen.**
- 4. Promover, en desarrollo de mecanismos de cooperación público - privados y comunitarios, la suscripción de nuevos contratos y convenios con Organizaciones Sociales, cuando estos faciliten la ejecución de las metas trazadas por las entidades del Estado.**

1. Ejemplo de contenidos - Peticiones

Las piezas se comparten en el correo adjunto en versión JPGE

Cada organización firmante puede complementar las publicaciones, siempre haciendo alusión a los APORTES que se genera al país.



1. Ejemplo de contenidos - #UnaONGEs

Ejemplo contenidos redes sociales

- (Nombre de la organización) trabaja para llevar (el fin fundacional) a diversos territorios del país aportando a la mejora de la calidad de vida y la realidad en la que viven las comunidades. [#PiezaClaveParaColombia](#) [#UnaONGes](#)
- Nuestras organizaciones constituyen un valor esencial para la sociedad y para la democracia. Aportan con su acción a diversos sectores del desarrollo social, económico cultural en los territorios, en los ámbitos productivo, de salud, educación, vivienda, paz, protección del medio ambiente, gobernabilidad, defensa de los derechos humanos, acceso, a la justicia y promoción de la igualdad y la inclusión, entre otros. [#PiezaClaveParaColombia](#) [#UnaONGes](#)
- Las Organizaciones Sociales hemos contribuido a la transformación social mediante ejercicios de coordinación, de empoderamiento, de responsabilidad social empresarial, de filantropía y de organización social y comunitaria. Mediante ello hemos aportado activamente en la agenda de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) e construye con el impulso de proyectos innovadores, incluyentes y sostenibles que inspiren a otros a trabajar por la paz y el bienestar de los colombianos. [#PiezaClaveParaColombia](#) [#UnaONGes](#)
- En cumplimiento de nuestros objetos sociales, hemos estructurado y ejecutado proyectos a lo largo y ancho del país, muchos de los cuales se han constituido en innovaciones y modelos demostrativos que han generado grandes impactos en las comunidades [#PiezaClaveParaColombia](#) [#UnaONGes](#)
- Nuestro sector es un aliado formidable y un par ideal para atender la emergencia actual, para paliar sus efectos y para contribuir a la reconstrucción del tejido social en los territorios y de la vida económica, social y cultural. Tenemos la disposición, la vocación y el deseo de contribuir con este propósito nacional. [#PiezaClaveParaColombia](#) [#UnaONGes](#)

PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA

¿Qué hacemos las organizaciones
sociales por Colombia?
¿Qué estamos haciendo
en medio de la COVID-19?

#UnaONGEs

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



www.ccong.org.co
Email: comunicaciones@ccong.org.co
Teléfono: (0571) 6060704

PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA

Las organizaciones sociales no generan ganancias.
Los excedentes, cuando los hay,
en lugar de distribuirse se reinvierten
para seguir cumpliendo nuestros
objetivos misionales.

#UnaONGEs

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



www.ccong.org.co
Email: comunicaciones@ccong.org.co
Teléfono: (0571) 6060704

PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA

Las organizaciones sociales
constituyen un valor esencial para la
sociedad y para la democracia.

#UnaONGEs

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



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Teléfono: (0571) 6060704

PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA

Las Organizaciones Sociales hemos
contribuido a la transformación social

#UnaONGEs

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



www.ccong.org.co
Email: comunicaciones@ccong.org.co
Teléfono: (0571) 6060704

PIEZA CLAVE PARA
COLOMBIA

El sector social es un aliado formidable y un par ideal
para atender la emergencia actual, para paliar sus efectos
y para contribuir a la reconstrucción del tejido social
en los territorios y de la vida económica, social y cultural.

#UnaONGEs

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



www.ccong.org.co
Email: comunicaciones@ccong.org.co
Teléfono: (0571) 6060704



Aquí te dejamos algunas de las peticiones que más de 257 Organizaciones Sociales hicimos al Gobierno Nacional ante la actual coyuntura de la COVID-19

#UnaONGEs

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



www.ccong.org.co
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Teléfono: (0571) 6060704



1. Incorporar de manera expresa a las Organizaciones Sociales como actores y/o beneficiarias en las reglamentaciones derivadas de las disposiciones y medidas expedidas con ocasión de la Emergencia Económica, Social y Ecológica.

2. Aumentar los incentivos al sector privado para mantener las donaciones que realizan a las Organizaciones Sociales durante y después de la Emergencia.

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



www.ccong.org.co
Email: comunicaciones@ccong.org.co
Teléfono: (0571) 6060704



3. Facilitar, cuando aplique, la renegociación y ajuste de los convenios de cooperación y contratos suscritos con las Organizaciones Sociales, de modo que los alcances y los métodos se ajusten a la realidad material que implica la pandemia, mientras los contratos y convenios se protegen.

4. Promover, en desarrollo de mecanismos de cooperación público - privados y comunitarios, la suscripción de nuevos contratos y convenios con Organizaciones Sociales, cuando estos faciliten la ejecución de las metas trazadas por las entidades del Estado.

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



www.ccong.org.co
Email: comunicaciones@ccong.org.co
Teléfono: (0571) 6060704



5. Garantizar los procesos institucionales que hagan efectivo el derecho de acceso a la información pública y la promoción del diálogo de políticas públicas.

6. Fortalecer la Oferta de Valor y favorecer la sostenibilidad de las Organizaciones Sociales, reconociendo y apoyando sus buenas prácticas, sistematizando y escalando los resultados, metodologías e instrumentos, impactos, y lecciones aprendidas. Esto con el fin de aportar a la situación

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



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Teléfono: (0571) 6060704



7. Instamos por a los donantes a tomar en consideración que la labor que desarrollamos tiene vigencia e importancia más allá de la pandemia.

Por ello, llamamos a realizar esfuerzos para seguir impulsando los proyectos orientados a la atención de los distintos desafíos de desarrollo social, económico, social e institucional que tiene nuestro país. Desafíos en torno a los cuales las Organizaciones Sociales estamos prestos a colaborar.

#PiezaClaveParaColombia



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Teléfono: (0571) 6060704

Programación contenidos para Twitter Campaña #PiezaClaveParaColombia				
SEMANA DEL 21 DE MAYO AL 25 DE MAYO - Lanzamiento y posicionamiento				
Día	Tipo de contenido	Tema (Hashtag)	Copy	Link o foto
Jueves	Lanzamiento del logo	#PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes	¿Qué es #PiezaClaveParaColombia? una campaña de cientos de organizaciones sociales que queremos seguir trabajando por Colombia y quienes pedimos al Gob. Nacional nos tenga en cuenta ante la actual crisis por la COVID-19 para seguir contribuyendo al tejido social del país	Foto del logo de la campaña
Jueves	Publicar el comunicado mencionando a medios de comunicación e influenciadores	#PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes	Las organizaciones estamos aportando al tejido social de Colombia y hemos solicitado al Gob. Nacional nos incluya y nos tenga en cuenta en las medidas que son tomadas por la actual coyuntura	Al comunicado que debe estar en sus páginas web
Jueves	Publicar contenido propio de cada org. Que destaque la importancia del trabajo de la misma en el país	#PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes	(Nombre de la organización) trabaja para llevar (el fin fundacional) a diversos territorios del país aportando a la mejora de la calidad de vida y la realidad en la que viven las comunidades	Propia de cada organización
Jueves	Pieza gráfica prediseñada	#PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes	En el texto que acompaña la pieza se puede retomar alguna de las exigencias hechas en el comunicado o alguna acción positiva que haga la organización	Diseñada previamente para la campaña
Viernes	Publicar una encuesta virtual para que las personas participen/sensibilicen sobre la importancia del trabajo de una ONG	#UnaONGes	Opción 1: ¿Crees que #UnaONGes importante para Colombia? SI/NO Opción 2: ¿Sabías que #UnaONGes importante para el desarrollo de Colombia? SI/NO	N/A
Sábado	Escribir datos sobre la realidad de las organizaciones sociales frente al COVID-19 y su importancia para el desarrollo de las personas y comunidades en el país	#Sabíasque	Retomar algún dato que considere relevante del comunicado que se firmó por parte de las organizaciones	Acompañado de alguna fotografía o ícono de pregunta

Domingo	Retomar algún video de cada organización para reforzar la idea de la importancia del trabajo desarrollado	#Video	Posicionar con un tono cercano el #UnaONGes y #PiezaClaveParaColombia retomando que en medio de la pandemia se requiere tener a este sector en cuenta para las medidas y que podamos seguir haciendo nuestro trabajo	Video propio
Lunes	Se sugiere retomar durante el día varios apartados del comunicado con link hacia el mismo	#PiezaClaveParaColombia #UnaONGes	Posicionar el comunicado/carta que fue radicada ante el Gob. Nacional, retomar mensajes claves	Remitir al link del comunicado de prensa en donde se encuentra publicado.
SEMANA DEL 26 DE MAYO AL 30 DE MAYO - Posicionamiento				
Día	Tipo de contenido	Tema (Hashtag)	Copy	Link o foto
Martes	Sensibilización de públicos sobre la importancia de las ONG	#UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia	Aquí te dejamos algunas de las peticiones que mas de 100 Organizaciones Sociales hicimos al Gobierno Nacional ante la actual coyuntura de la COVID-19	Template base o fotografía propia
Martes	Escribir datos sobre el aporte del sector a los ODS y/ sobre la vulnerabilidad del sector en tiempo de pandemia	#Sabíasque	Por ejemplo: Opción 1: En desarrollo de la actual pandemia nuestro sector se encuentra en un estado de alta vulnerabilidad, debido a los riesgos propios de las poblaciones con las que trabajamos y el cumplimiento de nuestros objetivos establecidos en los proyectos. Opción 2: Sabías que en nuestro modelo de operación como ONG no se generan ganancias. Los excedentes, cuando los hay, en lugar de distribuirse se reinvierten para seguir cumpliendo nuestros objetivos misionales.	Imagen propia incluyendo logo de la campaña
Miércoles	video	#Video #UnaONGes	Publicaciones en redes sociales sobre lo que es una ONG, tratar de poner como tendencia el hashtag #UnaONGes y #pieza clave para colombia	Video propio
Jueves	Pieza gráfica predisenada	#PiezaClaveParaColombia	Invitando a visitar o conocer el comunicado y animando a otros a ayudarnos a hacer "presión" al Gob. Nacional para que el sector social sea tenido en cuenta en la actual coyuntura	Diseñada previamente para la campaña
Viernes	Testimonios de los beneficiarios de las organizaciones para reforzar la idea de la importancia del trabajo que hacemos.	#UnaONGes #PiezaClaveParaColombia	Somos una #piezaclave para colombia porque gracias a nuestro trabajo se han beneficiado varias personas (dar cifras segun los resultados de cada organización)	Video, foto o pieza gráfica con un entrecorrido de una frase de un beneficiario acompañado del logo de la campaña

Sábado	Retomar publicaciones realizadas anteriormente para seguir posicionando el mensaje	#PiezaClaveParaColombia	Hacemos un llamado al Gobierno Nal. a los Gob. Territoriales, a las empresas y a la Cooperación Intl. para que se reconozca nuestro aporte como actores del desarrollo y para que, en la actual coyuntura, se tomen las medidas necesarias para proteger nuestra sostenibilidad	Link redireccionando al ocmunicado, puede ir acompañado de una foto
SEMANA DEL 01 al AL 05 DE JUNIO - Posicionamiento				
Martes	Invitar a los seguidores de las redes sociales a contarnos porque creen que nuestro o el trabajo de las ONG es importante para la realidad del país	#Participa #UnaONGes #piezACLAVEPARACOLOMBIA	Cuéntanos si has sido testigo de la labor de alguna Organización social y la importancia que está tiene, puedes hablar de cualquiera que hayas conocido.	Imagen o template
Miércoles	Mencionar logros de cada organización desde sus inicios	#piezACLAVEPARACOLOMBIA	Opción 1:(nombre de la organización) ha sido de gran ayuda para la población de Colombia por... Opción 2: Desde el inicio de (nombre de la organización) hemos beneficiado o logrado...	Imagen o video propio
Jueves	Escribir datos sobre las propuestas de las ONG firmantes de la comunicación de cara a la actual coyuntura	#Sabíasque #piezACLAVEPARACOLOMBIA	Tomar apartados importantes de la carta firmadas por las organizaciones y publicarlos junto a los hashtags	Imagen
Viernes	Recordar la importancia para el país del trabajo que hacen las organizaciones sociales en Colombia.	Videos	Además del video, destacar algún dato importante de la organización, por ejemplo beneficiarios o personas impactadas en el último año. Luego de eso referenciar que por eso debemos ser tenidas en cuenta por el Gob. Nacional ante la actual coyuntura.	Video propio

Appendix 17 Article related to the petition published on the magazine “Semana” on May 2022

Semana | Nación

NACIÓN

Organizaciones sociales piden respaldo del Gobierno ante crisis por coronavirus

Más de 257 organizaciones que hacen presencia en los territorios más apartados del país y acompañan a las poblaciones más vulnerables le han pedido al presidente Iván Duque que las tenga en cuenta ante la actual emergencia por coronavirus. Ningún decreto las ha amparado.

Coronavirus: organizaciones sociales piden respaldo del Gobierno por crisis | Foto: Dinero

22 de mayo de 2020



Más de 257 organizaciones sociales en Colombia se han unido con el fin de exigirle al Gobierno nacional ser tenidas en cuenta en las políticas contempladas en medio de la emergencia sanitaria por la pandemia de covid-19 en el país. Aseguran que, a raíz de la crisis, **varias de estas se han visto obligadas a cerrar o no se están viendo incluidas en los decretos expedidos por las autoridades.**

Es por esto que varias de las organizaciones decidieron presentar una declaración, así como varios documentos y cartas al presidente Iván Duque y sus ministros con propuestas y soluciones para ser respaldados durante de la

coyuntura nacional. Entre estas destacan Techo, Fundación ProBono, Confederación Colombiana de ONG, Corporación Reconciliación Colombia, entre otras **organizaciones que hacen presencia en los territorios más apartados del país y acompañan a las poblaciones más vulnerables.**

Contexto: Médicos piden modificar decreto que admite a la covid-19 como enfermedad laboral

Preocupa la suerte de estas en el contexto presente y futuro, por lo que sus propuestas están específicamente encaminadas para garantizar su permanencia y para que **su trabajo, diversidad, conocimientos, saberes y alcance sean valorados** y tenidos en cuenta por su compromiso con la transformación social en el país.

El sector se encuentra en estado de alta vulnerabilidad por la pandemia, por los riesgos propios de las poblaciones con las que trabajan, pero también por los posibles cambios de las prioridades de inversión y ayuda de las entidades del Estado y actores de la cooperación internacional con la que establecen alianzas, acuerdos y contratos.

Contexto: La OPS donó a la Secretaría de Salud de Bogotá cien mil pruebas para coronavirus

Cabe mencionar que **las organizaciones sociales no generan ganancias**, por lo que es previsible que la vulnerabilidad en la que se encuentran continúe aún después de finalizada la crisis. Una recuperación definitiva se consolidaría en el mediano plazo.

"Creemos que en una coyuntura como la actual, la alianza entre organizaciones sociales, Estado, sector empresarial y cooperación internacional contribuirá al fortalecimiento del tejido social, promoverá la confianza, estimulará la cooperación y nos permitirá afrontar el futuro con optimismo y resiliencia", manifiestan en el comunicado.

Contexto: Cinco mensajes clave para atender la migración en Colombia

Piden al Gobierno **aumentar los incentivos al sector privado para mantener las donaciones que realizan antes y después de la emergencia**, así como garantizar los procesos institucionales que hagan efectivo el derecho de acceso a la información pública y la promoción del diálogo de políticas públicas.

Asimismo, llamaron a los donantes a continuar impulsando proyectos orientados a la atención de los distintos desafíos de desarrollo social, económico, social e institucional que tiene Colombia.

Con el numeral **#PiezaClaveParaColombia**, las organizaciones sociales buscan visibilizar sus peticiones y ser tenidas en cuenta para tener el respaldo y continuar aportando en diversos sectores y necesidades de la población colombiana.

Tendencias

1. Fabio Ochoa, el más joven del clan que fue el aliado de Pablo Escobar. Así fue su vida en el crimen
2. SEMANA revela la defensa de Ricardo Roa con la que busca tumbar el pliego de cargos en el CNE por la presunta financiación irregular de la campaña de Petro
3. Desde el petrismo presentarán proyecto de ley para revivir la pensión Gracia, con la que saldrían beneficiados profesores del Estado

Encuentra aquí lo último en Semana

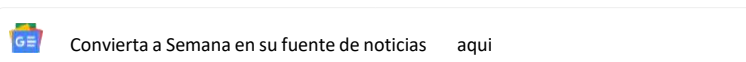
1. Comité de la ONU asegura que recibió información sobre 20 mil cuerpos sin identificar
2. “Uno vive marcado”: padre de Yuliana Samboní, niña abusada y asesinada por Rafael Uribe, habla tras 8 años de su feminicidio
3. Flavia Dos Santos resolvió el ‘misterio’ sobre su edad. Todo quedó claro con su respuesta
4. María Alejandra Benavides, exasesora del minHacienda, guardó silencio ante la Corte Suprema. Congresistas pidieron que cuente la verdad
5. Así se vivió el temblor que sacudió gran parte de California, los videos son aterradores

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Organizaciones sociales

Coronavirus en Colombia



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