



IMPACT STORY



INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN COLOMBIA-ECUADOR BORDER LEAD COMMUNITY EFFORTS TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Photo: UN Women/Hombres en Marcha

“My indigenous community is hardworking, and a place where women have taken leadership roles in the fight to recover ancestral land,” said Luz Angélica Tarapuez, from the municipality of Cumbal, in the department of Nariño, on the Colombian-Ecuadorian border.

She is among 104 indigenous women and farm workers who have attended the training school *Soy Rosita, Soy Mujer, Soy Campesina, Soy Indígena* [I am Rosita, I am a woman, I am a farmer, I am indigenous]. The school is part of the 2019-2021 “Protective Communities” project in the Colombian-Ecuadorian border towns of Cumbal and Ipiales, where 70 per cent of the population is indigenous. The project was led by UN Women in partnership with UNICEF and UNHCR and with funding from the Peace Building Fund. The training programme was implemented by the civil society organizations *Hombres en Marcha*, *Aldeas Infantiles SOS* and *Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo*, with a focus on strengthening indigenous women’s leadership to prevent gender-based violence. It was the first initiative of its kind in these border towns to exclusively focus on this issue through leadership training.

“Taking a leadership role has not been easy. We have had to fight against discrimination, but we have not allowed

Photo above: Luz Angélica Tarapuez attended the *Soy Rosita, Soy Mujer, Soy Campesina, Soy Indígena* training school, where she and other indigenous women strengthened their leadership skills to prevent gender-based violence and learned more about their rights.

PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

The *Soy Rosita, Soy Mujer, Soy Campesina, Soy Indígena* school trained **104** indigenous women and farmworkers in leadership skills in the Colombia-Ecuador border. The school was part of the Protective Communities project, led by **UN Women, UNICEF** and **UNHCR** in partnership with the civil society organizations **Hombres en Marcha, Aldeas Infantiles SOS** and **Corporación Infancia y Desarrollo**.

The Protective Communities project (2019-2021), was the first bi-national and inter-agency initiative funded by the UN Secretary-General’s **Peace Building Fund (PBF)** in Latin America. Funds for the PBF are managed by the **UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)**, a pooled mechanism used to receive contributions from multiple financial partners and allocate such resources to implementing entities to support specific national, regional or global development priorities.

Together with **Sweden**, the **PBF** was the first contributor with the Government to the **MPTF** in Colombia, which has now mobilized more than **USD 147 million** towards the implementation of the peace agreement signed by the **Government of Colombia** and the **FARC** in 2016.

ourselves to be overshadowed,” said Tarapuez. “Attending the training school allowed us to learn more about our rights and the importance of speaking up on decisions that affect us as women. We have organized a Women’s Roundtable to strengthen our platform,” she added, beaming with pride.

“Now, we can leave behind a legacy of strong women that the younger generations can learn from.”

—LUZ ANGÉLICA TARAPUEZ, *Participant in the Soy Rosita training school*

The programme has made participants aware of their rights, what constitutes as violence, and taught them how to strengthen their economic, civic and political participation. As a result, in Cumbal, indigenous women mobilized to form a Municipal Women’s Board and a Local Committee on Sexual Violence and Community Action Board. Through these, they are able to organize forums during local elections and develop proposals that shape the Municipal Development Plan. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they held a virtual bi-national meeting to establish the Binational Women’s Network.

“Indigenous women experience sexual, psychological, physical violence on a daily basis without realizing it. This is why it’s important for women to empower themselves... we need to [be aware] of how important we are socially, economically and politically—in our homes, on the farm and in our communities,” said Mariana Tucanez, who lives in the municipality of Ipiales, also in Nariño.



Photo above: Indigenous women taking part in a capacity-building activity, part of the Soy Rosita, Soy Mujer, Soy Campesina, Soy Indígena training school. Credit: UN Women/ Hombres en Marcha

WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN NARIÑO

The department of Nariño is among the territories with the highest rates of violence in Colombia due to the armed conflict. Additionally, it has high rates of poverty and inequality—conditions that have caused a breakdown of the social fabric and the detriment of sustainable development, affecting men and women differently.






The *Soy Rosita, Soy Mujer, Soy Campesina, Soy Indígena* training school is the latest of a series of projects that UN Women has led in this region.

Since 2014, UN Women has energized initiatives focused on promoting leadership around peacebuilding, political participation and sustainable development while supporting the improvement of women and girls’ quality of life in Nariño from a human rights and gender-based approach.

The training school was a catalyst for mobilizing municipal administrations to support development plans that benefit women in the border communities while promoting women’s leadership and men’s engagement. As a result, local and regional institutions strengthened their knowledge and capacities on violence against women. More broadly, the Protective Communities project is viewed as a success story of collective mobilization—of local governments, the international community, the private sector and civil society—to promote the stabilization of the Colombia-Ecuador border zone with the meaningful participation of women.

For Tarapuez, organizing a successful women’s forum in Cumbal was one of her biggest achievements. “Now, we can leave behind a legacy of strong women that the younger generations can learn from,” she said. “In our indigenous worldview, nobody is more and nobody is less, we complement one another, and that is why we defend gender equality.”

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