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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

USAID works to increase and improve services for victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and support the development of violence prevention plans.

USAID works towards the reduction of GBV, including prevention, response, and the provision and decentralization of essential services to victims through multiple activities. The landscape of GBV justice services — both within the public institutional justice system and civil society — remains deeply fragmented. Services needed to be woven together strategically to comprehensively support victims and enable them to become survivors.

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

In Guatemala, violence against women is the number one reported crime with 52,447 complaints in 2022, 197 per day and 532 femicides; however, only 20 percent of the GBV complaints filed that year were resolved. Men are the main perpetrators of gender-based violence in Guatemala. Evidence indicates that the root causes of GBV can be narrowed down to two things: gender inequality, and the violent, harmful, and controlling aspects of masculinities which are the result of patriarchal power imbalances.

Models such as specialized femicide courts and specialized women's prosecutor offices (SWPOs), for example, had demonstrated that addressing GBV/SV with specialized staff and institutional structures meaningfully improved the justice experiences of Guatemalan victims of violence. Nevertheless, these models needed to improve their effectiveness and coverage. Existing structures and models could not handle the annual volume of GBV/SV complaints, nor does the institutional architecture adequately

respond to the comprehensive needs of GBV victims, both in heavily resourced urban areas such as Guatemala City and in more rural, relatively less resourced departments. As a result, fragmentation, distance, and other systemic challenges frequently discouraged victims from pursuing cases in full or caused secondary victimization with unnecessary procedural hurdles.

APPROACH AND RESULTS

USAID/Guatemala’s programming strengthen the Guatemalan Government and civil society’s capacity to provide justice and services including medical, psychological, and other support services to respond to the needs of GBV victims, by promoting greater integration and coordination among actors to help reduce violence and impunity and increase prosecution rates of GBV cases.

USAID uses three-pronged approaches to combat GBV in Guatemala: 1) prevention; 2) effective response; 3) holistic approach to recovery and healing of survivors and their families. The institutional paradigm shifts to prioritize victims’ needs in pursuit of “people-centered” justice, aims to consolidate processes, seek efficiencies, and foster changes to streamline and improve victims’ experience with the system, while employing local systems to strengthen the connectivity among stakeholders and improve the quality and comprehensiveness of the justice sector’s response to GBV.

Resources and efforts to bolster existing justice services resulted in the establishment of specialized units, courts, policies, and protocols tailored to the different needs of GBV victims, including indigenous women and people who identify as LGBTI+ and people with disabilities. Moreover, implementing key recommendations to establish holistic and multi-disciplinary processes and models that filled identified gaps in services, such as legal counseling, economic empowerment, and psychosocial support, resulted in GBV victims accessing more responsive, comprehensive, streamlined, and proximate services.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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