

## Voices of Hope Project

### Summary

In Colombia, violence against women and girls is a persistent and multifaceted problem, in which various factors that exacerbate the situation converge, such as the armed conflict, the patriarchal culture and the lack of credibility of survivors in the justice system. According to the Peace & Reconciliation Foundation (Pares), during 2023, a total of 630 femicides were registered, almost two femicides per day<sup>1</sup>. Gender-based violence encompasses not only femicides, but also physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence against women and girls. Many of these cases occur in the context of violent relationships or ex-partners. As of June 8, 2023, the National Public Health Surveillance System (Sivigila) of the National Institute of Health reports that 66,621 cases of gender-based violence were registered in the country. Of these cases, 75.6%, or 50,374 correspond to women<sup>2</sup>.

Colombia has ratified all existing international treaties on human rights and women's rights and has made significant progress in drafting laws to promote gender equality and protect women's human rights. While these regulations provide a solid framework for advancing women's rights, significant challenges remain in their full implementation. Among these challenges, the lack of government offices specialized in dealing with cases of violence against women and girls is evident in some cities and departments.

Humanitarian emergencies in Colombia are aggravated and exacerbated by various forms of gender-based violence, such as sexual violence, sexual slavery, exploitation related to child recruitment, as well as intimate partner violence, which are a daily reality, especially for girls, adolescents and women, although they also affect men and boys.

### Challenge

The Colombian National Police, for the year 2023, reported 109,674 cases of domestic violence and of these, 70.9% were women. As for the departments that reported the most cases of domestic violence in 2023, Bogotá D.C. is in first place with 32,530 cases, of which 59.4% correspond to female victims; followed by Antioquia with 15,941 cases, of which 74.8% affected women; and in third place Cundinamarca, with 8,979 cases and 72.8% of female victims.

Working with the issue of gender-based violence in Colombia presents several significant challenges due to the complexity and severity of the situation. Many cases of gender-based violence go unreported due to fear, shame, lack of trust in authorities, or perceived injustice and impunity. This leads to underreporting of cases and makes it difficult to fully understand the problem, in addition to a shortage of resources and specialized services to support survivors of gender-based violence, such as shelters, psychological care centers and helplines.

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<sup>1</sup> Observatory of Human Rights and Conflicts of Indepaz. (2023). *Violence in Colombia. 2023 Annual Report*. Retrieved from <https://indepaz.org.co/violencia-en-colombia-informe-anual-2023/>

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Health [INS]. (2024). *75.6% of the cases registered for gender-based violence in 2024 are against women*. Retrieved from <https://www.ins.gov.co/Noticias/Paginas/75,6-de-los-casos-registrados-por-violencia-de-género-en-2024-son-contra-mujeres.aspx>

Addressing gender-based violence requires a comprehensive approach that involves different sectors such as health, education, justice, and civil society. Effective coordination between these entities is often a challenge, so local organizations and women's collectives help to promote awareness **and prevention of gender-based violence**. Some communities may resist recognizing gender-based violence as a serious problem or may have attitudes that perpetuate violence. This makes it difficult to implement effective prevention programs.

### **Solution**

The INAWY Foundation, in its experience working with communities in which violence is naturalized daily and has become an intergenerational problem, seeks to implement the ***Voices of Hope project***, which lasts five years and will be divided into two stages:



### **I. Stage I**

It will begin with a needs assessment in Gender-Based Violence (GBV), through focus groups and interviews with key actors, to adapt the educational content to the specific gender issues of each territory and design the most effective strategy for the project, allowing local challenges to be taken into account.

The training of 50 women leaders in prevention and response to Gender Violence will be carried out in the cities of Cartagena (25) and Bogotá (25). This training will be theoretical-practical, adapted to

the learning style of adults, using a GBV didactic toolkit designed by the organization, which will serve as essential interactive material for the second stage of the project.

## **II. Stage II**

The leaders (under the supervision of the organization) will be responsible for imparting information to women and adolescents in the community through pedagogical talks using the didactic kits. It is expected to reach 300 women and adolescents in this phase. This approach aims not only to raise awareness about the implications of violence against women and its various manifestations, but also to provide effective options for its prevention, knowledge of care routes and rights.



### **Long-term impact**

Training 50 women leaders will not only strengthen their skills in preventing and responding to gender-based violence, but will also empower them to become agents of change in their communities. This will ensure the effective transfer of knowledge and skills, promoting the denaturalization of gender-based violence among women in the community, as well as the recognition of institutional care routes.

In addition, the pedagogical talks will inform about the various manifestations of violence against women and promote awareness of the options available to prevent and respond appropriately to

this problem. This approach can foster positive change in attitudes and behaviors within the community.

By empowering women leaders to act as facilitators of change, the project will strengthen community networks of support and awareness on gender-based violence. This will contribute to creating a safer and more supportive environment for women and adolescents in the territories.