

Peacebuilding Project

Recovering balance within our energies: an alternative method of preventing and responding to gender-based violence using Mayan wisdom



Gender-based violence (GBV) occurs within a social system that discriminates against women based on their gender and devalues the “feminine”, creating social inequality between men and women.

Poverty, inequality in the distribution and control of resources, and all manifestations of discrimination -due to class, age, sexual orientation, or cultural identity among others- are expressions of structural violence.

In this complex framework of social exclusion, violence against women has significantly escalated in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The pandemic increased tensions and uncertainty within families due to the decrease in economic opportunities, greater presence of children in the home due to suspended in-person classes, and the restrictions to access support networks or protection mechanisms.

Through participatory processes that include dialogue and reflection, Peacebuilding Project’s communities have identified GBV as an obstacle to effective community development. As such, preventing and responding to GBV has been prioritized within the

category of youth, gender, and family conflicts. This type of conflict has lasting effects not just at the individual and family level but at the community and social level as well.

From Maya women, for Maya women

The gravity and prevalence of these acts of violence against women and girls requires coordinated efforts to reduce and progressively eradicate GBV. The Peacebuilding Project responds to conflicts identified by communities, in association with local or national organizations. The project and its partners guide coordinated prevention efforts, psychosocial attention and legal advice to victims and/or survivors of GBV from a human rights focus, recovering and respecting favorable cultural practices of resiliency and peaceful coexistence.

In partnership with Association Miriam, the Peacebuilding Project contributes to the prevention and attention to gender-based violence, providing integrated care to women, girls, and adolescents in violent situations, through culturally relevant processes that promote empowerment and equity.

Asociación MIRIAM for the intellectual promotion of women -chak rech uk’yem uwach kinojib’al ri ixoqib- emerged in 1996 in the framework of the signing of the Peace Accords and was legally founded on December 21, 1999. The mission is to contribute to the full life of women and adolescents, their daughters and sons, with ancestral Mayan principles and values through access to education, comprehensive training, psychosocial healing, research, and political advocacy.



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Our shared objectives and commitments



Provide culturally relevant services, including psychosocial care and specialized legal counsel, to 600 women victims and/or survivors of GBV.

Individualized care is provided from the Mayan worldview through knowledge of the Mayan calendar Chol q'ij to strengthen energy balance, facilitated by a Ajq'ij, a spiritual guide that acts as an ancestral psychologist.



Strengthen mechanisms for inter-institutional coordination in the integral, timely, and culturally relevant prevention and attention to women survivors of GBV.

To increase dialogue between authorities within ancestral judicial systems and the state systems, learning exchanges are held to raise awareness about applying ancestral forms of care for indigenous survivors of GBV.

Additionally, Association Miriam facilitates training processes in legal pluralism that highlights “survival of ancestral wisdom through time”, “administration and co-administration of justice systems for the attention of survivors of violence”, “individual and collective rights of indigenous women”, and “cosmogonic principles for the peaceful resolution of conflicts”, among others.



Coordinate efforts with community authorities to improve the first-line response to provide care for women in situations of GBV.

To strengthen the capacities of ancestral and community authorities to promptly respond to victims of GBV, community-level reporting routes are proposed and culturally adapted. Due to the limited knowledge around ancestral Mayan justice and the community route to attend survivors of violence, it is important to promote spaces of exchange and critical analysis between ancestral authorities, justice workers and members of the referral networks. This promotes and defends human rights from the perspective of ancestral wisdom.



Prevention of GBV through the training of community promoters for a full life for women, with the purpose to exercise local advocacy efforts through preventive actions from the action framework of the National Network of Promoters for the Full Life of Free Women.

The methodology of Association Miriam is based on the belief that **education is freedom** and in the implementation of this joint effort, a model known as “flower for the full life of women” will be utilized which includes:

Four strategies

1. Formal education
2. Civic training
3. Collective action for a full life for women
4. Healing from traumas



Four methodologies

1. Mayan worldview
2. Constructivism and popular education
3. Feminism
4. Emotional healing

The result = “A full life”

Progress until August 2022

Women between ages 18 to 75 have received **psychosocial care** for:

48

Psychological violence
Sexual violence

Using the *El Sendero* methodology, we provide accompaniment and transformative healing to victims and survivors of violence using an ancestral Mayan approach.



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Women between ages 16 to 48 have **received legal advice** for:

Alimony
Security measures
Voluntary divorces

With legal services, clinics are implemented to define litigation strategies with the support of experts from the Association of Indigenous Women Lawyers *Chomijá*.

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Adolescents with comprehensive support

- Psychosocial care based on ancestral practices.
- Training on themes of gender and Mayan worldview
- Energetic balancing and individual healing through the 20 Nahuales.
- Creation of a life project with a cultural identity perspective

Analysis and awareness on the situation of violence affecting indigenous women

