

<https://doi.org/10.23913/ricsh.v13i25.326>

Essays

Entre la resistencia y el olvido: los pueblos indígenas en tiempos de pandemia en la Montaña Baja de Guerrero, México

Between the resistance and the oblivion: The indigenous villages in pandemic times in the Low Mountain region of Guerrero, Mexico

Entre a resistência e o esquecimento: povos indígenas em tempos de pandemia na montanha Baja de Guerrero, México

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Resumen

En este ensayo se analiza el impacto y las respuestas comunitarias frente a la pandemia covid-19 en el contexto de la Montaña Baja de Guerrero, México, una de las regiones con más comunidades indígenas nahuas, las cuales enfrentan problemas de violencia e inseguridad y altos índices de marginación y pobreza; además, estas comunidades tienen un mínimo acceso a los servicios de salud, circunstancias que se evidenciaron durante la pandemia. Sin embargo, en la etapa más aguda de la enfermedad, estos implementaron algunos mecanismos de resistencia como el cierre de sus territorios, utilizar sus conocimientos sobre medicina



tradicional y el apoyo mutuo entre vecinos y amigos, entre otros. Así, los pueblos indígenas enfrentaron una etapa más de su larga historia de resistencia.

Palabras clave: pandemia, resistencia, Montaña Baja, vida cotidiana, pueblos indígenas.

Abstract

This essay analyzes the impact and community responses to the pandemic COVID-19 in the context of the Lower Mountain of Guerrero, Mexico, that is one of the regions with the most nahuas indigenous communities, which face problems of violence and insecurity and high levels of marginalization and poverty; in addition, these communities have minimal access to health services, circumstances that become more during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted health and the economy of the habitants of these communities. The scene is adverse and has an impact on the daily lives of the most vulnerable habitants. Nonetheless in the most acute stage of the diseases, the nahuas implemented some mechanisms of resistance such as closing their territories, using their traditional medicine knowledge and the mutual support between neighbors and friends, among others. Thereby, the Indigenous people face another stage of their long history of resistance.

Keywords: Pandemic, resistance, Low Mountain, daily life, indigenous people.

Resumo

Este ensaio analisa o impacto e as respostas comunitárias à pandemia de covid-19 no contexto da Montanha Baja de Guerrero, no México, uma das regiões com mais comunidades indígenas Nahua, que enfrentam problemas de violência e insegurança e altas taxas de marginalização e pobreza. ; Além disso, estas comunidades têm acesso mínimo aos serviços de saúde, circunstâncias que ficaram evidentes durante a pandemia. Porém, na fase mais aguda da doença, implementaram alguns mecanismos de resistência como o encerramento dos seus territórios, a utilização dos seus conhecimentos de medicina tradicional e o apoio mútuo entre vizinhos e amigos, entre outros. Assim, os povos indígenas enfrentaram outra etapa na sua longa história de resistência.

Palavras-chave: pandemia, resistência, Montaña Baja, cotidiano, povos indígenas.

Fecha Recepción: Agosto 2023

Fecha Aceptación: Enero 2024



Introduction

The Montaña de Guerrero, also known as Mixteca Nahua Tlapaneca, is traditionally divided into Montaña Baja and Montaña Alta. In the first are municipalities with a strong Nahua presence: Chilapa, Ahuacuotzingo, Atlixtac, Copalillo, Zitlala, and José Joaquín de Herrera. Montaña Alta basically refers to the municipalities located south of Tlapa, which are located in the foothills and in the upper part of the Sierra Madre del Sur, and are mostly naïve towns. *savi* and *m e 'ph aa*. To prepare this article, field work was carried out in communities in two municipalities of the Montaña Baja: Chilapa and Zitlala ¹.

In the state of Guerrero, the impact of covid-19 has been significant. Although the virus has spread throughout the state, some regions have experienced a greater impact. With its arrival in 2020, communities have resisted not only violence and “common” diseases, but also a disease that they did not know about, that they were not prepared to face ²and in a context where public health continues to have lags and does not reach all those who require it.

According to official data from the Guerrero Ministry of Health (2023), covid-19 is still present in 18 municipalities of the entity, and the municipality of Chilapa is where the largest number of active cases is found, with 57 as of April 13, 2023. They are followed by Acapulco with 32 cases, Chilpancingo with 14, Ometepec with 11 and Zitlala with 7 cases. In total, Guerrero accumulates 119,666 confirmed cases and 6,886 deaths from covid-19 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Chilapa and Zitlala, municipalities with a high presence of Nahua indigenous communities, have been among the most affected by the pandemic in terms of infections, death and consequences for their population. Therefore, in this essay we will focus on them.

It should be noted from the outset that these communities have limited access to basic health services, lack adequate medical infrastructure, and health personnel are scarce, circumstances that make timely care and the detection of Covid-19 cases difficult, which has led them to greater vulnerability to the virus. Furthermore, the availability of timely and reliable information has been some of the obstacles they have had to face.

However, despite these challenges, as we will see in the following sections, with its

¹ Rosalba Díaz has worked for years in the region and was the one who carried out the field work that serves as support for this publication.

² Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which originated in China at the end of 2019 and became a global pandemic in 2020. In Mexico, the first confirmed case was recorded on February 28 of 2020.



deep-rooted culture of collectivity, internal solidarity and sense of responsibility, they have established community support systems to share food, medicine and basic resources with the most vulnerable.

Some measures that have been taken to contain the spread of the virus are the mandatory use of face masks, the suspension of mass events, restrictions on mobility and the temporary closure of various economic activities, measures that, however, have had a significant impact on your daily life.

Methodology

The information for this work was obtained from participant observation, which involved sharing daily life with the communities to collect testimonies of their experiences through open interviews and informal conversations. Journalistic sources, specialized investigations and reports from the entity's health agencies were also reviewed with emphasis on the Montaña Baja region. The data obtained corresponds to the communities of Acatlán, Mexcaltepec , San Gerónimo Palantla and the municipal seat of Zitlala, among other small towns that were visited during the period of pandemic restrictions, which allowed us to observe the changes in the daily lives of the communities. people and their impacts. In addition, changes were recorded in commercial, recreational, festive and educational activities mainly, which was achieved thanks to a prolonged stay in the region.

Discussion

The issue of the effects of Covid-19 has already been addressed in various investigations, where important components of the pandemic and the national response in Mexico have been examined. However, this work seeks to elucidate the reasons behind the high burden of disease for the indigenous people of a particular region. That is, we want to contribute to the topic from the everyday and local perspective, unlike other works whose perspective is more general at a national or international level. The problems that have been addressed, in relation to the pandemic, are many: inequality, poverty, discrimination, racism, among others.

However , regarding the region we are dealing with, little has been recovered about the effects suffered by indigenous peoples. Therefore, we think that the information obtained



provides ideas and recommendations for more effective responses to future health emergencies.

We consider that the data provided are valid and verifiable, although conducting research in the indicated context was not easy, especially qualitatively. Even so, socioeconomic aspects are emphasized that need to be made known to understand how the pandemic was experienced from the region in which the study was carried out.

To begin, it is necessary to mention that the municipalities in which the communities in which we concentrate are located are Zitlala and Chilapa. Both belong, according to the official regionalization, to the Central Region of the state; However, geographically, in the eastern area of the municipality of Chilapa, the region officially called Montaña begins. In both cases, the percentage of indigenous Nahuatl population is the majority. Chilapa represents, at the state level, one of the municipalities with the highest percentage of indigenous population, which is equivalent to 9.4%.

In relation to some development indicators, it should be noted that Chilapa is a municipality that presents high rates of social backwardness. In the last census, it has been shown that the percentage of people without access to health services was 50.6%, equivalent to 57,932 people. Likewise, it is noted that there is a large number of homes that do not have piped water from the public network (59%) nor do they have drainage (41.3%). Most of the homes have dirt floors (21.9%), with only one room (19.4%) and do not have electricity (5%).

For its part, the municipality of Zitlala, located 60 kilometers from Chilpancingo, capital of Guerrero, and 12 kilometers from Chilapa, is distinguished by being made up of 31 communities, all of which speak Nahuatl. The municipal seat, of the same name, has 4,731 inhabitants and the entire municipality 21,587 (INEGI, 2020). The socioeconomic conditions of the communities, including the capital, make the municipality of Zitlala one of the municipalities with the highest degree of social backwardness in the entity. All of its towns are connected to the municipal capital by dirt roads, a situation that reveals the conditions with which the people who live in these towns deal, since they must frequently go there because they do not have educational, health and support infrastructure. field. This is despite the fact that the municipality receives a budget amount that includes, among other things, a fund for municipal social infrastructure, which are federal contributions for states and municipalities whose destination, in accordance with article 33, is at the state level for works and actions of regional or intermunicipal scope or scope of benefit.

At the municipal level, the financing is for works for drinking water, sewage, drainage



and latrines, municipal urbanization, rural electrification and poor neighborhoods, basic health infrastructure, basic educational infrastructure, housing improvement, rural roads and rural productive infrastructure.

Regarding the transportation service, there is the foreign service of minibuses, buses and vans, which connect Zitlala with different towns, mainly with Chilapa, the mestizo city that serves as the regional sub-headquarters .

In the municipal seat, the City Council indicates that it provides the following services : public security, municipal market, public garden, pantheon, public lighting, postal agency, rural telephone and drinking water. The latter, however, does not work even though the network was installed more than 10 years ago.

In summary, according to the National Population Council (CONAPO), both municipalities, Zitlala and Chilapa, are classified in 2020 as having a very high degree of marginalization, occupying 26th and 28th place, respectively, out of a total of 81 municipalities in the state of Warrior. Likewise, it is relevant to highlight that both municipalities are senders of labor for agricultural work in the north of the country, since they participate in national and international labor circuits, such as the agricultural fields of Sonora, Chihuahua, Baja California, Morelos and the United States.

According to data presented by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (Colef), in the report *Populations vulnerable to covid-19. Agricultural day laborers* , one of the risks to which they are exposed has to do with mobility and the conditions in which they travel, which constitute a source of vulnerability and expansion of contagion because workers are transferred from different parts of the country. country. The document adds that another risk variable is housing or the so-called camps, which not only expose the day laborers, but also, sometimes, their families to overcrowded conditions, which can be a factor that facilitates contagion (Velasco *et al* ., April 13, 2020) . This report highlights the urgency of guaranteeing access to health services for agricultural workers due to their high mobility, since the return of sick workers to their communities increases the risk of the spread of the virus among the poorest and most marginalized sectors of the country. .

Added to the already existing daily shortage in the region is the arrival of people who used to work in other locations, such as Acapulco or Chilpancingo. However, due to the lack of employment generated by the contingency, they have returned to their places of origin. In relation to this phenomenon, the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center (2020), in collaboration with other civil society organizations such as FUNDAR (Center for Analysis and Research,



AC) and SERAPAZ (Services and Consultancy for Peace), prepared a report on indigenous peoples and communities in the face of covid-19, where the following stands out:

The main profiles of people who return to their communities are: temporary workers (56 percent), students (36 percent), people who lost their jobs in cities (17 percent). For unemployed people who are returning to their communities, COVID-19 is a vector that deepens the crisis of job insecurity and possibly places them in a situation of vulnerability that we predict will increase during the health emergency, impacting economic resources and with this in the quality of life of the communities (p. 1).

In this context, the health crisis, like others, has highlighted the numerous social inequalities that persist in different periods. The coronavirus pandemic has hit hard one of the most impoverished territories in Mexico, characterized by little access to water and a precarious employment situation.

Although the Mexican State has the responsibility of guaranteeing the economic and social rights of society, this has not materialized in the region. As of 2020, the local economy has been significantly affected, which has caused internal conflicts in the communities. Seasonal migration has contributed to this scenario, leading many residents to return without proper health care and contributing to the spread of the virus. Thousands of people from Guerrero, unable to find life opportunities in the state and the country, were forced to emigrate to the United States of America. In places like New York, one of the epicenters of covid-19, the disease has affected numerous immigrants, including those from Guerrero.

As a measure to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, 99 indigenous communities in 40 municipalities of Guerrero closed their accesses to prevent in some cases the entry of visitors and residents from other cities. However, those who returned claimed their right of entry as members of the community who were forced to leave out of necessity. This situation generated tensions among residents and fueled fear of being infected due to the lack of adequate health services. Therefore, below, we will approach the impact of the pandemic in the region and some responses that have emerged from the community to prevent the spread of the virus.



The impacts of the pandemic on the daily life of the Nahuas of the Baja Mountain

With the arrival of the pandemic, new challenges arose for the inhabitants of indigenous communities in the region. Their fear no longer only focuses on violence, but also on the health system that has historically not considered indigenous peoples as a priority. A large part of the population in the most remote communities is monolingual and there are no translators in local hospitals, which is especially evident in the case of older adults. Faced with this situation, traditional medicine was resorted to, which in some cases made it possible to treat people infected with the virus.

Since 2020, the situation in the Mountains has become more complex due to the emergence of the covid-19 pandemic, which adds to the persistent “pandemic of violence” that has not ceased in the region or the country. . The government strategy in the Guerrero Mountain region consisted of giving instructions that are almost impossible to follow, such as constantly washing your hands in places where water is scarce or using antibacterial gel , which is not even available. Faced with this reality, the indigenous communities of Chilapa and Zitlala held assemblies at the end of March 2020 to determine how to face the pandemic, so they decided that closure was the best solution to prevent the virus from spreading in their territories and to avoid the need to seek care in hospitals located several hours away. Since many of these communities follow their own practices and customs, they entrusted the community police with the responsibility of establishing checkpoints.

The impacts on daily life were felt from the beginning of the pandemic, highlighting the fundamental importance of considering how daily events become relevant for each member of the communities. As Heller (1972) points out, everyday life is the fundamental dimension of social existence because it incorporates “ the set of activities that characterize the particular reproductions that create the global and permanent possibility of social reproduction. In every society there is therefore a daily life: without it there is no society ” (p. 72).

To understand the importance of everyday life, below we mention some of the characteristics that are part of daily life in indigenous communities. The purpose is to offer a brief look at the way these communities live and the most relevant consequences that the covid-19 virus has left. From this, we reflect on how the pandemic affects the sources of reproduction of daily life, since the testimonies collected during field work indicate that it has negatively impacted the sale of their agricultural and artisanal production, mainly due to



the difficulty to transport products to markets and a decrease in demand, among other factors. Additionally, they have faced lower than expected prices for their products.

This phenomenon, added to the already existing inequalities faced by indigenous peoples in Mexico, creates an unfavorable terrain to guarantee their well-being in the face of the onslaught of the virus. Among these inequalities, access to water stands out preponderantly, which acquires crucial value in the context of the current health crisis. According to UNESCO data (2020), in the country's rural population, 21% of those who speak an indigenous language lack vital water due to poor access to this resource, while among those who do not speak an indigenous language the lack of service is 16.8%.

Identity, daily life and social reproduction

For the Nahuas of the region, traveling the mountain paths, the coast and even the mountains, through trade, was a daily activity that, until recently, represented a secure source of income. With their transportation, they reached remote communities, setting up stalls with a variety of merchandise, including food, clothing, shoes, blankets, and household items, purchased in large markets in cities such as Puebla, the State of Mexico, and Mexico City. Their adventurous spirit and migratory tradition allowed them to control the wholesale purchase of some products and promote local production in their communities.

Agriculture is the main activity, since they grow corn, tomatoes, garlic, onions, chili, among others. Work in the field occupies most of the time, which begins early in the morning, with men in the field and women busy with tasks such as preparing the nixtamal, making dough and tortillas. During lunch, they head to the plot and then return to prepare the food. Daily activities often include carrying water, visiting church or attending meetings, especially in government programs such as PROSPERA and now Sembrando Vida, which are mandatory.

A common practice in Nahua communities is “tequitl” or work, an organizing element of their daily life and thinking as a people. They consider work as something beyond subsistence, since it is an integral part of daily life and is associated with festivals, ceremonies, rituals of birth, life and death. Every life-sustaining activity is considered work. Although it requires effort, it is not perceived as an obligation, but as an integral part of daily life, assumed with responsibility, seriousness and satisfaction. Thus, activities such as weeding the plot, carrying water, participating in the Sunday market to sell or buy, caring for



animals and preparing food, especially tortillas, are acts that guarantee the continuity of their specific way of life, as Catherine Good (2005) points out.) for the Nahuas of Alto Balsas.

It is important to emphasize here that the conceptualization of *tequitl* reveals a high cultural valuation of work and of the bodily experience of work itself, unlike the Western perspective. In the local Nahua society, working in the community is not an onerous and exhausting burden in itself, —although the life of the villages does require a lot of exhausting physical work— On the other hand, it must be emphasized that the breadth of your concept of *tequitl* allows recognition of the contributions of all individuals in the community. This favors the specific contributions of women, children and the elderly and has important implications for the cultural construction of the person and for gender relations. From the Nahua perspective, work can never be an individual phenomenon; one does not work alone or for oneself but always shares work with others. When working, the *force* or vital energy of the person who works is transmitted to those who receive the benefits of their work; At the same time, as a member of the community one always receives the benefits of the work of others (p. 730).

In this way, the holidays represent days of community integration to rest and celebrate the joy of life, while they are mechanisms that require a collective effort. For example, preparing food, decorating the church, making rockets and bulls, and even participating in a dance involves sustained effort, since during the three or four days that a festival lasts, the participants barely rest. . They are expected to attend the butler's house, the church, and the street tours, which also applies to the musicians who accompany the dances.

In this way, the ritual and festive life of the Nahua communities reflects “ that so-called Mesoamerican way of conceiving life, where all natural objects and cultural products were arranged in various planes and levels of the universe, which is still perceived as inscribed in the mentality of current indigenous peoples ” (Vargas, 2010, p. 9).

Each town, no matter how small, has its own festive cycle, which extends throughout the year and organizes movements from one neighborhood to another or from one town to another, uniting various groups in the same place. The patron saint festivities offer the opportunity to make reciprocal visits between communities and maintain good intercommunity relations. In addition, civil and religious authorities organize to participate



in the festivities of other communities, contributing with the music band, dances, flowers, candles, fireworks and beer, which are donated to the mayordomos or the patron saint.

Civic celebrations, such as baptisms, weddings, confirmations and presentations, are also occasions to bring together the family, often dispersed, as well as neighbors and friends, sharing music, food and exchanging information about the community and those absent. In short, they are days of community integration and collective effort to celebrate the joy of life.

Visiting the sanctuaries of other towns in the region is a common practice that is carried out as a family or with groups of neighbors. These tours, which involve leaving a candle and praying for the well-being of the family, involve a trip to a place of special significance. This separation from everyday space, which provides security and routine, also becomes an opportunity for recreation and leisure. Furthermore, places considered sacred have significant power for the pilgrim's faith, since they house an image or relic that is the object of their devotion. In this regard, it is interesting to return to what Alicia Barabas (2004) mentions about pilgrimages:

We can argue that pilgrimage paths build *ritual itinerant territories*, where people travel every year, establishing the same milestones and ritual marks. However, we also travel through spaces of daily significance and new sacred places. The multiple pilgrimages trace networks of paths, places and sacred territories. Thus, pilgrimage routes and sanctuaries (often located in towns) can form a socio-religious or devotional region to which different towns from different ethnic regions come together (p. 115).

The act of regularly visiting sacred places in the communities, such as springs, swamps and boundaries where there are protective crosses that also serve as territorial delimitations, is a daily practice that updates collective memory. This practice establishes a connection between the pilgrim and the history of their ancestors, who visited the same places.

Daily life is a universal phenomenon present in all societies, where social reproduction develops and is expressed. It consists of the set of activities that people carry out under certain social conditions to live and continue living. It represents the central social dimension in which human beings develop their personality and put into action all their intellectual, affective and emotional capacities. As Heller points out, in everyday life, the individual acts with everything that he is and as he is.



In this sense, reproduction ensures the existence and subsistence of men and women by providing elements for the control and management of their physical and social environment, structuring their community life and their possibilities of interaction. In this way, the continuity of the customs, norms and values in force in that society is guaranteed. However, the emergence of new forms of violence can alter time, space and social practices.

Conclusions

During the pandemic, indigenous peoples have demonstrated their ability to implement strategies of cooperation and reciprocity. Furthermore, in this period of crisis, they have had to develop notable technical skills to make the impact of the pandemic on their territories and populations visible. The important actions that indigenous peoples have carried out to resist the pandemic include the generation of data on infections and deaths in their communities, the implementation of information and awareness campaigns on the prevention of the virus, and the adoption of measures containment and mitigation. These measures include sanitary fences, prohibitions on access to communities, surveillance, community supervision, creation of circulation and isolation protocols, use and promotion of traditional medicine, and adoption of measures to guarantee food security.

In exercising their right to self-determination, many indigenous peoples decided to restrict or close the borders of their territories as one of the main measures to prevent the transmission of the virus. For indigenous communities, especially those with a small number of inhabitants, preventing the virus from spreading to their territory is a matter of life or death, not only for individuals, but for the people as a collective.

The arrival of the virus generated fear, so communities initially decided to isolate themselves. However, then they began to doubt the existence of the disease and began to go out and carry out activities, mainly economic. For example, those who work in masonry continued working, with little protection and in constant contact with other people, they decided to break isolation. This was because the isolation resulted in a shortage of supplies in the communities, since farmers, who do not receive support from the federal government and subsist by selling farm products, could not sell their products.

The dynamics to protect themselves from the coronavirus had a strong impact on people who survive thanks to what they achieve every day; If they did not leave their community, they could not work or sell in the city, and if they did not work or sell, they did not have money to buy food either. The communities were shielded and did not allow the



entry of strangers, which also caused a shortage of supplies in small businesses, which were forced to close.

In addition, it is important to add that in May 2020 sales were suspended at the Chilapa market, possibly one of the oldest and most important markets in Mexico. In this place, more than 100 communities attached to the municipality of Chilapa and neighboring municipalities such as Zitlala and José Joaquín de Herrera trade. This flea market is mainly peasant, artisanal and gastronomic, although free-range animals are also sold. Historically, the flea market has provided an opportunity for farmers, who grow crops mainly for their own consumption, to sell the surplus. Every Sunday, they place their products, such as tomatoes, onions, radishes, pumpkins, garlic, beans, corn, among others, on a plastic sheet on the ground. These products are grown, cared for and harvested by themselves for their families and are shared with those attending this traditional market.

The suspension of the flea market was due to the increase in covid-19 cases. In 2014, the same thing happened due to the increase in violence in Chilapa. That year was particularly difficult and, unfortunately, those days are not over yet. The violence caused the suspension of transportation on rural routes, which complicated the arrival of artisans. Many stopped attending for a time, others did so very cautiously, and some never returned because they were victims of violence.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the flea market remained closed for two months. After that, people began to return little by little. Meanwhile, the artisans looked for other alternatives to survive. They dedicated themselves to cultivating the land or working as bricklayers. The pandemic could not stop their activities, since not everyone could remain isolated.

Water shortage is another problem that affects several areas of Guerrero. The basic recommendation of washing your hands frequently to avoid contagion is impossible to follow when there is no running water in homes. Given the lack of State participation in basic issues such as information, organizations have intervened. For example, the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center distributed audios in the languages Me'phaa , Tu'un savi and nahua with advice on hygiene and protection to prevent coronavirus. Other community communication groups prepared information capsules in different native languages on the causes and forms of contagion of Covid-19. These capsules were broadcast on more than 20 community radio stations and alternative media with the aim that the most remote populations had information



about the disease and how to prevent it, as well as about the collateral damage that this disease causes in the lives of indigenous peoples.

However, as we have noted, without water available in their homes, the inhabitants of one of the poorest areas of Mexico lack the main protection measures against the pandemic. When the virus subsides, the threat of hunger will continue: a “disease” that has never stopped punishing these communities.

It is important to note that, unlike other areas of the country, information about the pandemic arrived late in this region. It was learned that migrants living there, working in New York, were sick or dying. Shortly after, on April 6, 2020, the first positive case and the first death were announced in the region.

As of August 7, 2020, the state of Guerrero had 11,963 registered people infected by covid-19, of which 1,457 died. This represents a mortality rate of 12.2%, higher than the national average of 10.9%. In this way, the epidemic, in its expansion from the center to the periphery, reached the Guerrero Mountain, where the lack of medical infrastructure and the difficulty in accessing, in particular, diagnostic tests for covid-19 is notorious.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that, due to the socioeconomic conditions of the region, migration to the northern states of the country has not stopped, without measures having been implemented to prevent infections. The presence of covid-19 in the Mountains adds to diseases such as dengue, malaria and diarrhea.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the pandemic has not stopped deforestation processes either. In fact, in several cases, it has led to its increase due to less environmental oversight.

Likewise, starting in 2020, the pandemic caused by covid-19 added a layer of complexity to the existing situation in Mexico and, in general, in Latin American countries. Its impact on the indigenous municipalities of Guerrero has been considerable. However, the resistance, solidarity and culture of these communities have been key elements in their response to the crisis. This has contributed to strengthening the collective response and minimizing the impact of the virus on the population. Despite these efforts, completely overcoming the pandemic still presents challenges. The Delta and other variants of the virus are of concern, so maintaining vigilance and individual and collective responsibility remains crucial.

Therefore, it is important that authorities at all three levels of government recognize and address the specific needs of these communities to ensure equitable access to medical



care and all the resources necessary for their full recovery and well-being, as the pandemic has highlighted, once again, how violence and disease affect the most vulnerable sectors of the population, including indigenous peoples, for whom special and specific measures were not adopted to face the impact of the pandemic.

In this context, the humanitarian response to the spread of the virus must consider, among other aspects, the issue of illicit economies. Often, groups that depend on these economies for survival are at risk of becoming victims of crime or do not have access to health systems or other protection mechanisms.

Contingencies have an impact on crime and violence. For example, it is important to keep in mind that criminal organizations, in some cases, are the only ones that have enough capital to consolidate or expand their presence both in the countryside and in the cities. Recently, some of these organizations distributed pantries (food) to the population with the aim of strengthening social support and support. Furthermore, the economic power of these organizations allows them to recruit more unemployed people in a context of greater lag due to the pandemic. It is also important to highlight that drug consumption has increased among vulnerable sectors.

Furthermore, it appears that the restrictions have not been applied equitably. For example, large companies that promote mining, hydroelectric and agricultural monoculture projects have continued working. Furthermore, the pandemic has been used as a mechanism to increase actions of intimidation, threats and criminalization, and has been taken advantage of by private actors to carry out evictions without any respect for human life. At the same time, mobility and assembly restrictions have made territorial defense activities difficult.

Faced with the ineffectiveness and negative impacts of the measures implemented by the State, the indigenous peoples of the region have articulated autonomous and self-managed proposals aimed at protecting communities from the virus. This has been the basis of the permanence of the towns for more than 500 years.



Future lines of research

For future work, two lines of research are recommended, which could shed light on the challenges facing the Baja Mountain region. The first would focus on the impacts of the pandemic on education, and how it has influenced school dropouts at different levels, particularly at the high school level. This study could provide a detailed view of the difficulties students face during the pandemic and offer possible solutions to mitigate school dropouts.

The second line of investigation would focus on violence and the presence of organized crime in the region, since during the pandemic these groups did not stop operating and maintained free movement for more than two years that the population remained in confinement. This study could help better understand how these groups operate in times of crisis and how they affect the local population. Both lines of research are broad and relevant, and this document only constitutes a first approach to these topics.

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