



UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

Inputs to inform the Special Rapporteur's report on violence against indigenous women and girls

“For the creation of movements, we consider that the diversity and heterogeneity of the organizational processes of indigenous and non-indigenous women must be taken into account. An intercultural approach and intercultural dialogue... nurtures the creation of alliances. Spaces for dialogue, discussion and exchanging experiences with women's organizational processes should be promoted.” Member of Conservación Investigación y Aprovechamiento de los Recursos Naturales (CIARENA), México

The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund), managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN System, states in its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 that eliminating violence against women, “must be grounded in an understanding of violence against women and girls as intersectional with other forms of inequality.¹ Ensuring attention to preventing and ending violence against the most marginalized, including indigenous women and girls. In 2021, the UN Trust Fund managed a grants portfolio of 157 projects in 68 countries and territories. This includes at least **24 projects** with a primary or partial focus on preventing and ending violence against indigenous women and girls. In 2020, 242,569 women and girls directly benefited from support that led to transformative changes in their lives, including at least **12,822 indigenous women and girls or women from ethnic groups**. In addition, over the course of 2016-2020 (the UN Trust Fund's previous Strategic Cycle), UN Trust Fund grantees reached at least: **47,823 indigenous women and girls**.

Selected UN Trust Fund grantee results:

In 2021, UN Trust Fund grantees overall have reported a trend towards the shrinking space for their operation, a sharp rise in violence against women due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that women and girls from particularly marginalized groups continue to be severely impacted.² For example, in Mexico, **CIARENA**, a small indigenous women-led organization funded under the EU/UN Spotlight Initiative partnership with the UN Trust Fund and dedicated to defending indigenous women and girls rights in rural Oaxaca has reported that they face multiple forms of violence, from threats from aggressive ranchers for the work they do on indigenous women's rights and environmental justice, and death

¹ UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women Strategic Plan 2021-2025: <https://staging2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20untf/images/2021/strategic%20plan%202021/2021strategic%20planfinal%20002compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=1907>

² COVID-19 and the Impact on Violence against Women, UN Trust Fund: https://untf.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20UNTF/Publications/2020/External%20brief%20/UN%20Trust%20Fund%20Brief%20on%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20CSOs%20and%20VAWG_2-compressed.pdf



threats from a perpetrator identified in the context of a case of violence against an adolescent girl. Similarly MADRE, a former UN Trust Fund grantee and an international women's NGO working in collaboration with a community development organization for indigenous women in Nicaragua's north Atlantic coast (the Waspam region), faced pushback from local communities as well as state law enforcement including an antagonistic culture of machismo and violence.

Despite these challenges, the project from MADRE highlighted the reciprocity between men and women in the local indigenous culture, which was deeply rooted in the local environment and ecology. The intervention drew on elements and symbolism from local, traditional or indigenous culture that were more gender equal. Similarly, CIARENA also overcame the abovementioned challenges and has provided **services** to 78 indigenous women individually and has released 6 radio campaign messages titled, "The rights of indigenous women to a life free of violence" in four languages (6 in Spanish, 5 in Mexe, 5 in Zapotec and 2 in Chinantec). CIARENA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic through providing 62 women with medical kits and the organization incorporated a communal vegetable garden activity into its project in response to reports of increased food insecurity emerging as a result of the pandemic and to empower women through skills in gardening and farming.

In Cameroon, the **African Indigenous Women Organisation Central African Network (AIWO-CAN)**, works to end violence against women in five indigenous communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization trained community members to improve their capacities to prevent rights violations of women and trained 60 project staff and partners on how to integrate COVID-19 response into violence **prevention interventions**. The project also distributed 593 hygiene kits and food baskets to alleviate hardships brought on by COVID-19. The project has led sensitization campaigns to ensure women and girls are more aware of their rights and know where and how to report violations.

In Guatemala, **Mujeres Transformando el Mundo (MTM)** is implementing a project funded by the UN Trust Fund to improve **access to justice and reparations** for indigenous and mestiza women living with disabilities who have experienced gender-based violence. MTM has reached 52 indigenous women from ethnic groups and has trained 164 women leaders on their rights and how to prevent and eradicate violence. During COVID-19, the project delivered 168 food kits and sanitary kits. The project works to facilitate strategic litigation and promote a comprehensive legal, psychological and social approach to ensure effective support to survivors. The project also provides capacity building and training on human rights and access to justice; offers institutional capacity building for NGOs and other stakeholders collaborating on the project; and maintains ongoing advocacy and dialogue with government authorities. Elaborating materials in an accessible format also allowed MTM to coordinate with national and international organizations; for instance, producing materials in Braille was achieved in collaboration with the Committee for Deaf and Blind Persons of Guatemala.

Knowledge and learning:

The UN Trust Fund has commissioned a series of 10 papers on "[Learning from Practice on Prevention](#)", produced in collaboration with 70 grantees and external researchers. Each paper in the series draws on the monitoring and evaluation reports of 10 civil society organizations each implementing prevention

projects funded by the UN Trust Fund in different countries and contexts. The Learning from Practice on Prevention paper: “[Mobilizing women as agents of change to prevent violence against women and girls](#)” analyzes how women, including indigenous women, are agents of change in their community.³ In addition, the Learning from Practice on Prevention paper: “[Exploring Intersectional approaches to preventing violence against women and girls](#)”, explores how grantees take an explicitly intersectional approach to work empowering women such as indigenous women in rural, post-conflict and settings of poverty.

As an example, the **Women’s Justice Initiative (WJI)**, a twice-funded UN Trust Fund grantee in Guatemala works with their community advocates to understand the needs of indigenous women and supports them in ways that best suit their needs. For instance, recognizing that radio remains a powerful tool for communication in rural indigenous communities, WJI worked with its cadre of community advocates, along with three other NGOs, to create radio programmes in four Mayan languages to broadcast health and safety information on COVID-19 and also used the opportunity to generate awareness about the hotline for psychological services.

One community advocate shared how having activities conducted in Kaqchikel made it easier for her to convince her peers to seek the project’s services: “The truth is that one of the things that influences women not to seek support or file a complaint is the fear of not being able to speak Spanish ... if we tell them that they can go to WJI’s office and that the lawyer will speak to them in Kaqchikel, then it is easier for them to seek help.”

In a final evaluation of WJI’s previous project funded by the UN Trust Fund, which worked in 16 rural indigenous communities, the Women’s Justice Initiative delivered a legal literacy course in the Kaqchikel language in which 813 women and girls participated. A survey of participants conducted after the course showed significant changes in attitudes: 6 per cent of women said that they agreed it is justified for a husband to beat his wife – a 71 per cent decrease from baseline surveys – and 85 per cent responded that in cases of domestic violence other people who are not family members should intervene – a 124 per cent increase from the baseline survey. Almost half of all participants (45 per cent) already exercised their rights by seeking legal assistance from WJI.

In addition, in Peru, **Red Nacional de Promocion de la Mujer (RNPM)** recruited older indigenous women in rural communities as “senior women leaders” to advocate for gender- and age-sensitive policies with local authorities. RNPM in Peru took a participatory and inclusive approach from the very beginning as to not reproduce patterns of social exclusion of indigenous women and instead “generate new forms of relationships” with project participants. Through the project’s safe spaces, women learned to recognize the violence they face and understand its root causes. Project staff from RNPM in Peru stated in a written response about how the project managed to break through the silence when they began their work with senior indigenous women leaders who faced political violence decades ago: “Painful stories

³ Learning from Practice: Mobilizing women as agents of change: https://staging2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20unwtf/publications/2021/prevention%20briefs/mobilizing%20women/mobilizing_women_synthesis%20review.pdf?la=en&vs=3058

surfaced in the first meetings, requiring psychosocial support. The older women themselves did not recognize at first that they were victims of gender-based violence.”

Recommendations from the “Learning from Practice on Prevention” series point to the inherent value of co-producing programming with women living with overlapping and intersecting vulnerabilities, including indigenous women, and addressing the invisibility of certain groups of women and girls, among others.⁴ For instance, in Colombia **Fundación Mundubat**, built the resilience of indigenous and Afro-Colombian women through engaging and building on indigenous traditions. . Water, rivers and medicinal plants were all integrated into psychospiritual, culturally relevant accompaniments for women survivors of violence. Drawing on these ancient, indigenous practices not only allowed the women to heal from the trauma of violence but also strengthened their cultural identity and sense of self. These examples show grantee’s efforts to design indigenous-led programming i.e. ensure accessibility and inclusivity of indigenous women in preventing violence through engaging in contextually relevant and language inclusive programming.

UN Trust Fund Secretariat’s lessons learned and recommendations:

- Local, community-based, grassroots women’s rights organizations have the capacity, knowledge, skills and ability to access indigenous women and girls. They work within the community value system, formulating transformational change programming for the benefit of women and girls in a way that is culturally sensitive and effective for women’s and girls’ needs. Investing in their expertise and organizational resilience is a strategic and sustainable way of supporting autochthonous efforts and building capacities of autonomous change actors.
- During the ongoing COVID-19 crises, indigenous women’s rights organizations stepped in as first responders to their constituents serving not only as essential, specialist service providers to survivors/victims of violence, but also providing for their constituents’ essential needs in accessing hygiene and medical kits, PPE and survival food supplies. The allocation of core and flexible funding on top of programmable budget allowed for such prompt and resilient adaptations – this approach should be built into grant-giving for women’s rights organizations as a means for strengthening organizational resilience to impact of crises.

⁴ Learning from Practice: Exploring intersectional approaches to preventing violence against women and girls <https://staging2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20unwomensrights/publications/2021/prevention%20briefs/intersectional/synthesis%20review%20-%20intersectional%20approaches.pdf?la=en&vs=4125>