

CIVIC SPACE MONITORING REPORT IN COLOMBIA 2025



Civic Space Monitoring Report – Colombia 2025

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¹ Corporación Cambio Sostenible is a nonprofit established in 2020, committed to advancing sustainable development for social equity in Colombia and Latin America.

² Hivos is an international development organization working toward fair, inclusive, and sustainable societies where people have equal access to opportunities, rights, and resources. With a solutions-driven approach, Hivos builds movements for change by amplifying and connecting voices.



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We deeply appreciate the commitment of social and community organizations that participated in this process, contributing with their knowledge, experiences, and regional perspectives. Their invaluable insights have contributed to building a comprehensive understanding of Colombia’s civic space, highlighting both its challenges and opportunities for its strengthening.

We also extend our gratitude to Hivos for their technical and financial support, as well as to Cambio Sostenible’s experts, whose dedication made possible the data collection across five key territories.

Finally, we thank the organizations and communities who actively engaged in this initiative, sharing their voices, stories, and realities to shape this report. Their commitment stands as a testament to the transformative power of collective action.

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- Ama la Tierra Nukichinda
 - Fundación Brisas del Norte
 - Pon tu Huella Afro
 - Organización Kaliawirinae Nativo de Rios Tomo Beweri
 - Fundación Artística Afro Guajira
 - Comunidad indígena Kogui, sierra nevada de Santa Marta
 - Asociación Banderas Unidas
 - Fundación latidos chocó
 - Asociación intercomunitaria Painu
 - Corporación Vida Consciente Colombia
 - Corporación Chocó Joven
 - Asociación Afro Colombia Raíces de Norte de Santander (Raíces Afro).
 - Asociación juvenil Fomentando el Cambio en el Guainía (FCG)
 - Fundación Nautama
 - Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas del Municipio de Timbiquí.
 - Fundación Tayrona
 - Fundación Mar y Luz
 - Resguardo Indígena caño bachaco
 - Resguardo Saliva Santa Rosalía
 - Fundacion Tejido Social Nariñense Esp.
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 - Poder Sororo
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 - Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas Zenú-ASOMIZ
 - ATINAZ
 - Consejo Comunitario de Comunidades Negras de Primero de Julio “Gilberto Pérez”
 - Cabildo Indígena Quillacinga de Jenoy
 - Fundación personas paso a paso
 - ASOV-ABADES
 - Escuela Deportiva Cubiertos F.C.

• Asociación de Mujeres Emprendedoras Hilabreras Tradición

• Anoujirawa Wakuaipa

• Consejo ancestral raíces negras de río María Mina

• Caii Wayúu

• Fundación wayuu epinayu

• Asociación de autoridades tradicionales indígenas wayúu saimnaa wayúu

• Guainia diversa

• Fundación Pasos Por La Paz



Summary.

The Civic Space Monitoring Report in Colombia 2025 presents a detailed analysis of civic space conditions across eleven key territories, with particular focus on Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities. Developed by Corporación Cambio Sostenible through the “Inclusive Voices” project with Hivos’ support, this report employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to assess the current state of civic space, identifying specific barriers, and proposing strategies to enhance these communities’ participation in defending their rights and autonomy. The findings and recommendations aim to foster a more inclusive, safe, and participatory environment where Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities can effectively influence decision-making processes and strengthen Colombia’s civic space.

Keywords: civic space, Afro-descendant communities, Indigenous peoples, civil society

Resumen:

El presente documento, titulado “Reporte de Monitoreo del Espacio Cívico en Colombia 2025”, constituye un análisis detallado sobre las condiciones del espacio cívico en once territorios clave de Colombia, con énfasis en las comunidades afrodescendientes e indígenas. Liderado por la Corporación Cambio Sostenible, en el marco del proyecto “Voces Incluyentes” y con el apoyo de Hivos, este informe combina metodologías cualitativas y cuantitativas para evaluar el estado actual del espacio cívico, identificar barreras específicas y proponer estrategias que fortalezcan la participación de estas comunidades en la defensa de sus derechos y su autonomía. Los hallazgos y recomendaciones buscan promover un entorno más inclusivo, seguro y participativo, donde las comunidades afrodescendientes e indígenas puedan incidir de manera efectiva en los procesos de decisión y en el fortalecimiento del espacio cívico en Colombia.

Palabras clave: Espacio cívico, afrodescendientes, indígenas, sociedad civil.

Contenido

Acknowledgments.....	3
Summary.....	6
Resumen.....	6
Executive Summary.....	8
Introduction.....	11
Methodology.....	13
Measurement Framework Development	13
Data Collection.....	14
Information analysis.	15
Analysis and Discussion of Results.....	16
Context.....	17
Dimensions of civic space	18
National result.....	18
Results by dimension	20
Results by Region.	27
Case Studies.....	31
Strategic Recommendations	40
Perspectives and Opportunities.....	43
Conclusions.....	45
Bibliography.....	46
Annex.....	50

Executive Summary

Colombia provides a comprehensive analysis of civic space¹ conditions at both national and territorial levels, with particular focus on Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities. This document employs mixed qualitative and quantitative methodologies to assess civic participation conditions and the specific challenges faced by these communities. Using Oxfam monitoring scale and CIVICUS Monitor references, the study evaluates nine key dimensions through a 0-10 scoring system, with 2-point intervals defining each category: 0-2 (Closed), 2-4 (Repressed), 4-6 (Obstructed), 6-8 (Restricted), and 8-10 (Open). The scale ranges from 0, representing extremely negative conditions with complete absence of civil society participation, to 10, indicating the best conditions for civil society engagement and activity development within a specific geographic area.

Key Findings:

- **Caribbean & Insular Region:** Civic space remains closed due to the state's failure to respond to Afro and Indigenous communities, while the Raizal People demand formal recognition and autonomy.
- **Orinoquía:** Despite some progress in dialogues with authorities, persistent barriers include limited funding and inadequate protection for human rights defenders.
- **Amazon:** The high prevalence of illicit cultivations and armed violence severely restricts social leadership and the exercise of fundamental rights.
- **Pacific:** Despite its economic potential, the structural violence, insecurity, justice systemic and resources obstacles, hinder civic participation.
- **Andes:** Civic space is repressed, with high risks for social leaders—particularly in Antioquia and significant territorial inequalities in rights and participation.

Strategic Recommendations:

This report proposes a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen the civic space for Afro-descendant and Indigenous organizations:

- Promote content that promotes peace and counters polarizing narratives.
- Strengthen skills in management, security protocols, fundraising, and accountability.
- Establish coordinated safeguarding mechanisms and pathways for social leaders.

¹ Civic space refers to the environment that enables civil society to play a role in the political, economic, and social life of our societies. Specifically, it allows individuals and communities to contribute to the development of policies that affect their lives, under conditions that are free, inclusive, transparent, and rights-based (OHCHR).

- Guarantee political participation with intercultural and intersectional approaches.
- Develop counter-narratives against racism and online violence.
- Monitor accountability and citizen participation in public policymaking.

Outlook and Opportunities

The current landscape presents critical opportunities for advancing civic space:

- Implementation of the Peace Agreement provisions and initiatives by the Ministry of Equality could significantly benefit historically excluded communities.
- The strengthening of 65 organizations through the Voces Incluyentes project demonstrates a commitment to cooperation and democratic resilience.
- Technologies offer innovative pathways for virtual participation, overcoming geographical barriers and enabling national/international dialogue platforms.

Conclusions

Colombia's civic space continues to face systemic challenges:

- Chronic Underfunding undermines organizational autonomy and sustainability.
- Bureaucratic Barriers discourage social mobilization while reinforcing state control mechanisms.
- Unaddressed Threats against human rights defenders persist due to inadequate state response.
- Structural Inequality creates disproportionate barriers to participation in peripheral regions.
- Racism is not effectively sanctioned, and it disproportionately affects Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities online.
- Intersectional Vulnerabilities particularly affect organizations led by women, youth, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and displaced populations - requiring urgent protection measures.

A man wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat and a blue and white vertically striped shirt is working in a field. He is holding a large, light-colored root or tuber with both hands, and a white string is tied around it. The background shows a dirt path and some trees.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Human rights and environmental defenders in Colombia face one of the most dangerous situations in the Western Hemisphere (Mongabay, 2024). The country has the highest number of murdered leaders in the world and experiences a security and human rights crisis that severely affects those who defend the territory, natural resources, and the rights of vulnerable communities.

Despite peace process advances and the government's "Total Peace" policy implemented since 2022, violence persists nationwide. Attacks against defenders increasingly target their lives as a systematic method to silence their efforts against illegal activities in their territories (Castillo, 2024).

The situation of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities adds a critical dimension to civic space protection efforts (OHCHR, 2024). Colombia's civic space faces diverse challenges that severely restrict Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities' ability to participate fully in democratic processes (Meneses, 2020). These historically marginalized groups confront systemic barriers including digital exclusion, inadequate technological infrastructure, and unequal access to fundamental rights. Such limitations not only constrain civic engagement but also perpetuate vulnerability to discrimination, violence, and territorial dispossession (OHCHR, 2024).

Within this context, Hivos' "Connect, Defend, Act!" program (2024) works to strengthen civil society's capacity to protect and expand civic space, with particular focus on communities facing the greatest barriers. The initiative emphasizes inclusive participation, rights protection, and intersectional approaches that address the specific needs of Afro-descendant and Indigenous populations.

The "Civic Space Monitoring Report in Colombia 2025" "Inclusive Voices" project, an initiative of the Sustainable Change Corporation that seeks to highlight the conditions of civic space in eleven key territories across the country. Using a mixed methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection, this report analyzes key barriers faced by Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities in their civic participation, identifying regulatory, geographic, digital, and sociocultural obstacles.

This report serves as both an analytical tool and as a call to action – not only assessing the current state of civic space but providing concrete recommendations to enhance advocacy capacity, community autonomy, and protection mechanisms. Through its participatory approach, the document amplifies grassroots perspectives from social and community organizations, aiming to foster a more inclusive, secure, and resilient civic environment across Colombia.

A portrait of a woman with a large, ornate, light-colored headpiece and a red garment, with the word 'METHODOLOGY' overlaid in a red serif font.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The project adapts Oxfam's monitoring methodology, incorporating indicators from CIVICUS Monitor and Freedom House, along with Arias González's (2020) online data collection framework. This mixed-methods approach ensures sequential adaptation of data gathering activities across different tiers, followed by processing and analysis to produce a comprehensive report specifically contextualized for Colombia's reality and target populations (Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities). The implementation occurred through three distinct phases:

1. Measurement Framework Development

The report established nine key dimensions to assess civic space: Legal Framework; Funding Access; Administrative Barriers; Safety and Well-being; Freedom of Expression and Information; Freedom of Assembly; Dialogue and Consultation; Access to Justice and Legal Services; and Civil Society Legitimacy and Accountability. Five measurement categories were defined (Open, Restricted, Obstructed, Repressed, Closed) using a 0-10 scale divided into 2-point intervals, with Table 1 detailing the specific criteria for each classification range and their corresponding numerical values.

Table 1. Civic Space Measurement Criteria Source: Adapted from Oxfam (2019).

Category	Category Overview
Open (8 -10)	National and regional authorities actively enable and guarantee civil society participation for all citizens. In this environment, fear is absent - people freely associate, demonstrate in public spaces, and share information without formal or in fact restrictions. Press freedom is robust, social media remains uncensored, and citizens enjoy unobstructed access to government information.
Reduced (6 -8)	While authorities permit civil society organizations and individuals to exercise rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, violations still occur. Citizens can form associations to advocate for diverse interests, yet full enjoyment of these rights is periodically undermined by harassment, arbitrary detentions, or attacks against government critics. Protests generally proceed peacefully, though authorities sometimes impose unjustified security-based restrictions
Blocked (4 -6)	Civil society faces systematic opposition from authorities, who enforce both legal and in fact restrictions of fundamental rights. While civil society organizations (CSOs) exist, state actors deliberately undermine them through illegal surveillance, bureaucratic harassment, and public defamations.
Repressed (2 -4)	Civil society operates under severe constraints. Activists and citizens who criticize authorities face systematic surveillance, harassment, imprisonment, physical attacks, and even assassination. While some CSOs exist, their advocacy work faces deliberate obstruction, with constant threats of forced closure or criminalization by state actors.
Closed (0 -2)	Civil society space is completely shuttered, both legally and in practice. An environment of fear and violence prevails, where state and parastatal actors operate with impunity – arbitrarily detaining, severely attacking, or even murdering those attempting to exercise rights of association, peaceful assembly, or free expression.

2. Data Collection

Fieldwork focused on eleven Colombian departments: Amazonas, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Guainía, La Guajira, Magdalena, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Valle del Cauca, and Vichada. The qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews with community leaders and organizational representatives, supplemented by focus groups designed to document collective experiences and perceptions of civic space challenges. The quantitative component involved structured surveys administered to representative community members, capturing data on civic participation rates, resource accessibility, and perception of rights.

To ensure rigorous analysis aligned with international standards, the study incorporated: 1) comprehensive literature review of local organizations' perceptions on civic space conditions, 2) official cyber-mapping of government authorities' communications, 3) documentation of human rights defenders' reports (2025 cohort), and 4) statements from national and international bodies. This data was cross-referenced with information from Colombia's 22 remaining departments. The methodology also included legal analysis and comparative assessment against the 2024 report findings.

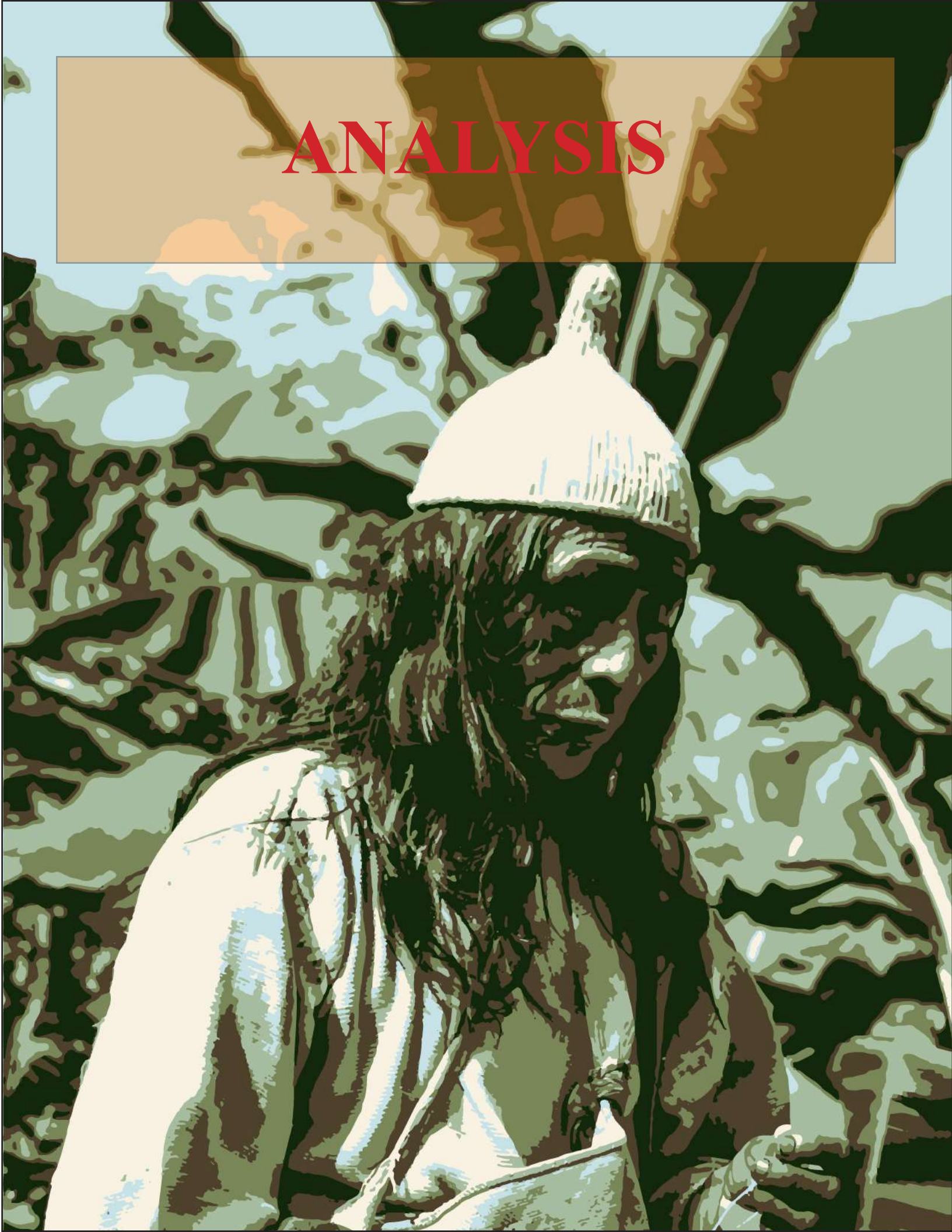
3. Information analysis.

The research team processed the data through a categorical and longitudinal analysis matrix, organizing findings according to civic space dimensions with departmental weighting. Results were georeferenced using color-coded mapping at both national and departmental levels. For the eleven focus departments, the analysis included: 1) enhanced geospatial mapping of localized perceptions, 2) comparative territorial benchmarking against national patterns, 3) year-over-year trend analysis, and 4) legal-contextual examination of regulatory frameworks.



Project Activity: Voces Incluyentes program implementation in Cartagena, Bolívar, featuring capacity-building workshops with local Afro-Colombian and Indigenous organizations. Source: Cambio Sostenible archive

ANALYSIS



Context

In 2025, Colombia experienced direct impacts on the enabling environment ² for local organizations. According to the Institute of Development and Peace Studies (INDEPAZ), 23 massacres ³ occurred in the first half of the year, with 70 victims - including 62 social leaders and 21 peace agreement signatories ⁴. These national and global challenges severely constrained civil society's operational capacity, manifested through critical funding cuts to organizations, and escalating physical and digital attacks against rights defenders.

Freedom House's latest 2025 report ranks Colombia at 70/100 in global freedom indexes, highlighting particular weaknesses in freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression. Digital freedom challenges focused on internet access rights, information security, online violence, and state surveillance. Human Rights Watch 2025 reports document systematic abuses by armed groups ⁵ against civilians - including a fourfold increase in killings by ELN and Frente 33 factions, forced displacements, and targeted persecution of social/environmental leaders who denounce narco-trafficking and illegal mining operations.

The Ombudsman's Office has expressed concern over escalating structural discrimination against Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, who face systematic violence and persecution by armed groups seeking territorial control through confinement tactics ⁶ and movement restrictions in strategic areas (2022). These communities - historically marginalized and forced into conflict-prone regions - now confront renewed displacement threats as violent actors contest these territories (Ombudsman's Office, 2024).

² Enabling environment refers to the favorable conditions and guarantees that allow civil society to carry out its work—thanks to freedoms such as expression, access to information, freedom of association, and participation in public decision-making (CIVICUS, n.d.).

³ “Massacre” is defined as the extrajudicial execution of three or more people in a single event, or in related events linked by perpetrator, location, and timing (E/CN.4/2000/11).

⁴ This term refers to individuals who were formerly associated with guerrilla groups and chose to accept the terms of the Peace Agreement.

⁵ Despite peace efforts and the current “Total Peace” policy led by President Gustavo Petro, armed groups have refused to comply with its terms and continue to commit crimes in the country (HRW, 2025).

⁶ Confinement refers to a condition of dispossession or land abandonment (‘deterritorialization’) in which restrictions are imposed on the use, enjoyment, and productive benefit of the territory. When a community is confined, it means that—even while remaining on its land—it loses the freedom to move within it; armed conflict and violence force people to limit their movements to a reduced space to protect their lives, often depriving them of basic survival needs such as food and hygiene (Unidad de Víctimas, 2023).



Dimensions of civic space

National result

Colombia's civic space status for Afro-descendant and Indigenous local organizations remains classified as **REPRESSED** on average. Illustration 1 reveals that the southeast of the country is predominantly in the Closed category, north zones are in the Repressed category, while the center is in the Obstructed category. This data highlights how regions with concentrated Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations consistently show the most restricted civic space conditions nationwide.

Compared to 2024, the national average shows a gradual 3 to 4-point increase, reflecting measurable improvements in certain civic conditions. Specifically, 14 departments (42%) demonstrated civic space expansion, while 8 regressed and 11 maintained stagnant conditions - collectively representing 57% of departments where shrinking opportunities for Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities to exercise fundamental freedoms remain concerning.

Being classified in this “Repressed” category signifies that ethnic communities face significant challenges nationwide – including hostile environments and systematic silencing when attempting to develop transformative initiatives. This reality contrasts with Colombia's general enabling development framework, where the overall civic space landscape remains classified as “Restricted” (Freedom House, 2025).

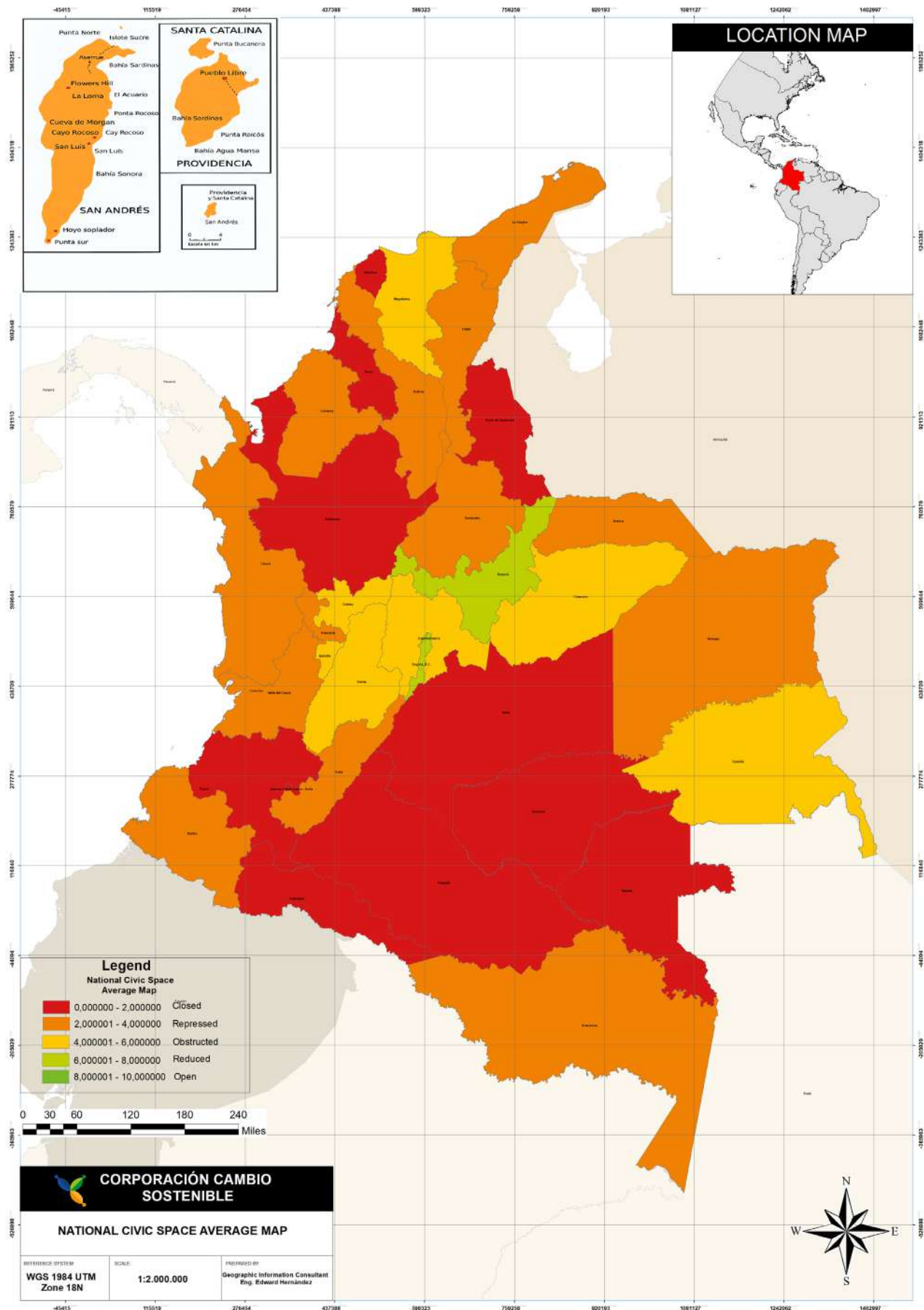


Figure 1. National map of Colombia's 2024 civic space status averages. Source: Authors, 2025

Results by dimension

Figure 2 displays Colombia's national scores across all civic space dimensions, revealing particularly constrained results in Dimensions B, C, D, and E

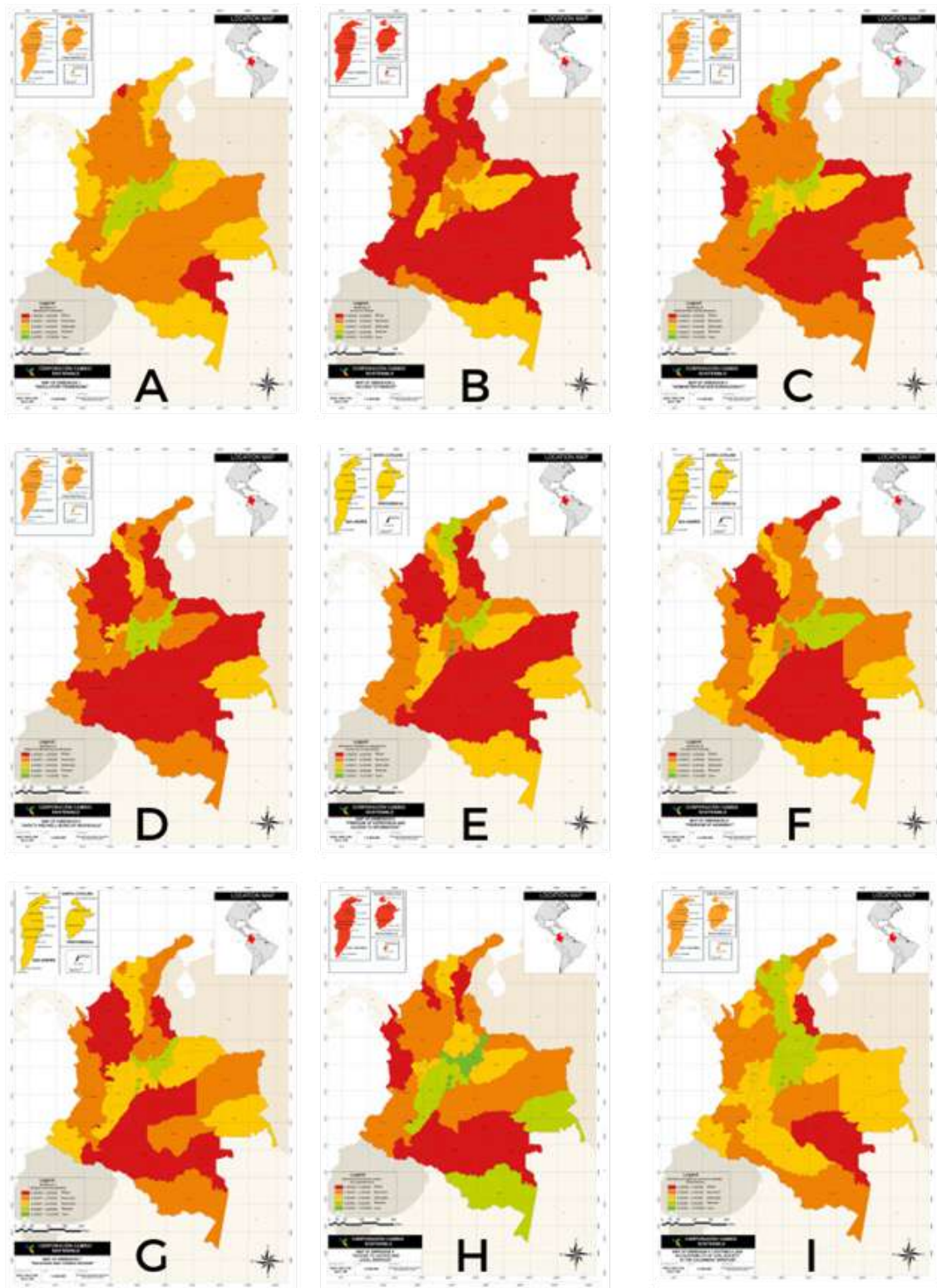


Figure 2. National maps of Colombia's civic space status by dimension. Each map represents one civic space dimension: A) Legal Framework; B) Funding Access; C) Administrative Barriers; D) Safety & Well-being; E) Freedom of Expression & Information Access; F) Freedom of Assembly; G) Dialogue & Consultation; H) Access to Justice & Legal Services; I) Civil Society Legitimacy & Accountability. Source: Authors, 2025

A. Legal Framework

DIMENSION 1 (0-10 points)

Does the existing legal framework effectively support civil society organizations to be autonomous in their management operations?

4/10

Colombia's regulatory landscape continues to impose restrictive conditions that undermine the legal recognition and operational capacity of local organizations, maintaining this dimension's REPRESSED classification. The country's legal framework imposes annually renewed requirements - ostensibly justified as anti-money laundering and transparency measures - that disproportionately burden civil society groups. These increasingly unequal compliance conditions perpetuate systemic stigmatization of organizational legitimacy while restricting fundamental freedoms of association and legal operation.

Colombia's tax system subjects nonprofit organizations under the ordinary taxation regime ⁷ to corporate-level fiscal demands that often exceed their operational capacities, even though the organizations may in some cases receive income similar to that of a mini-company, this leads many into involuntary noncompliance due to failure to meet the obligations imposed by DIAN (the National Directorate of Taxes and Customs) requirements. While authorities promote a Special Tax Regime ⁸ as an alternative, this mechanism imposes perpetual monitoring that restricts organizational autonomy - limiting leadership decisions, founder participation, and even preventing social entrepreneurship initiatives.

Colombia's Law 2195 of 2022 (Article 9) requires all legally established organizations to create, implement, and monitor Ethics and Transparency Programs (PTEE) under the oversight of regulatory institutions. This legislation categorizes civil society organizations as potential money laundering risks while failing to provide adequate guidance or tools for developing these required policies. As a result, organizations face uneven implementation of these mandatory requirements, suffering disproportionate burdens during inspections due to the lack of standardized support or capacity-building measures.

Afro-Colombian and Indigenous organizations emphasize that civil society regulations remain ambiguous by categorizing organizations as private sector entities, failing to recognize the distinct challenges faced by nonprofit groups compared to businesses and commercial ventures.

⁷ It refers to the tax regime applicable to legal entities (such as companies or organizations) and individuals required to file income tax who do not meet the criteria to be part of the simplified or special tax regimes (García Moreno & Casallas Roza, 2022, p. 29).

⁸ This corresponds to a set of tax regulations applicable to a group of entities whose purpose is to carry out activities of public interest and operate on a non-profit basis allowing them to receive tax benefits when filing income tax (DIAN, 2025).

B. Access to financing

DIMENSION 2 (0-10 points)

How is civil society's scope of freedom to mobilize national and/or foreign resources assessed?

3/10

By 2025, most territories reported operating under repressed conditions for accessing funding. The international funding landscape for Colombia deteriorated significantly following President Donald Trump's decision to suspend U.S. federal agency funds for international cooperation (Knickmeyer & Lee, 2025). The situation worsened when Trump publicly questioned aid to ethnic communities, criticizing specific USAID initiatives: "Listen to some of the horrible waste we've already identified...\$60 million for indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups - is this for real?" (Carvajal García, 2025).

Hundreds of programs in Colombia have been indefinitely suspended due to the irreplaceable loss of U.S. cooperation funding (Stacey, 2025). Facing both financial restrictions and impending tax obligations, many Afro-descendant and Indigenous organizations have had to terminate implementation agreements and legally dissolve their operations altogether. The few remaining projects that continue covertly under U.S. federal agency agreements have been forced to unilaterally accept directives from the Trump administration - including prohibitions on supporting or even publicly commenting on issues like abortion rights or transgender identity, with immediate funding withdrawal as the consequence for non-compliance (RTVE, 2025).

In Colombia, access to public funding has historically been dictated by political interests. While the public contracting system is presented as transparent, local organizations consistently report rigged processes and deliberately delayed announcements that prevent diverse participation across regions⁹. Although some territories have made progress in allocating funds to Indigenous Reservations and Afro-descendant Community Councils through development projects, newer organizations - particularly "mixed" groups working with both populations - face systemic exclusion. As one anonymous organization from the Voces Incluyentes project stated: "You must be either Afro or Indigenous to qualify - the Ministry forms are designed to restrict organizations like ours that serve both communities."

⁹ During a public hearing in the Colombian Congress, Representative Olga Lucía Velásquez revealed that between 2013 and 2023, just 10 contractors accounted for nearly 30% of all government contracts, according to data from SECOP II. This represents more than 97.7 trillion Colombian pesos (Rozo, 2025).

C. Administration and bureaucracy

DIMENSION 3 (0-10 points)

How is the role played by local and national administrations (e.g., governorates, municipal mayors' offices) in facilitating civil society activities evaluated?
3/10

The bureaucratic and surveillance landscape for local organizations remains constrained nationwide. While some territories have achieved limited organizational autonomy, areas in the southern and eastern regions experience what feels like complete exclusion from institutional support. Local authorities in these zones - often aligned with political agendas - selectively determine whether to collaborate with civil society groups or instead target them for intensified monitoring based on perceived utility.

Representatives and leaders of civil society organizations report that bureaucratic processes and institutional neglect of their needs persist from the very moment of their legal establishment as nonprofit entities. In some territories, basic registration offices are completely absent - as in Vichada, which lacks a Chamber of Commerce ¹⁰ in its capital, forcing organizations to either fly or undertake over 24 hours of ground travel to Villavicencio (capital of Meta department) just to complete their legal registration.

The operational requirements for local organizations vary significantly across Colombia's territories, with some areas showing more flexibility than others. These uneven development conditions prove particularly challenging for predominantly rural regions lacking electricity or internet access to complete mandatory registration updates. In many border areas, merely maintaining legal organizational status is considered "a remarkable achievement," as groups struggle to meet compliance demands with almost non-existent infrastructure conditions.

Afro-Colombian and Indigenous organizations overwhelmingly report that the DIAN tax authority lacks understanding of their ethnic contexts and the challenges of maintaining accounting compliance. There are few accountants with specialized knowledge of social organizations, and most now require the use of accounting software for even the limited annual financial operations of local groups - adding fees and costs that often exceed these organizations' modest annual incomes from their core activities. Ultimately, it falls to the members and founders themselves to cover these expenses out of pocket.

¹⁰ Chambers of commerce are legally recognized institutions with legal personality, created by the national government either on its own initiative or at the request of local merchants. They are responsible for registering the commercial and legal activity of a given territory (Hernández León, 2015).

D. Safety and Wellbeing:

DIMENSION 4 (0-10 points)

How is the safety and wellbeing of activists, staff members, and social leaders in Colombia evaluated? 3/10

Perception of safety in 2025 has declined across Colombia, largely due to the expanding presence of paramilitary groups and other illegal armed actors. Security conditions for human rights defenders remain dangerous in over 80% of the country, particularly in rural and disconnected areas. Indigenous leaders are especially at risk, warning that their organizations may be targeted by these armed groups if they speak out against the crimes committed in their territories.

Generalized insecurity has been further exacerbated by a rise in acts of racist violence, often amplified online. In a context of political polarization, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities have been caught in the middle—on one hand, symbolizing the progressive rhetoric of the current national government around social inclusion, and on the other, facing backlash from fascist and ultra-conservative groups ¹¹.

Forced displacement due to violence and ongoing clashes between Colombian armed forces and illegal groups have further undermined safety, particularly in regions where criminal actors have reemerged. Threats against human rights defenders, labor leaders, and land rights activists continue to escalate, severely affecting this security dimension ¹².

E. Freedom of Expression and Access to Information

DIMENSION 5 (0-10 points)

How is access to information and freedom of expression for organizations in your territory evaluated? 4/10

Restrictions on freedom of expression remain a serious concern for human rights defenders and community leaders, who are often surveilled and persecuted by criminal groups monitoring their public statements and social media posts, especially when denouncing criminal acts. This situation is particularly severe in rural areas, where state authorities have limited presence and protection mechanisms for defenders are weakened (Stacey, UN warns of rising killings of environmental defenders in Colombia, 2024).

Local organizations have expressed fear of speaking out on sensitive issues or making public state-

¹¹ Ultraconservative Senator María Fernanda Cabal criticized Colombia's Vice President Francia Márquez for her remarks on racism in technology and her call to establish a global reparations fund for the harms caused by colonialism, accusing her of "trying to play the victim" (Rodríguez Sevilla, 2025).

¹² In Tibú, Norte de Santander, the hostile presence of the ELN and death threats against civilians led to the displacement of over 30,000 people in the first half of the year.

ments that might expose them to surveillance—particularly around corruption, environmental crimes, drug trafficking, and land disputes.

F. Right to Peaceful Assembly

DIMENSION 6 (0-10 points)

How is the level of freedom to assemble, express opinions, and protest in Colombia assessed?
4/10

In Colombia, protest continues to be stigmatized¹³, and Indigenous communities face discrimination when engaging in civic demonstrations—often driven by ultra-conservative leaders aligned with social control agendas¹⁴. Many organizations based in rural or remote areas, especially those without road access, are cautious about organizing public protests due to reports from defenders who warn that some police personnel allegedly collaborate with armed groups and share information about the activities of organizations and activists. This increases the risk of profiling, harassment, and violence.

G. Dialogue and Consultation

DIMENSION 7 (0-10 points)

How is the government's openness to meaningfully involving social organizations in policy development or reform assessed?
4/10

The inclusion of local organizations in participatory and decision-making processes has gained recognition at the national level, but remains highly unequal at the local level. Underrepresentation persists, along with a general lack of interest in involving civil society in local governance and the political agendas of municipal governments. Opportunities for participation are often restricted or prove ineffective in influencing decision-making. Local organizations also report a lack of trust and political will to meaningfully incorporate civil society proposals into actual decision-making spaces.

¹³ Conservative journalist and presidential pre-candidate Vicky Dávila circulated a video showing intoxicated individuals, using the phrase “drunk Indigenous people” to generalize and distort the protest of an Indigenous community at the National University of Colombia (Saavedra, 2025).

¹⁴ The Mayor's Office of Bogotá stigmatized the Emberá Indigenous Guard by linking it to child recruitment in an official communication. Although it later issued a retraction, the damage to the community's image had already been done, generating tensions and online violence against the group (Restrepo, 2025).

H. Access to Justice and Legal Services

DIMENSION 8 (0-10 points)

How is civil society's access to legal services and justice evaluated in cases of rights violations?

4/10

Access to legal guidance and protection mechanisms remains highly unequal across the country. Once again, defenders and leaders of local organizations face disproportionate barriers to justice—particularly in rural areas compared to urban centers. State presence in many regions remains limited, and civil society efforts have largely been confined to documenting killings. Prevention and early detection mechanisms for threats or targeted violence are not being implemented effectively¹⁵. In 2025, digital harassment and threats against Indigenous leaders are increasingly visible, yet they have not led to structural changes or effective prosecution of perpetrators.

I. Legitimacy and Accountability of Civil Society

DIMENSION 9 (0-10 points)

How is the level of transparency among social organizations in Colombia assessed?

5/10

Transparency and accountability are seen by local organizations as moderately sustained practices, largely supported through community outreach and communication efforts. However, regions in the southern part of the country continue to show very limited transparency, often overlapping with areas that have the lowest levels of internet connectivity and digital access.

Due to limited technological infrastructure in these areas, organizations often lack confidence in the legitimacy of participatory processes—particularly when medium and large organizations are awarded projects or resources in their territories without meaningful local engagement.

¹⁵ In 2025, Kamëntšá Indigenous journalist Sandra Chindoy received death threats on social media. Despite public complaints, judicial response has been slow, while support for fascist groups continues to grow across digital platforms (CNTI, 2025).



Results by Region

For this report, Colombia was divided into five geographic areas referred to as regions, each grouping different parts of the country. Figure 3 presents radial charts by region.

Section 1. Caribbean and Insular Region (North)

Comprising the departments of Atlántico, Bolívar, Cesar, Córdoba, La Guajira, Magdalena, and Sucre, the civic space across this region is, on average, rated as Closed – score of two (2). This may be due to the lack of adequate response from both national and local authorities to the diverse needs of the communities—particularly those expressed by Afro and Indigenous organizations. While Indigenous groups tend to receive more institutional recognition and protection, Afro-Colombian communities increasingly express dissatisfaction, feeling relegated to second-class citizenship. Many argue that “statistical visibility and certification by the Ministry of the Interior”¹⁶ is necessary to safeguard their cultural, social, and economic integrity and have their rights fully recognized.

One notable territory is the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina. There, Raizal and Palenquero leaders feel unheard by the government and believe they lack the self-determination afforded to Indigenous and Afro communities in mainland Colombia. This sentiment led to a gathering of nearly 70 delegations who drafted the ‘Raizal Community Statute’—a non-legally binding document created as a collective call for sovereignty and recognition of the Raizal people.

Section 2. Orinoquía Region (East)

Comprising the departments of Arauca, Casanare, Meta, and Vichada, this region is considered restricted in terms of civic space. One key highlight is that, while the legal framework recognizes community rights, significant challenges remain around financing. Social organizations struggle to

¹⁶ Third paragraph of the article Juntanzas Regionales published by the Afro-Colombian National Peace Council – CONPA (2025).

access public or international funding due to limited technical capacity and a lack of transparency in funding calls.

In 2025, local authorities have shown greater willingness to engage in dialogue with certain community sectors, which has been perceived as a positive development, particularly for Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, and conflict-affected communities, as well as migrants (MOE, 2025). However, the most concerning issues in the Orinoquía region relate to access to justice and the safety of human rights defenders.

Section 3. Amazon Region (South)

Comprising the departments of Amazonas, Putumayo, Caquetá, Guainía, Guaviare, and Vaupés, this region is among the most critical for the protection and exercise of rights by Afro and Indigenous organizations, as well as for practicing social leadership. The most concerning dimensions are territorial security and access to funding—especially in Putumayo, Guaviare, and Vaupés.

Notably, according to ESPE ¹⁷, Putumayo ranks as the second department with the largest area of coca leaf cultivation ¹⁸, exposing it to ongoing conflicts between illegal armed groups. This severely undermines freedom of movement, personal safety, and the ability to report crimes.

Section 4. Pacific Region (West)

Comprising the departments of Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, and Valle del Cauca, this region faces significant limitations in the full exercise of organizational activities. Organizations reported operating within a Closed civic space—score of two (2).

Despite being one of the regions with the greatest potential for economic development—given its Pacific coastline, geographic diversity, and borders with Ecuador and Panama—it shares many of the same structural inequities found in the rural areas of the Amazon and Orinoquía. This is partly due to the region's large areas of jungle, including the Darién biogeographic region.

The most critical challenges include: access to funding, safety for human rights defenders, structural violence, and serious barriers to accessing justice.

Section 5. Andean Region (Center)

Comprising the departments of Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Caldas, Bogotá D.C., Huila, Quindío, Risaralda, Norte de Santander, Santander, and Tolima, the Andean region shows uneven progress in cultural integration policies—some areas advancing more than others. Civic space in this region is evaluated as Repressed, with strong tendencies toward the lower end of the scale (scores of zero [0] and two [2]), particularly in dimensions such as personal safety and wellbeing, freedom of assembly, and access to funding.

The department of Antioquia stands out as a particularly alarming case. Despite its significant urban development, social leaders remain severely restricted. According to INDEPAZ, as of 2025, five (5) of the twenty (20) murdered Peace Accord signatories were from Antioquia.

¹⁷ Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas (ESPE, 2025).

¹⁸ 51% of the coca crops in the Amazon region are concentrated in the department of Putumayo (UNODC as cited by FCDS, 2024).

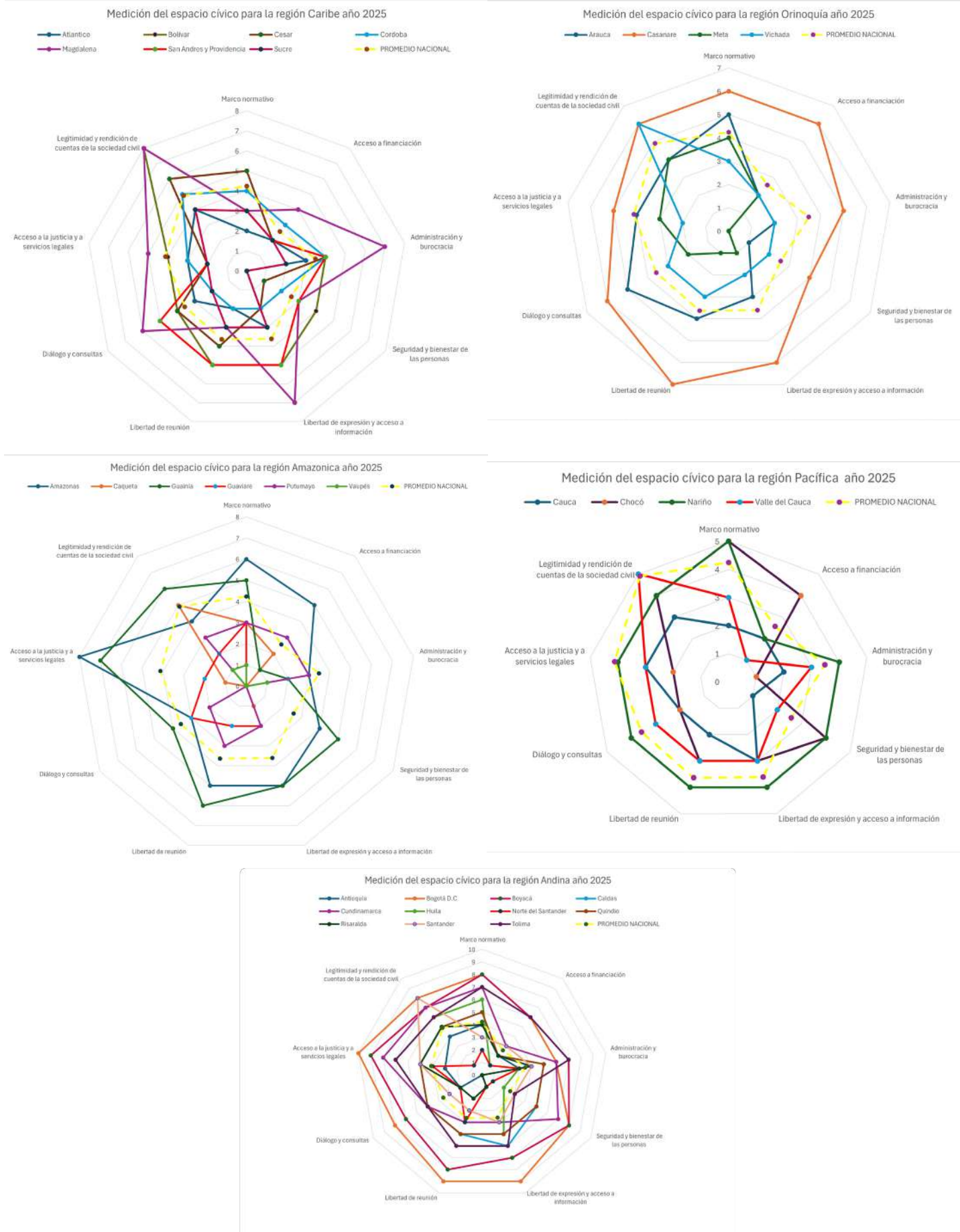


Figure 3. Radial charts by region: a) Caribbean Region; b) Orinoquia Region; c) Amazon Region; d) Pacific Region; and e) Andean Region. Source: Authors, 2025



*Project activity of Voces Incluyentes in Cali, Valle del Cauca, with local organizations.
Source: Cambio Sostenible*

Case Studies

Figure 4 shows the distribution of average civic space conditions across each of the departments highlighted in this report.

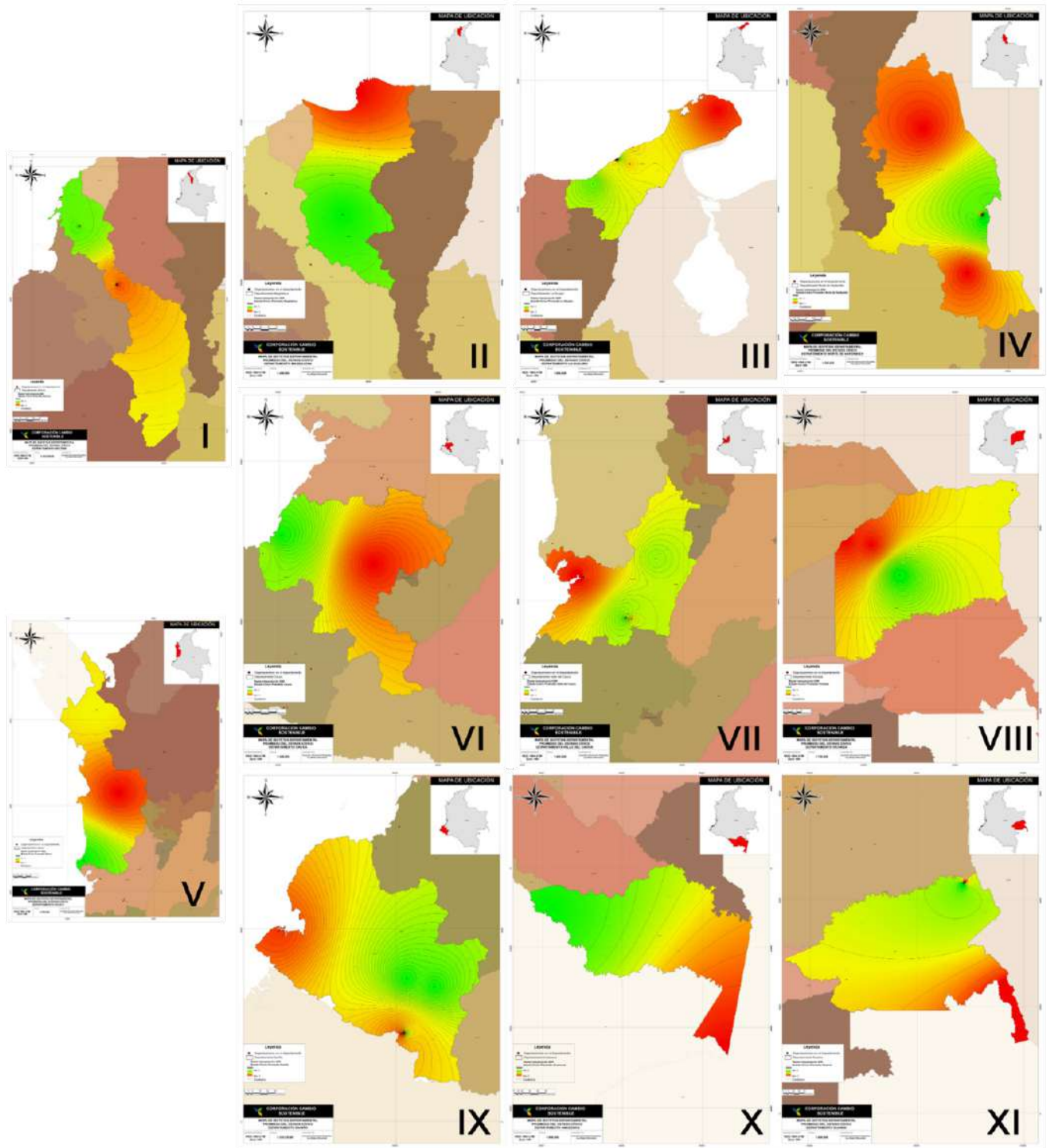


Figure 4. Isohyet map showing the distribution of civic space conditions by department, including: I) Bolívar; II) Magdalena; III) La Guajira; IV) Norte de Santander; V) Chocó; VI) Cauca; VII) Valle del Cauca; VIII) Vichada; IX) Nariño; X) Amazonas; XI) Guainía. Source: Authors, 2025

I) Bolívar

The department of Bolívar presents a repressed civic space. Its main challenge is access to funding, as Afro-descendant communities receive insufficient support from the state. Armed groups are present in parts of the territory, and due to fear and concerns for personal safety, freedom of expression is limited—especially when denouncing local drug trafficking networks. In some cases, leaders avoid going to certain areas or leaving their homes at specific times of day. Compared to 2024, civic space conditions in this department have worsened.

II) Magdalena

In Magdalena, civic space is obstructed. The department faces major challenges related to the security of social leaders and access to funding. Project selection processes lack transparency, with reports of advance notice being given exclusively to pre-selected organizations invited by public entities to participate. Access to information is also limited, particularly due to poor internet connectivity in areas such as the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, home to Indigenous communities like the Kogui. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education offers specialized bilingual education programs for these communities. The department shows relatively strong legitimacy and accountability. However, bureaucratic barriers persist in the identification and classification of Indigenous individuals, limiting universal access to rights¹⁹. Compared to 2024, the overall civic space condition in Magdalena has improved, although security concerns for human rights defenders remain.

III) La Guajira

This department faces several challenges, particularly in terms of access to justice and legal services—especially in its northern area, known as Alta Guajira—where communities encounter significant barriers to obtaining legal assistance or fair judicial treatment. Additionally, there is a lack of effective mechanisms for civic participation in dialogue and consultation processes. Freedom of assembly is also rated low, indicating restrictions or risks associated with social mobilization.

Other dimensions, such as personal safety and wellbeing, freedom of expression, and access to information, reflect repressive conditions—pointing to issues of local censorship and misinformation in digital media.

IV) Norte de Santander

In 2025, this department has been the most affected by a wave of violence driven by the ELN, severely restricting civic space. Both the general population and Afro and Indigenous defenders are unable to freely exercise fundamental rights such as freedom of expression due to fear of retaliation. Human rights defenders face ongoing harassment, and illegal armed groups maintain a permanent presence.

There is a lack of government funding and resources to support the implementation of social organization-led projects. The territory is also experiencing active displacement due to violence, and in general, the prevailing climate of violence and repression prevents meaningful public participation. Additionally, state-imposed requirements are often seen as intrusive or discriminatory toward communities, and there is a lack of transparency in procurement and bidding processes. Organizations

¹⁹ In the case of the Kogui Indigenous community: obtaining a national ID to access rights is perceived as a limitation. From their perspective, they choose not to identify themselves within that system, as they consider it a threat to their customs and traditions.

report the need for training to better understand laws and public policies affecting Afro communities, as they perceive structural racism at both local and departmental levels. Compared to 2024, the overall civic space condition in Norte de Santander has declined, particularly in the areas of freedom of assembly and access to justice

V) Chocó

The outlook for Chocó remains bureaucratically devastating. The limited reach of the national government and subnational jurisdictions fails to meet the basic needs of the territory, weakening the ability of local organizations to respond effectively. This is compounded by a lack of transparency in procurement processes, which threatens the long-term sustainability of Afro and Indigenous organizations. These communities must also fight for their right to assemble and engage in dialogue, as they are subject to constant surveillance and attempts to silence their voices. As in the case of the Director of the departmental environmental agency (CODECHOCÓ), an incident that has instilled fear among Afro and Indigenous leaders advocating for environmental protection. Regarding access to justice and legal services, Chocó is classified as Closed in terms of civic space (2025).

VI) Cauca

Cauca remains one of the most critical departments in Colombia in terms of security for human rights defenders. According to the Electoral Observation Mission (MOE), Cauca continues to report the highest number of lethal incidents against social leaders. This has been a persistent trend over the years, and conditions have not improved in 2025. In the first half of the year, the Ombudsman's Office issued two Early Warnings—Structural and Imminent—related to recruitment, movement restrictions, curfews, and other concerns (2025).

In addition, ethnic organizations face ongoing uncertainty around access to funding. This dimension is described as closed to opportunity, as neither the state nor international cooperation bodies fully understand the contextual, cultural, and circumstantial challenges faced by Afro and Indigenous organizations in accessing opportunities and calls for proposals. Moreover, no differentiated capacity-building pathways are offered to support project development and implementation.

VII) Valle del Cauca

Afro and Indigenous organizations acknowledge progress in ethnic representation within decision-making positions. However, this has not translated into improved security, as intimidation and threats continue. In the public sphere, while the local government has made efforts to promote conflict resolution initiatives, some leaders believe the state has been negligent. Despite political intentions to improve the situation, a long history of neglect and broken commitments hinders the meaningful participation of organizations, which also face economic limitations. As a result, civic space in 2025 is rated as closed.

In terms of security risks, municipalities like Buenaventura continue to bear the burden of illegal armed group activity, with six active criminal fronts operating across urban and rural areas. These groups have been responsible for 20 killings, escalating levels of violence not seen in recent years.

VIII) Vichada

This department, located in eastern Colombia, has shown some improvement in civic space conditions compared to 2024. However, significant gaps remain in the protection of human rights defenders, access to justice mechanisms, and state presence in rural areas. As the largest department in Colombia and home to the highest number of Indigenous peoples in the country, challenges related to social

equity persist—largely due to the lack of visibility of the communities’ needs.

Intersectional discrimination against Indigenous LGBTIQ+ individuals and human rights leaders makes them targets of persecution by criminal groups and conservative sectors.

IX) Nariño.

This department has seen a decline in civic space conditions compared to 2024. Although some departmental-level institutions have implemented small and diverse initiatives to support social transformation, organizations across the territory face a widespread environment of legal and personal insecurity.

Grassroots organizations receive little recognition in local government decision-making spaces, limiting their visibility and reducing their chances of accessing funding. This institutional weakness makes them vulnerable to unjustified restrictions and limitations. For example, one organization reported: “We were about to carry out a project, but the contracting entity claimed they couldn’t disburse funds because we didn’t have the Special Tax Regime (a registration we weren’t aware of), which would have helped them reduce their tax liability.”

This case reflects how organizations are exposed to external actors who may try to influence them for their own interests, taking advantage of their economic vulnerability.

X) Amazonas

This region is home to numerous Indigenous and community-based organizations that promote regional development, conservation, sustainable tourism, ancestral culture, and the defense of community rights. Compared to 2024, civic space conditions have improved; however, verbal and physical threats from illegal armed groups persist, and national authorities continue to restrict civil society actions such as protests and free expression.

Additionally, social organizations based in the urban center of Leticia are prioritized, while those in rural areas are excluded. As a result, these rural organizations face significant challenges including lack of funding, limited infrastructure and healthcare access, restricted freedom of assembly and dialogue, and difficulties in accessing information—often due to poor connectivity across the region. Some organizations report a lack of recognition by authorities and recommend fighting corruption through quality education, so that people are better informed, can act, and overcome fear and mistrust of authority. Notably, the dimensions of freedom of assembly and bureaucratic access have declined.

XI) Guainía

This department is classified as having an obstructed civic space. While there is now increased engagement from some state entities with social organizations in the region, several obstacles persist. These include difficulties accessing funding and internet connectivity, limited influence in public policy processes, and, in some cases, threats against social leaders.

Although there is no systematic repression, conditions still prevent the full exercise of participation rights and freedom of association. According to some organizations, public calls for proposals often benefit older, larger, or more established organizations, leaving out smaller or newer groups. This reflects a lack of transparency in such processes across the territory.



Status of Local Afro-Descendant and Indigenous Organizations.

This information is based on responses from the 49 Afro-descendant and Indigenous organizations that contributed to this report. Below are key data points related to the current status of local Afro and Indigenous organizations:

1. Organizational Capacity:

Funding Sources

55% of the organizations rely on their own resources, meaning that most operate with a high level of volunteer work, where members dedicate time without financial compensation and contribute voluntarily to the organization. This trend is more prevalent among Afro-descendant organizations, with 62% depending on their own resources, compared to 49% among Indigenous organizations. The least accessed funding source is public funding from government programs. Meanwhile, 21% of Afro organizations generate income through alternative means, such as entrepreneurship and the sale of professional services.

Organizational Challenges

The main challenge reported by organizations is access to direct and consistent funding—identified by 30% as their primary need. This is followed by the need for stronger digital tools for cybersecurity (24%), lack of recognition from authorities (21%), legal training (18%), technical assistance (16%), and other needs such as infrastructure development and entrepreneurship (8%).

2. External Conditions

Legal Framework: 55% of organizations believe that current national and local regulations infringe upon their autonomy and traditions. Among Afro-descendant organizations, this perception is even more concerning—71% consider the legal framework discriminatory.

Freedom of Association and Participation: 59% of organizations fear publicly opposing measures or decisions made by local authorities due to the risk of retaliation, such as being labeled “unwelcome” or excluded from participation in public processes and funding opportunities.

Security: 51% of organizations report having faced threats, rising to 60% among Indigenous organizations. These threats include physical violence (39%), digital surveillance (17%), defamation (22%), extortion, and harassment (14%). Only 8% report having implemented digital security measures.

3. Transparency and Access to Resources

Selection and Funding Processes: 60% of organizations believe that public funding selection processes lack transparency, and 51% report bias in selection criteria—particularly when contracting entities are not sensitive to geographic, connectivity, and participation gaps affecting Afro and Indigenous-led organizations.

State Support: 60% of organizations consider government support to be low, while 8% describe it as nonexistent. They point to a disconnect between public policy funding mechanisms and the ethnic equity goals intended to be achieved through organizations committed to protecting their communities.

4. Government Restrictions and Oversight

Restricted Activities: Indigenous organizations report that one of the most restricted activities by authorities in their territories is the organization of marches and the relocation of vulnerable communities to municipal centers, while for Afro-descendant organizations, it is protesting in favor of the rights of traditionally excluded communities. Both types of organizations agree that the most difficult activity in terms of bureaucratic limitations imposed by governmental and police authorities is the participation of spokespersons in local political advocacy spaces, such as Municipal Councils or Departmental Assemblies.

Government Oversight: Afro-descendant organizations perceive themselves more than Indigenous organizations as being persecuted and monitored by state entities.

Correlation of Government Oversight with Intersectionality: Figure 5 shows that for Afro-descendant organizations, there is an intersectional axis of vulnerability to persecution and government control, meaning that certain characteristics may result in significantly higher levels of restriction than for organizations that are solely Afro-identified. According to the Cartesian plane represented in Figure 5, the most relevant area is the upper right quadrant, called the “conflict zone,” where the key variables with the greatest influence and highest dependency are located—in this case, variables F, C, E, and I—which directly increase an organization’s vulnerability to government control. That is, an Afro organization may be more affected if it also represents or identifies as an organization that has publicly criticized the local administration (F), a women’s organization (C), a newly created organization (E), or an LGBTIQ+ organization (I). In contrast, the lower left quadrant of the figure contains autonomous variables, which show low levels of influence and dependency and therefore are not decisive for the phenomenon under study. This suggests that organizations in categories K (sports), B (displaced persons), and J (religious) are subject to fewer government restrictions.

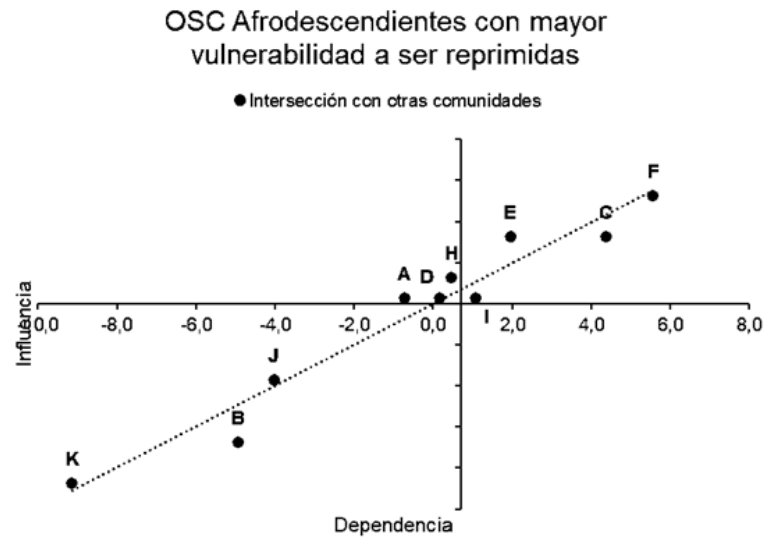


Figure 5. Cartesian plane of Afro-descendant CSOs with higher vulnerability to repression. The variables in the diagram represent types of organizations, as follows: A) Indigenous CSOs; B) Displaced persons CSOs; C) Women's CSOs; D) Human rights defender organizations; E) Newly formed CSOs; F) CSOs that have criticized the local administration; G) Afro-descendant CSOs; H) Rural CSOs; I) LGBTIQ+ CSOs; J) Religious CSOs; K) Sports CSOs. Source: Authors, 2025.

Figure 6 presents the same information, applied to Indigenous organizations. In the Cartesian plane, within the conflict zone, the variables that appear are E, D, B, and I. This indicates that the Indigenous organizations disproportionately vulnerable to government control are those that also identify or operate as newly formed organizations (E), human rights defender organizations (D), displaced persons organizations (B), and LGBTIQ+ organizations (I). On the other hand, the characteristics that have the least influence on government control include belonging to organizations categorized as K (sports), J (religious), C (women), and H (rural).

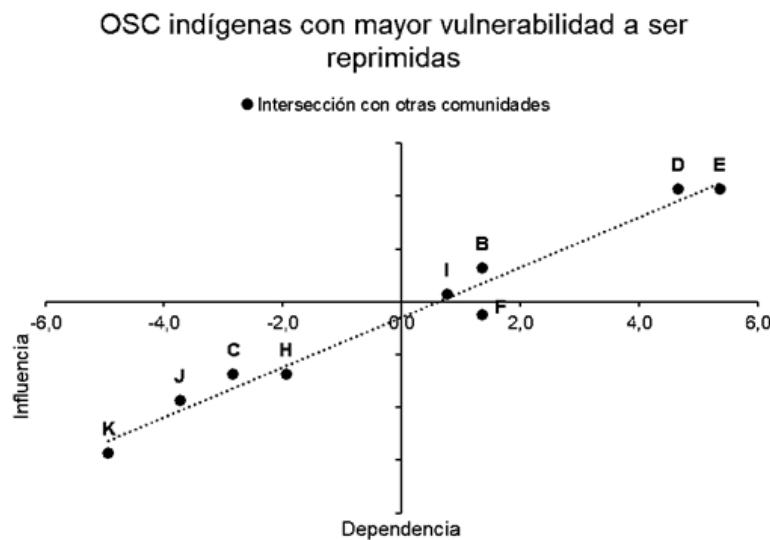


Figure 6. Cartesian plane of Indigenous CSOs with higher vulnerability to repression. The variables in the diagram represent organizational characteristics, as follows: A) Indigenous CSOs; B) Displaced persons CSOs; C) Women's CSOs; D) Human rights defender organizations; E) Newly formed CSOs; F) CSOs that have criticized the local administration; G) Afro-descendant CSOs; H) Rural CSOs; I) LGBTIQ+ CSOs; J) Religious CSOs; K) Sports CSOs. Source: Authors, 2025.

Discrepancies in vulnerability exposure between Indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations reveal differing perspectives on development. While Afro and women-led organizations face structural barriers to civic participation, within Indigenous organizations, female leadership is not considered a priority issue. However, one factor influencing both agendas is the intersection of LGBTIQ+ identity and ethnic belonging—an identity that challenges stereotypes and confronts internal stigmas, representing an unresolved issue within both Afro and Indigenous communities. Regarding human rights defense, both types of organizations recognize this activity as one of the most high-risk, often triggering control, restriction, and persecution by various actors.



Project activity of Voces Incluyentes in Ipiales, Nariño, with local organizations. Source: Cambio Sostenible

A person wearing a dark, pinstriped fedora and a light-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt is standing on a sandy beach. They are looking down at a large, unfolded map or document they are holding with both hands. The background is a blurred view of the ocean and a rocky shoreline. A semi-transparent orange rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the word "RECOMMENDATIONS" in red, serif, all-caps font.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to actors involved in the protection of rights and promotion of social equity for Afro-descendant and Indigenous organizations. This includes human rights guarantor bodies, national authorities, local public entities, the private sector, universities, and non-governmental organizations.

1. Communication for Peace

- Develop content that promotes a culture of peace and conflict resolution, helping prevent risks of confrontation and the spread of polarizing narratives that label social leaders under extremist political categories, putting their wellbeing at risk.

2. Strengthening Local Capacities

- Promote a holistic capacity-building agenda for social organizations, including organizational management, security, funding, project development, budget monitoring and execution, and accountability.

3. Security and Protection Guarantees

- Establish inter-institutional pathways for alerts and reporting threats against leaders and human rights defenders.
- Promote the use of secure technologies to mitigate digital surveillance.

4. Inclusion in Decision-Making

- Ensure political representation of Afro-descendant and Indigenous peoples in municipal, departmental, and national councils.
- Design public policies with an intercultural and intersectional approach.

5. Unified Response to Digital Violence and Online Racism

- Co-design digital content with local organizational groups focused on counter-narratives that address fascist, xenophobic, and aporophobic discourse and raise public awareness on the importance of not normalizing online violence and racism.
- Provide digital tools and resources to community organizations to strengthen their civic engagement and influence.

6. Monitoring Through Citizen Participation Mechanisms

- Establish clear indicators to measure transparency in selection and funding processes.
- Disseminate citizen participation mechanisms for consultation, petitions, complaints, and litigation related to corruption or lack of transparency in public calls for proposals



*A Project activity of Voces Incluyentes in Puerto Carreño, Vichada, with local organizations.
Source: Cambio Sostenible*

A high-contrast, stylized image of a crowd of people. Many individuals have their hands raised in the air, suggesting a celebratory or cheering atmosphere. The image is dominated by warm tones of brown, tan, and orange, with some bright blue accents from clothing. A semi-transparent orange rectangular box is centered horizontally and vertically, containing the word "CONCLUSIONS" in white, all-caps, serif font.

CONCLUSIONS

Perspectives and Opportunities

Despite the challenges, the current context also presents significant opportunities to advance the strengthening of civic space:

- The implementation of public policies stemming from the Peace Accords and the Ministry of Equality and Equity can serve as a catalyst for integrated actions that support the wellbeing of historically excluded communities.
- The strengthening of 65 local organizations through the Voces Incluyentes project, with the support of Hivos, highlights the potential and cooperative will that persists in Colombia—accompanying communities through a historical moment in which ultra-conservative rhetoric seeks to roll back the human rights and individual freedoms agenda.
- The rise of digital technologies offers new avenues for virtual participation, reducing geographic barriers and fostering both national and international dialogue.

Conclusions

Civic space in Colombia continues to face deep and complex challenges, particularly in regions with a high presence of Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities. This report highlights equity gaps at multiple levels that are often invisible:

• **Funding as a condition for autonomy:**

The sustainability of local organizations has become even more difficult than in the previous year. Now, it is not only public funding that has diminished—international cooperation has also reduced its opportunities. Unfortunately, limited access to funding makes organizations vulnerable to falling into relationships of control with public or private contractors who may abuse their position to undermine the autonomy and collective and individual freedoms of their members.

• **Relentless bureaucracy—where is the limit?**

More and more, legislation and administrative procedures shift in favor of oversight bodies (Inspection, Surveillance, and Control), to the detriment of the development of social organizations. There is a subtle trend toward pushing organizations to operate exclusively under the conditions set by fiscal and local authorities. It is ironic that a philanthropic social organization, just months after legal registration, is already required to file income taxes, allocate funds for accounting, and submit financial documentation annually just to maintain its legal status. In other words, a new organization already owes the State merely by existing—and over time, the situation worsens. This raises a serious question among communities: What is the real long-term purpose of these control systems? Does the Colombian State intend to push organizations into irregularity or eliminate the collective will to organize, paving the way for actors aligned with convenient economic agendas?

• **Security—an intangible yet still absent element in timely state response:**

Threats, forced disappearances, and harassment of human rights defenders must not end in murder when early warnings are available. The Colombian State cannot be complicit in the atrocities committed by criminal groups seeking to silence civil society and prevent it from standing up for community interests. The State has a duty to protect community leaders and human rights defenders, particularly because they represent the voices of hundreds and thousands of citizens.

• **Inequality as a structural barrier:**

The analysis confirms that the regions with the highest levels of exclusion are also those most affected by armed conflict, lack of connectivity, and weak institutional management. In departments like Vichada, La Guajira, and Chocó, geographic distance becomes a chasm that perpetuates inequality. In these areas, limited access to resources, justice, and participatory spaces not only restricts organizations but reinforces intergenerational exclusion.

• **Online racism—a harmful phenomenon without consequences for ultra-conservative and fascist leaders:**

Stigmatizing Afro and Indigenous populations online under the guise of “freedom of expression” or as ideologically protected speech must be considered a form of discrimination—or incitement to it. The continued reproduction of these narratives has real consequences on the wellbeing of thousands of people, violating their fundamental rights.

• **Intersectionality—resisting through adversity:**

The role of Afro and Indigenous organizations led by human rights defenders, LGBTIQ+ individuals, women, displaced persons, and youth is a critical form of resistance. These organizations are disproportionately vulnerable to government control and persecution due to their cross-cutting agendas for social equity, and thus require dedicated support and accompaniment.

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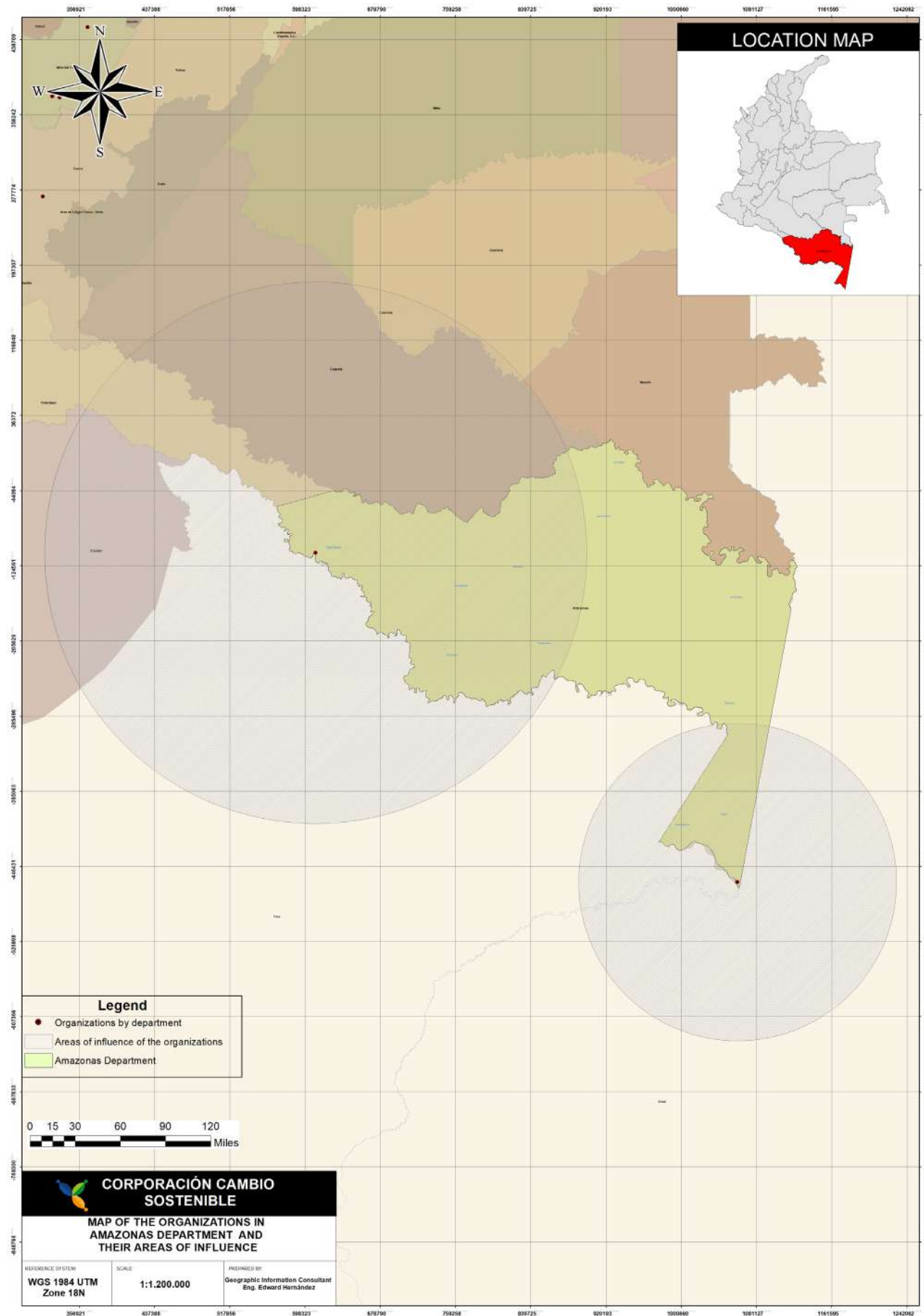
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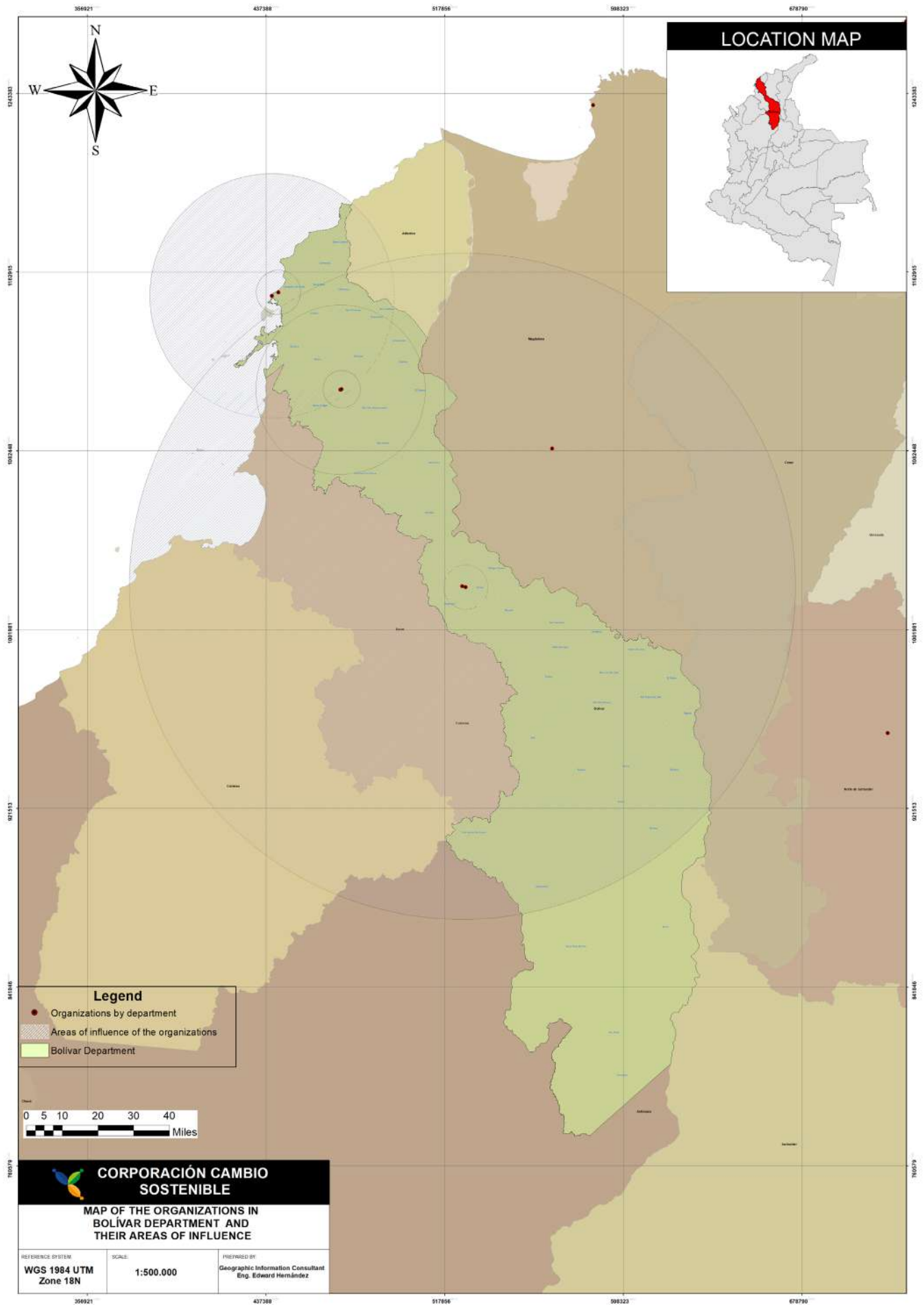
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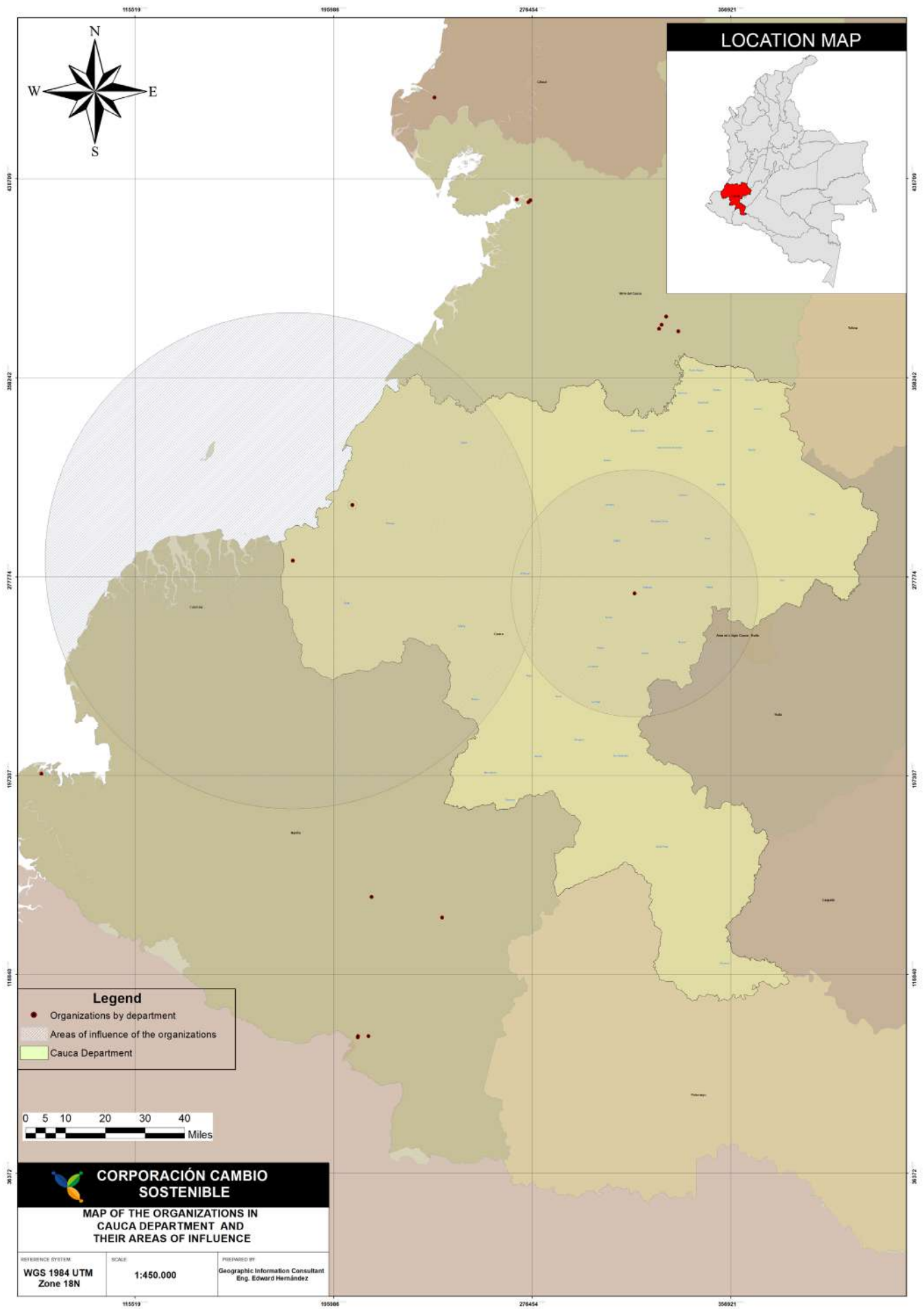
A woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a dark poncho is seated at a wooden table covered with a red cloth. She is using a metal coconut squeezer to extract juice from a coconut. On the table, there is a white paper bag, a glass of coconut juice, and a white cup. Underneath the table, several coconuts are visible in a wooden crate. The background is a rough, rocky wall.

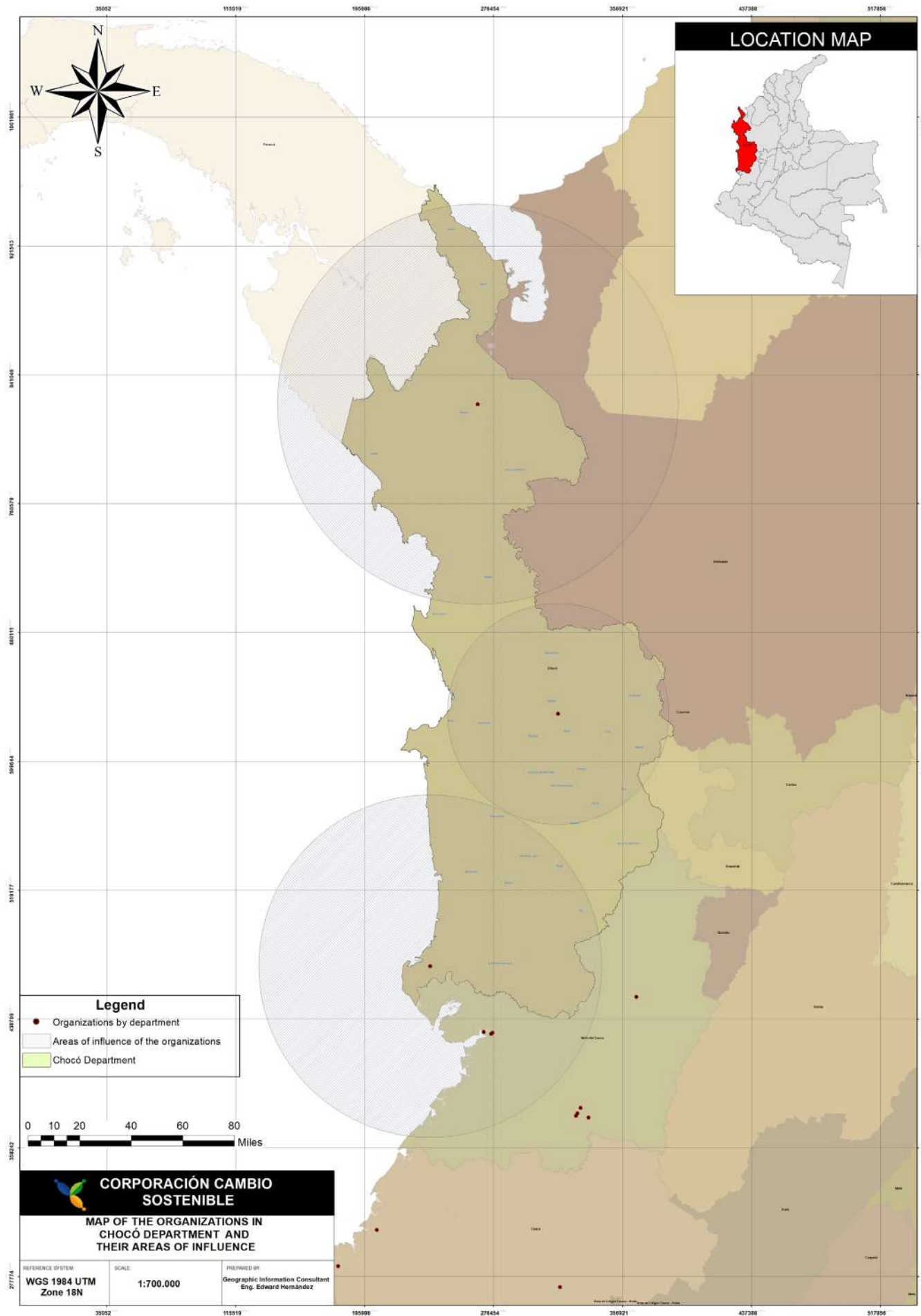
ANNEX

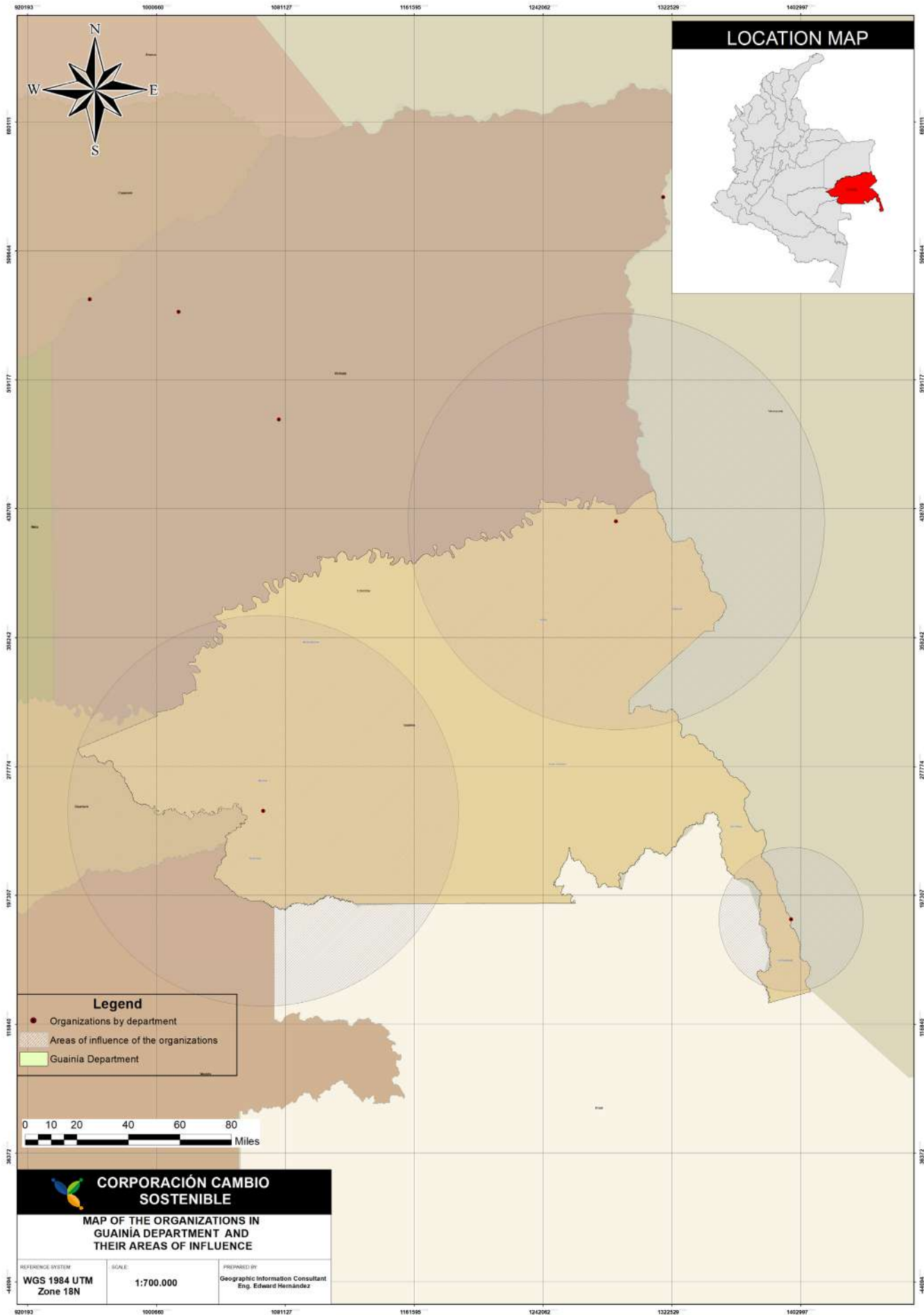
ANNEX 1. PROJECT GEOLOCATION MAPS

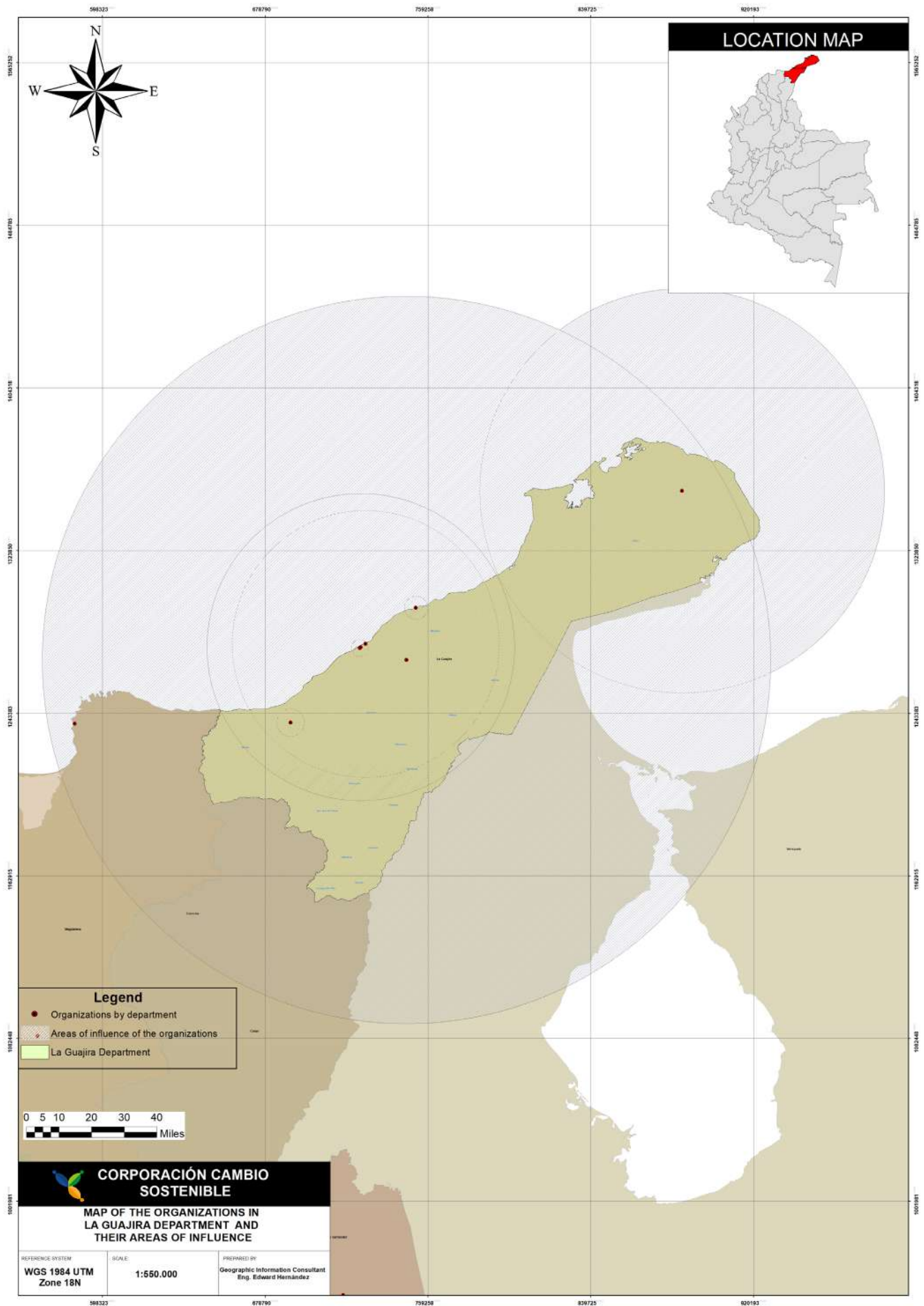


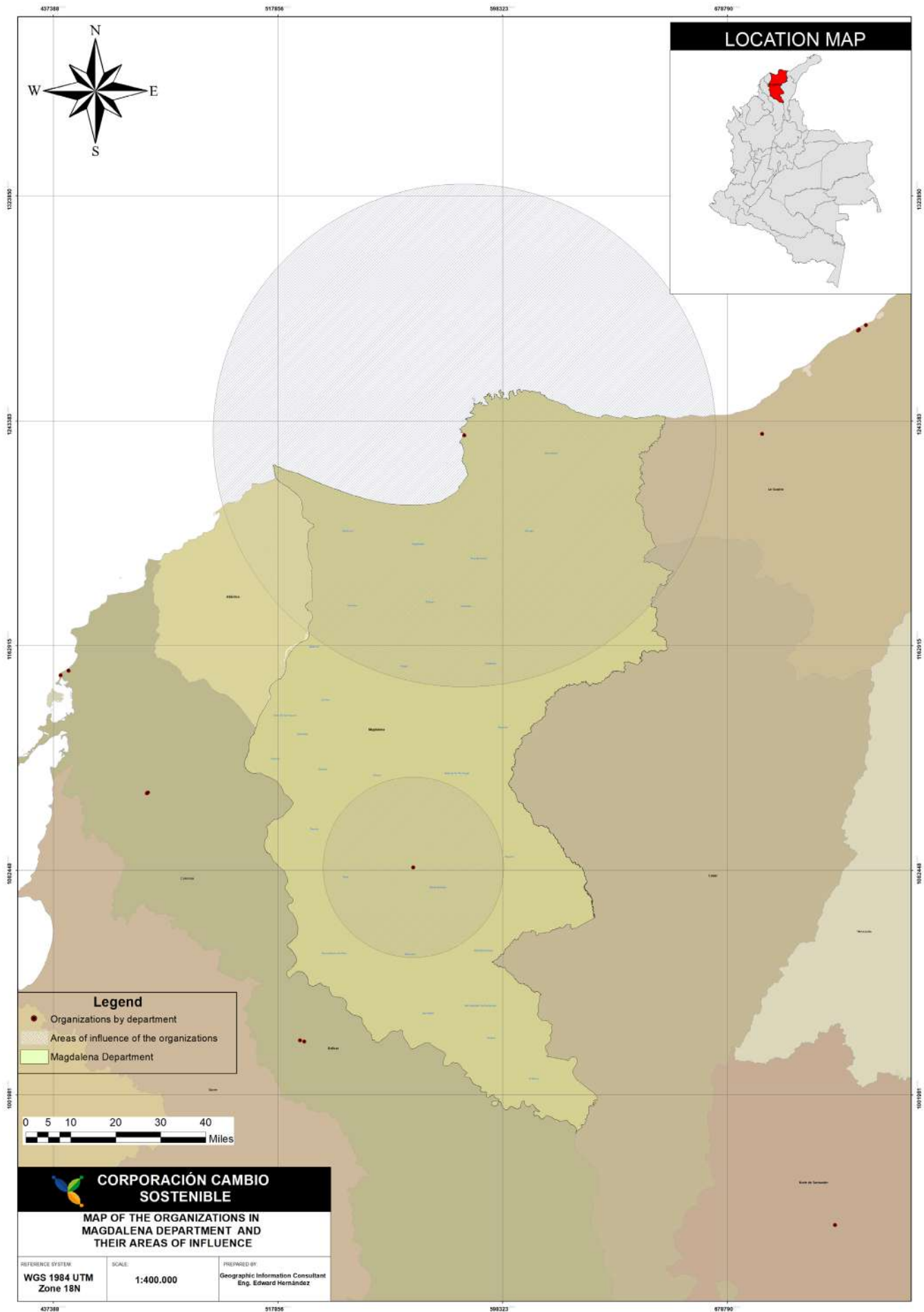


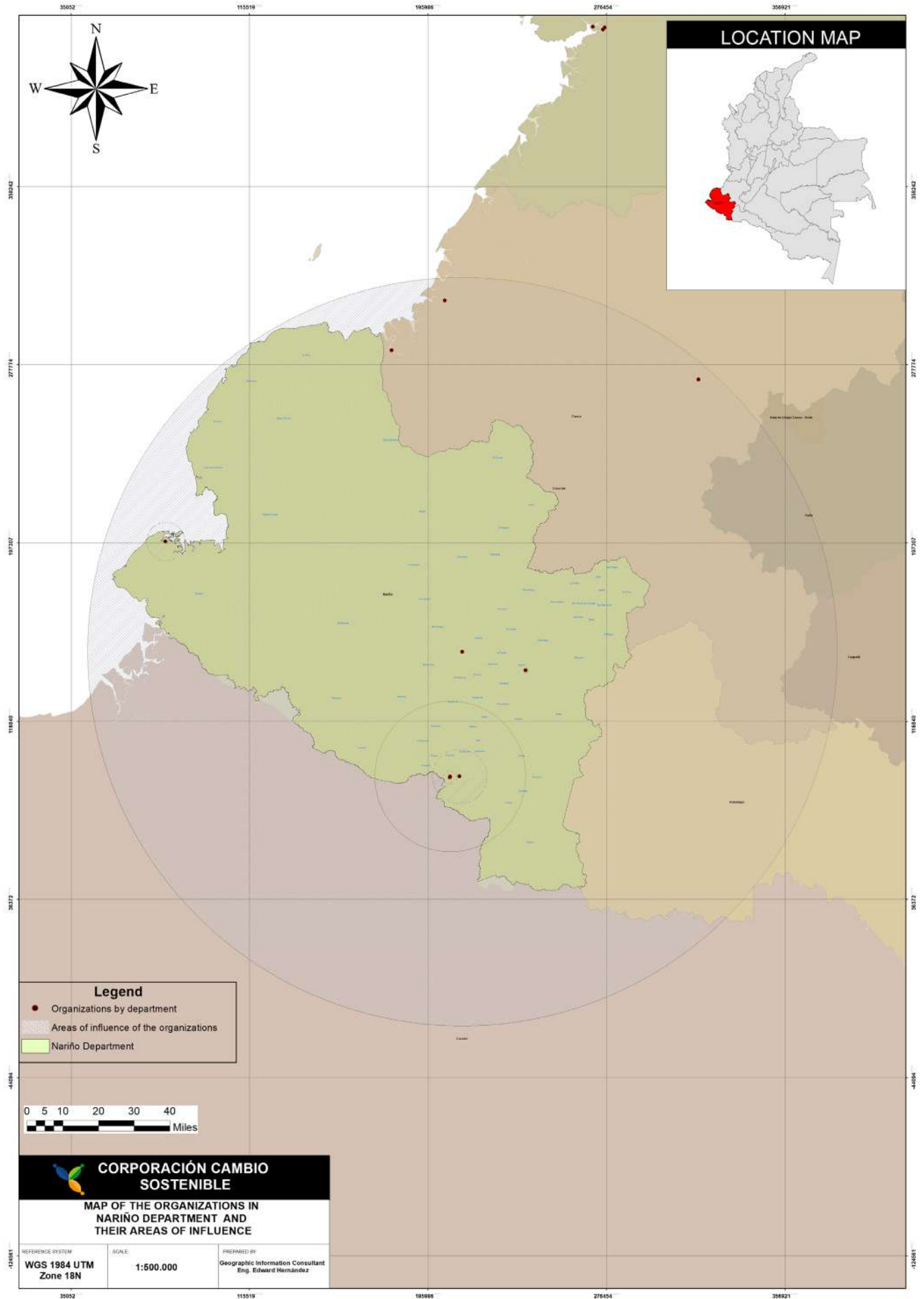


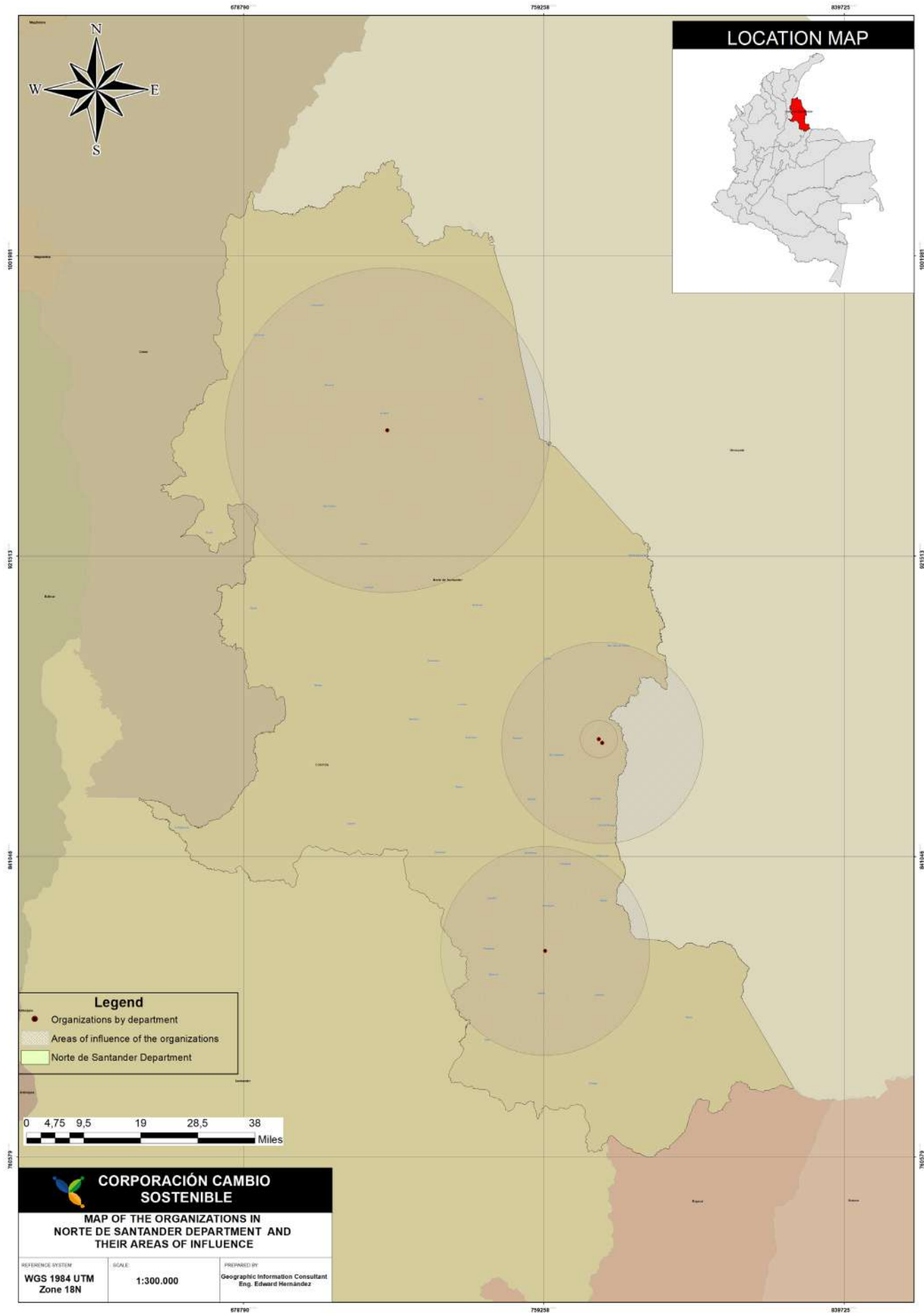


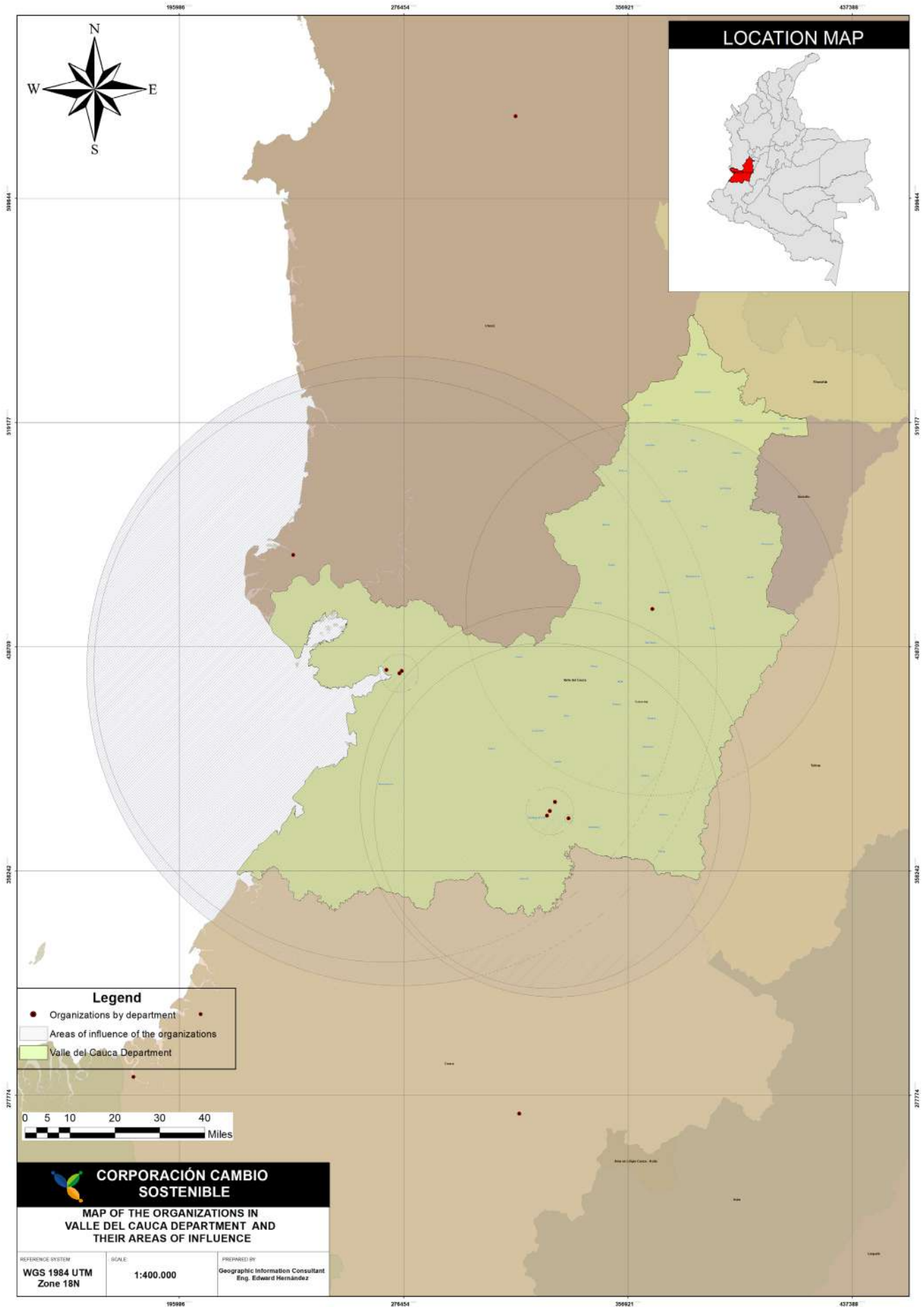


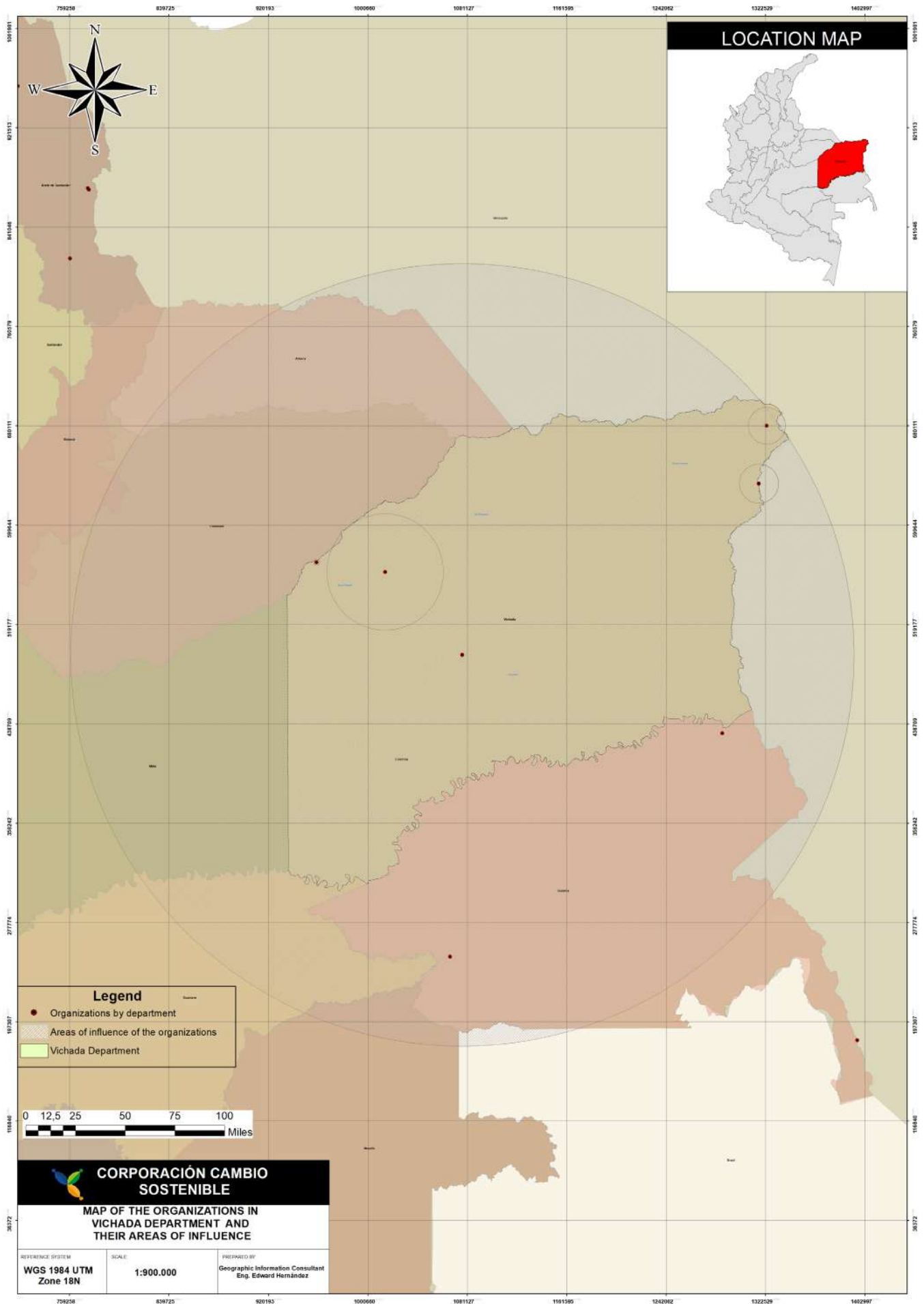




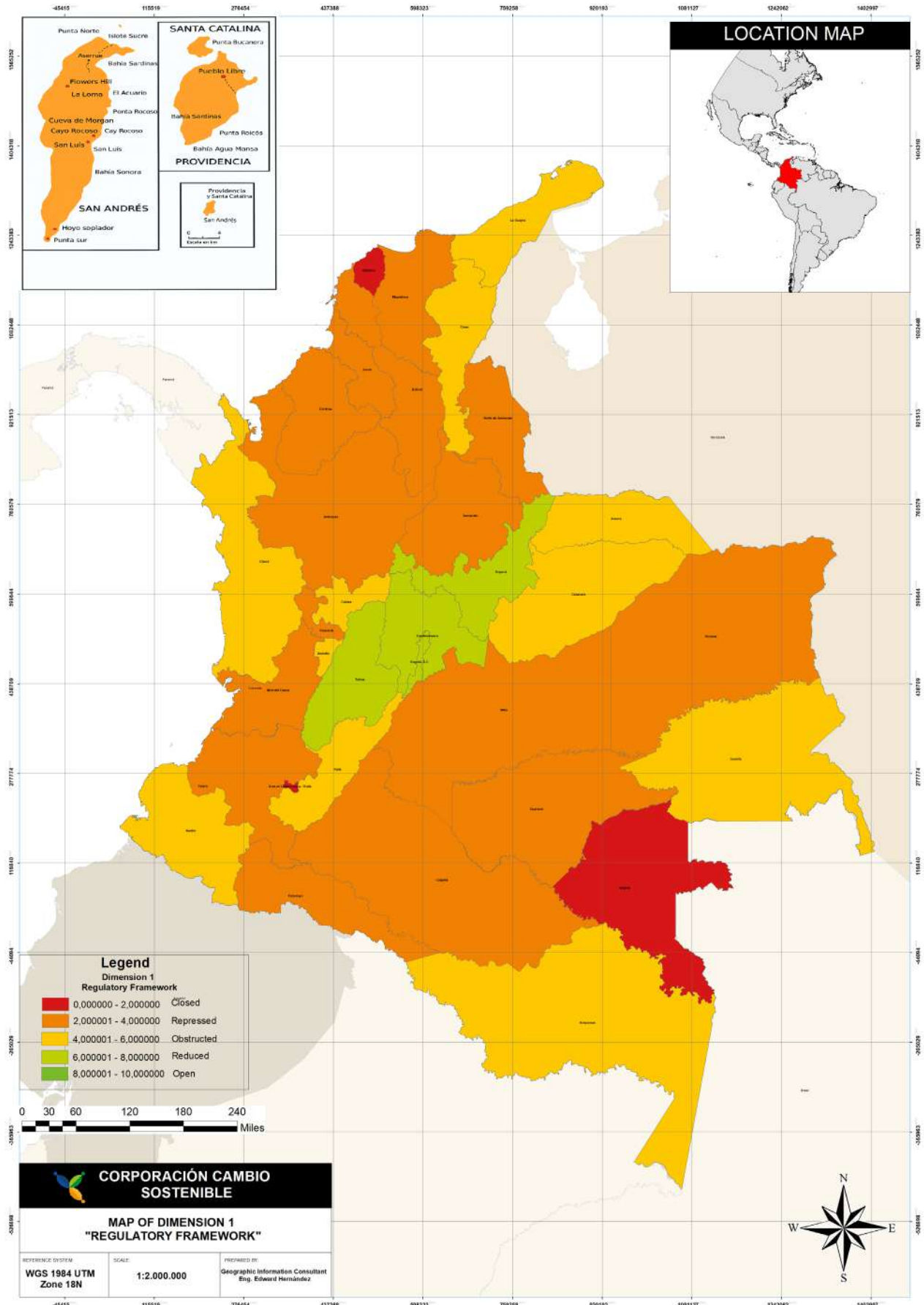


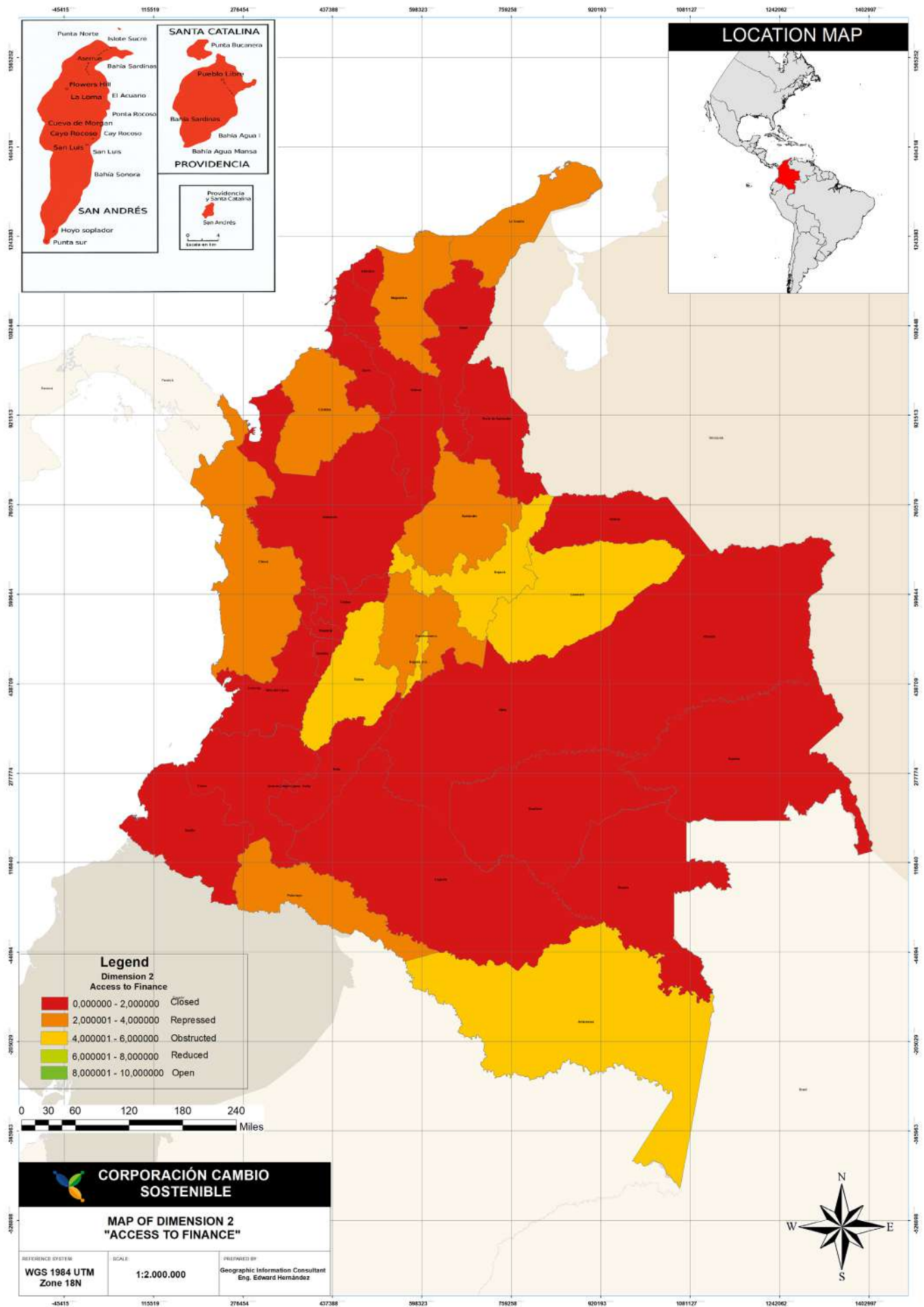


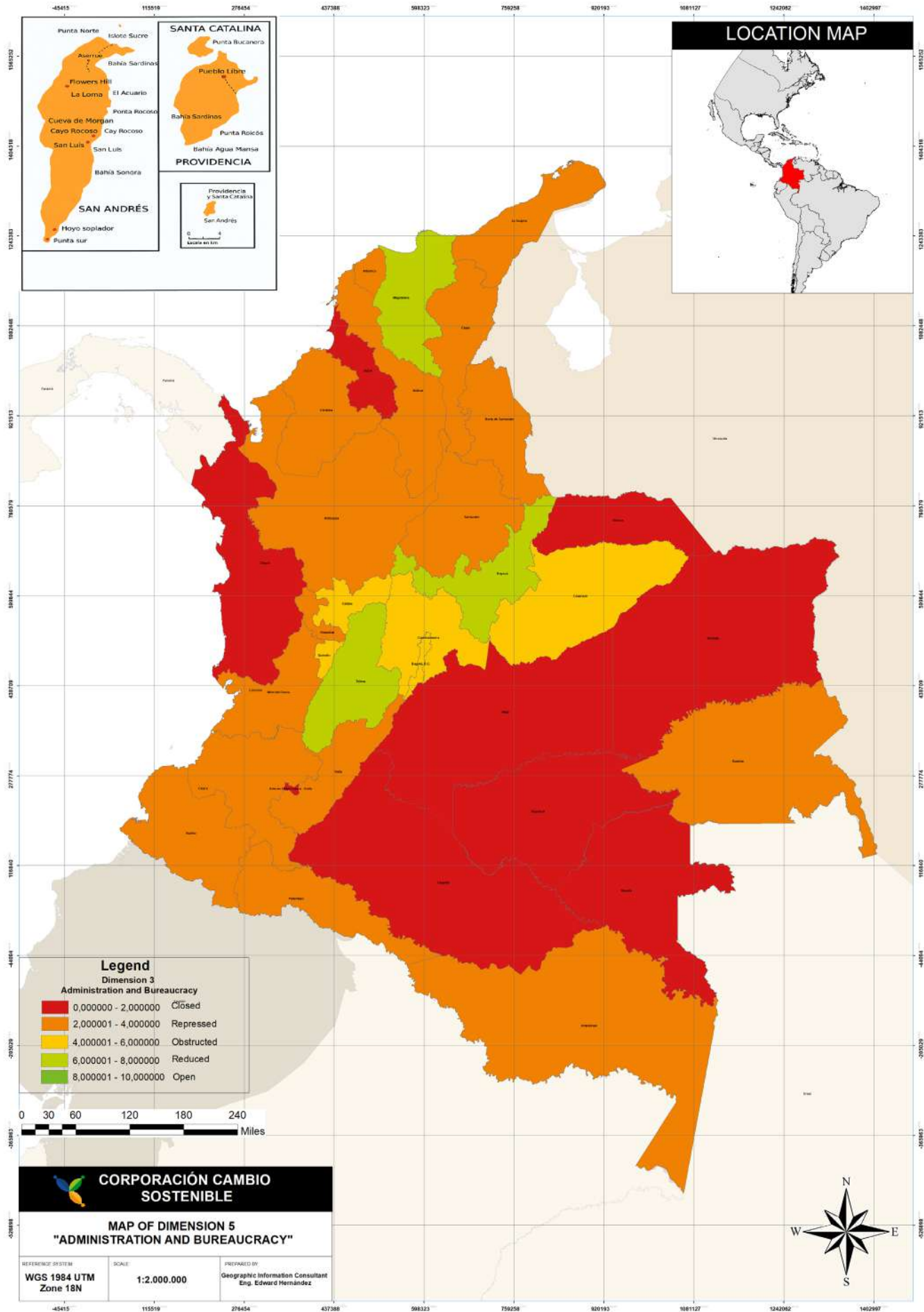


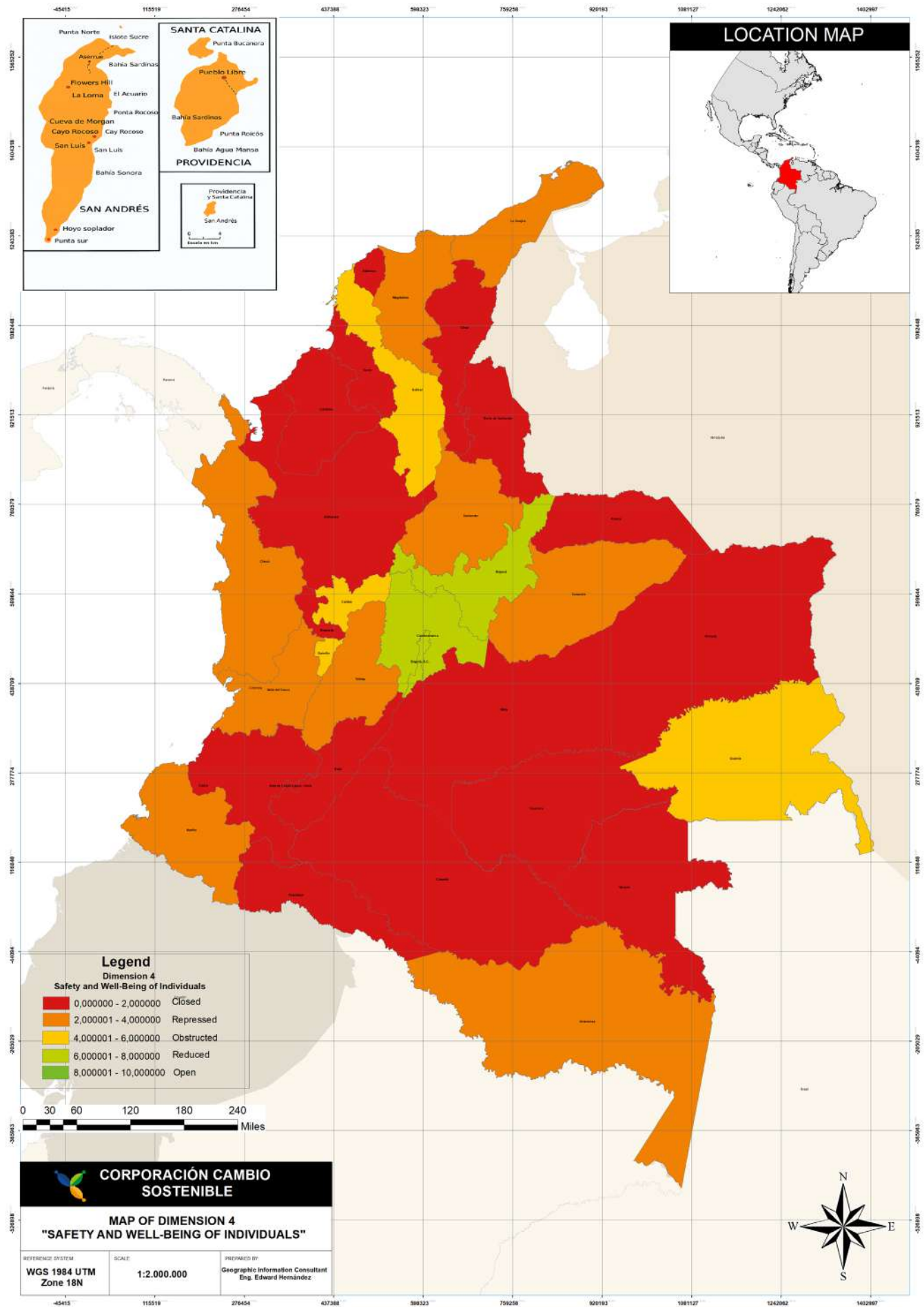


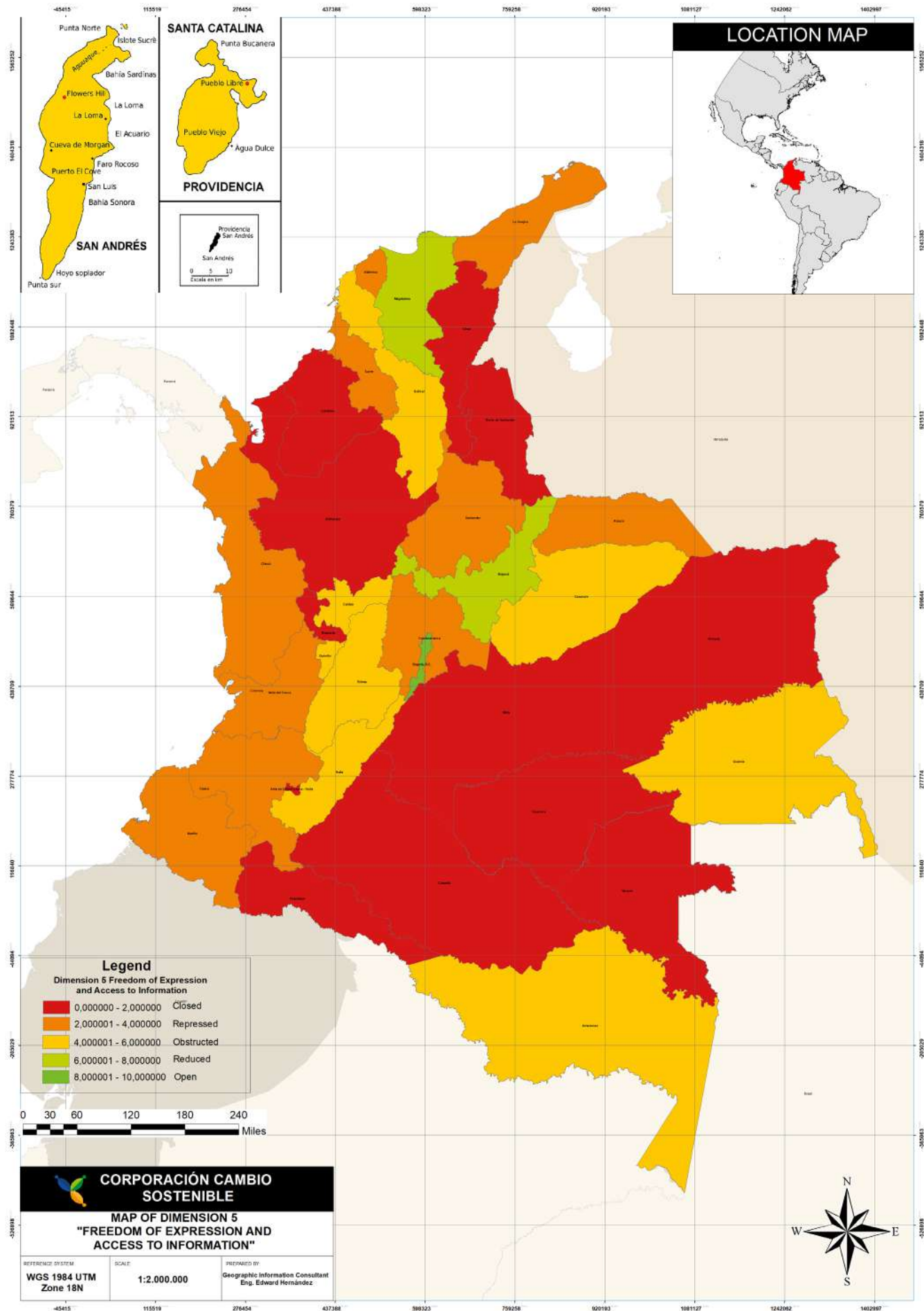
ANNEX 2. NATIONAL MAPS OF AVERAGE CIVIC SPACE BY DIMENSION

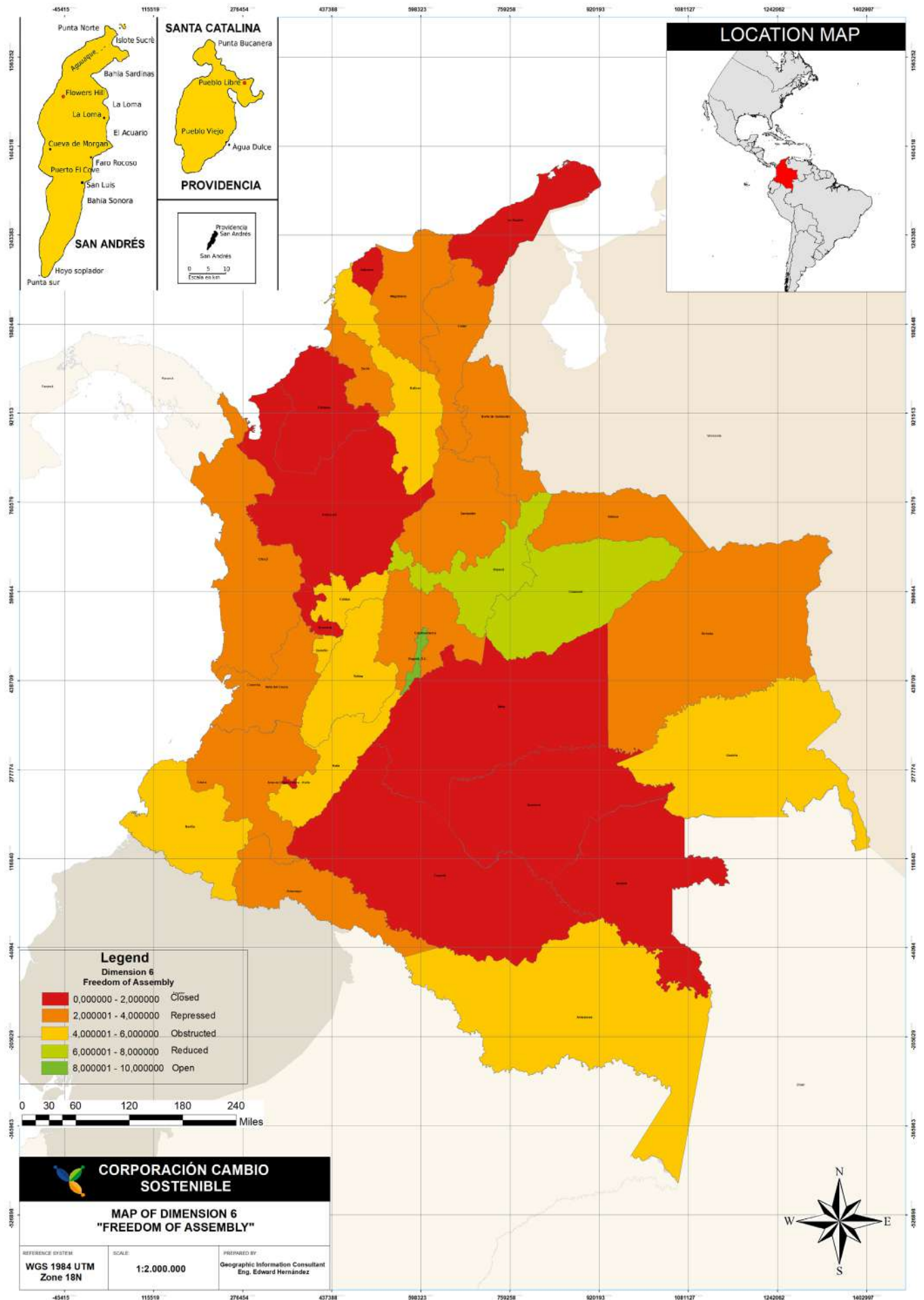


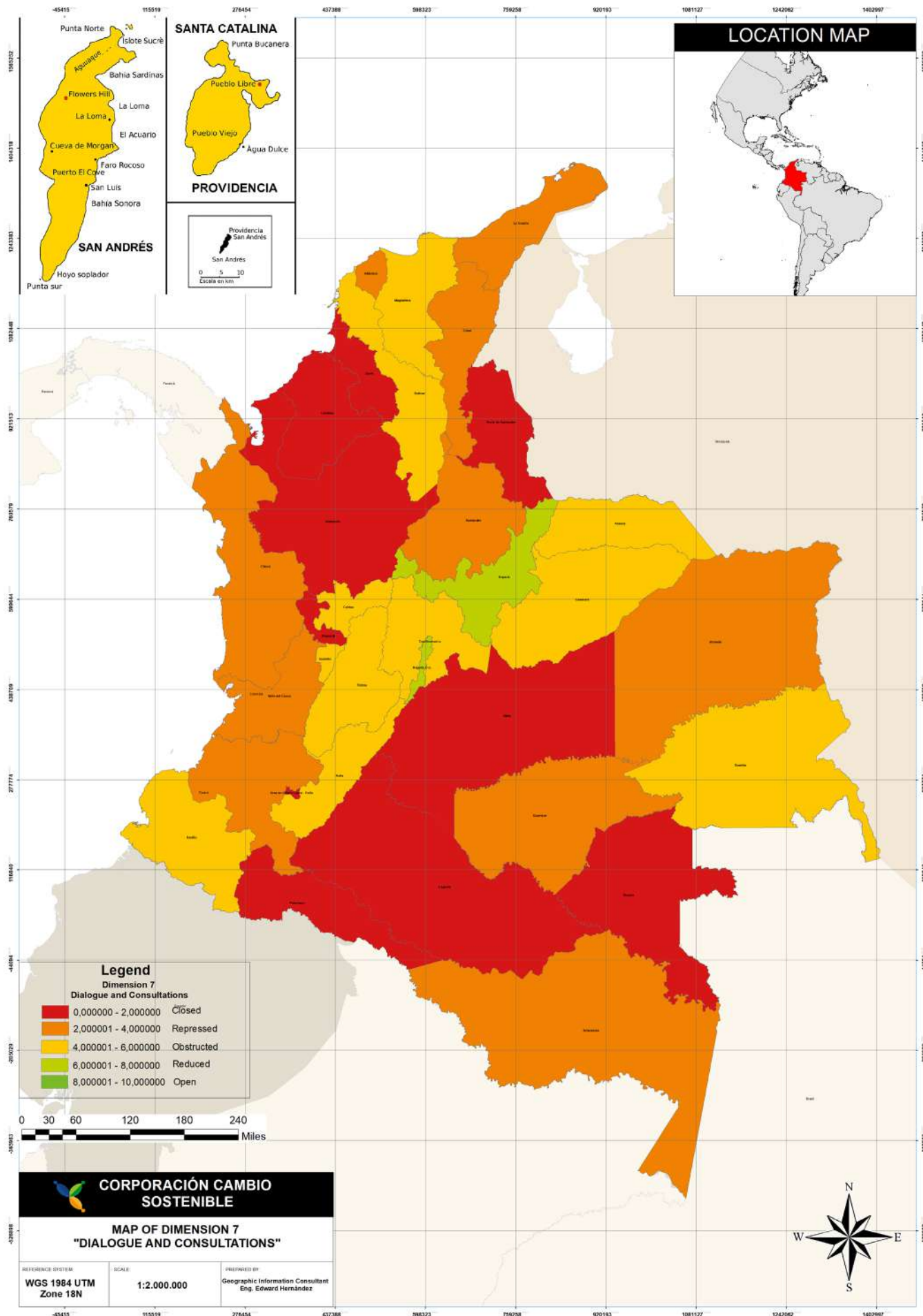


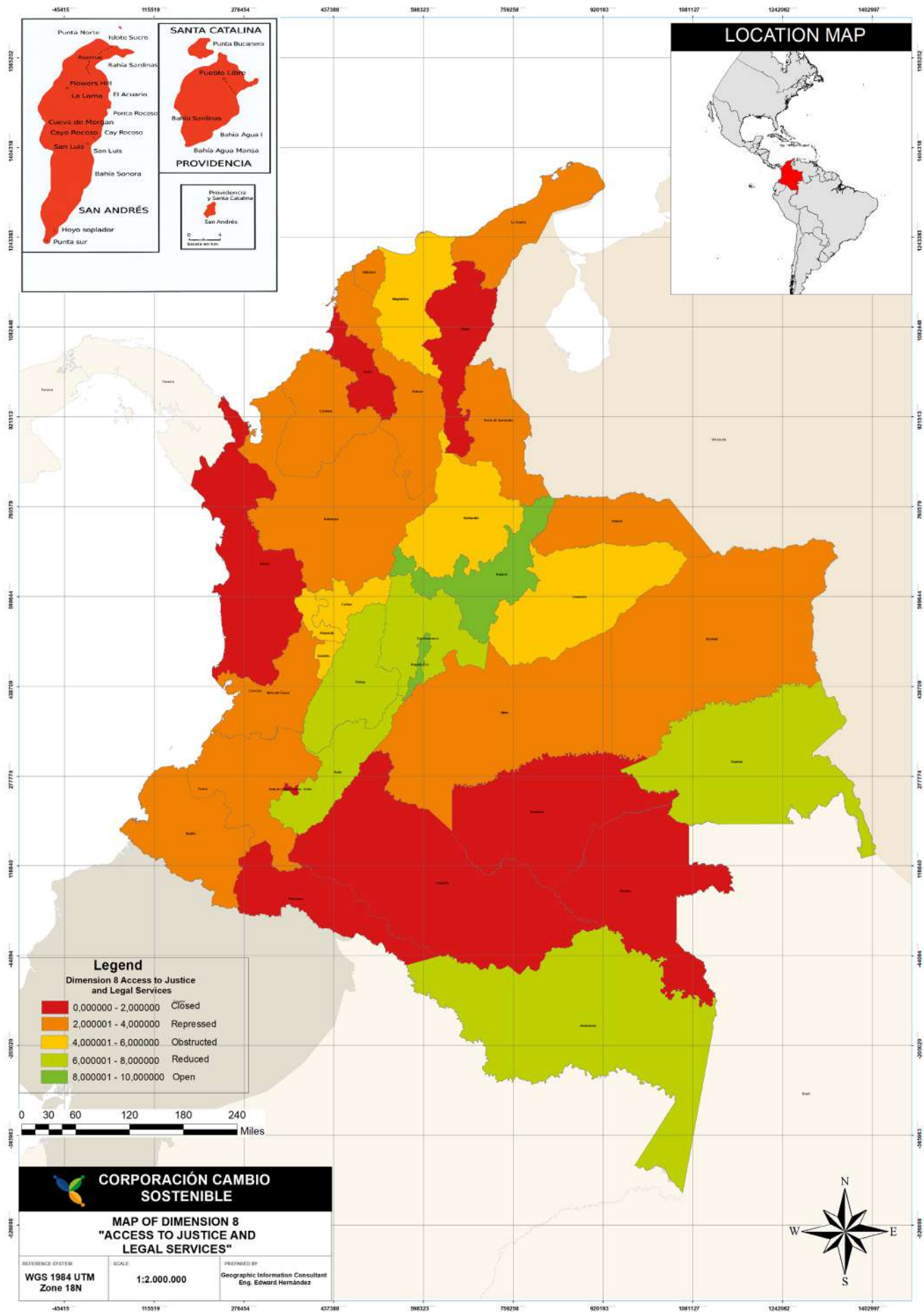


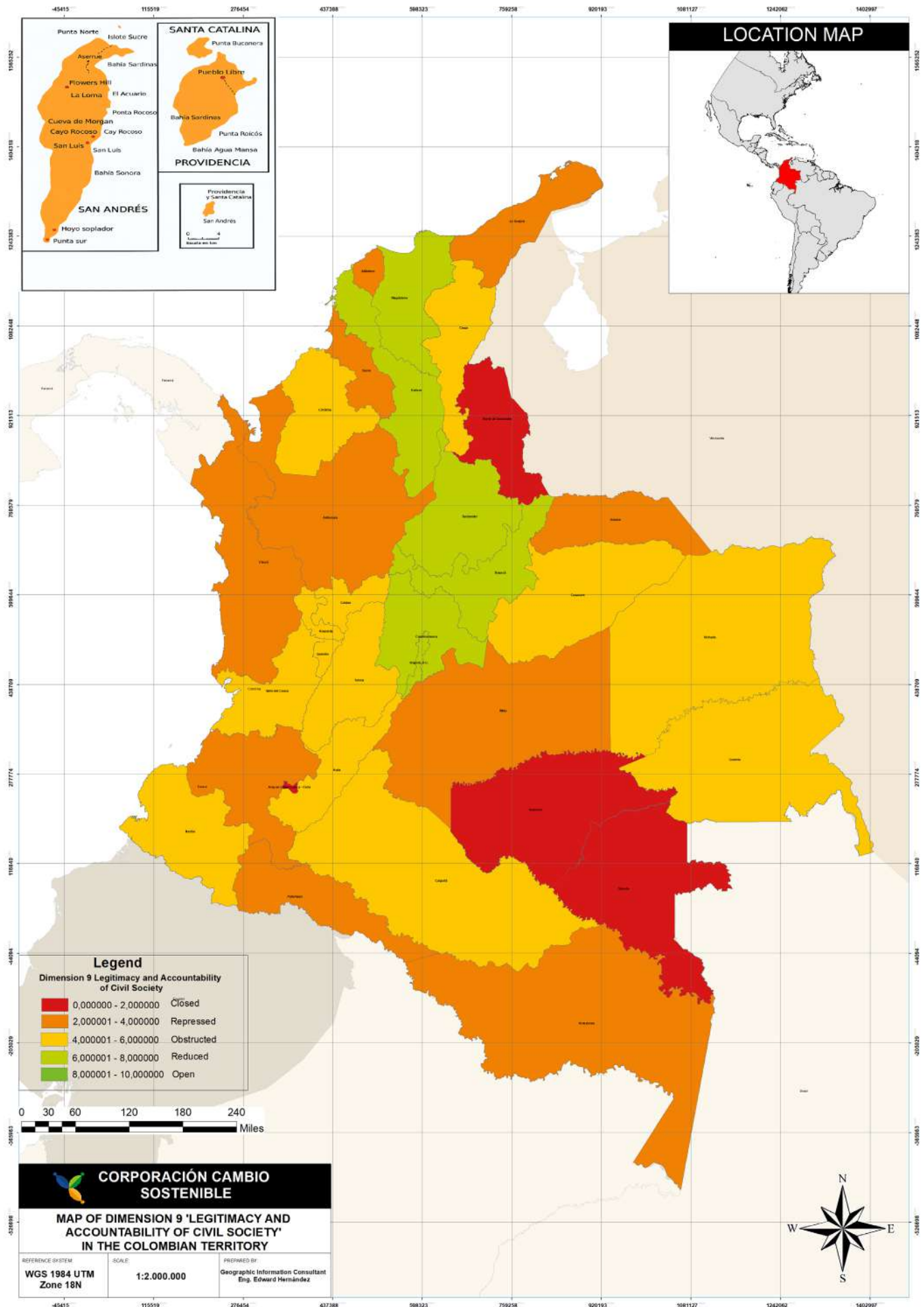


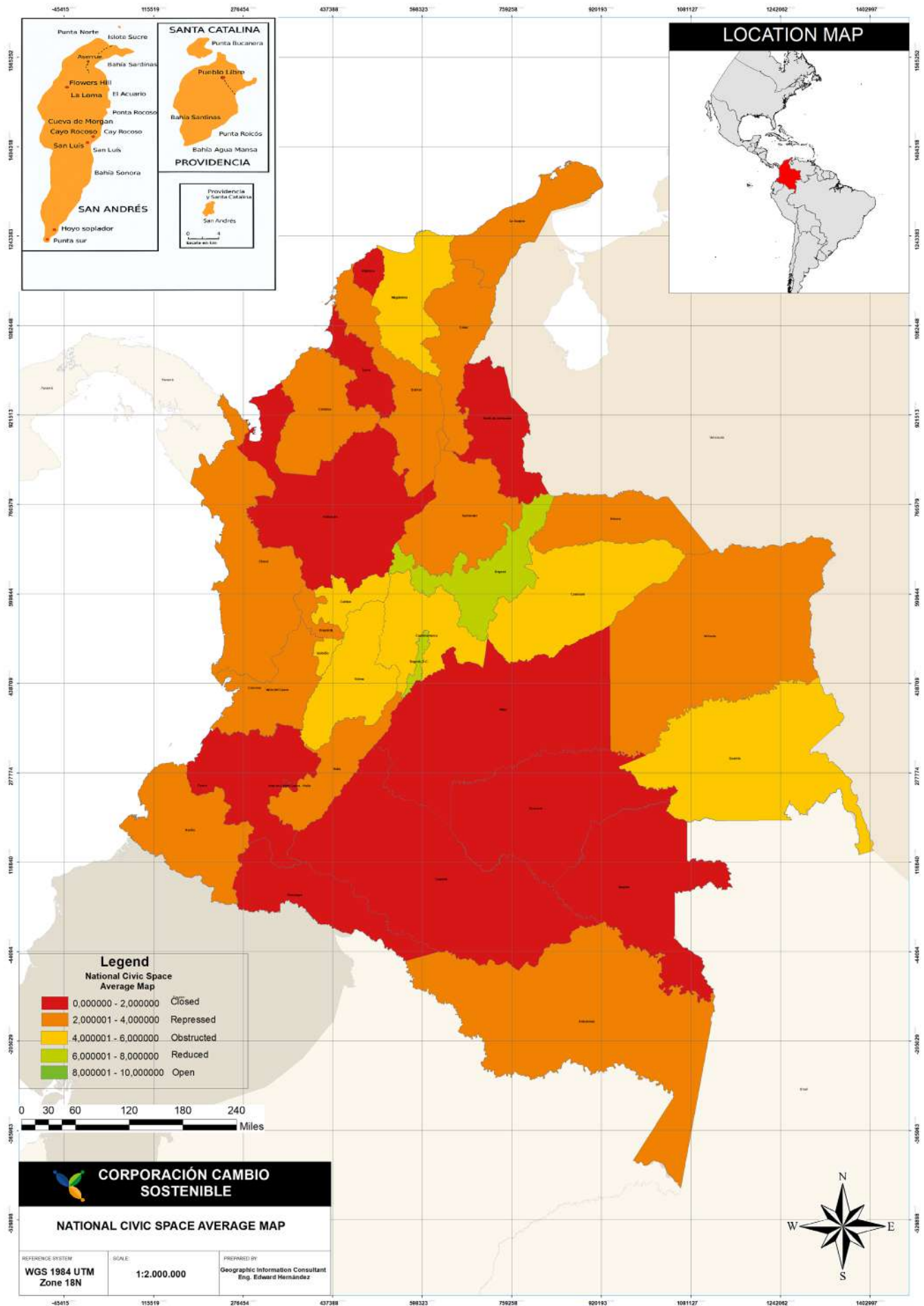












ANNEX 3. DEPARTMENTAL MAPS OF CIVIC SPACE STATUS BY ISOHYETS

