



Women's Justice Initiative

ANNUAL REPORT
2019





STRONG WOMEN, SAFE COMMUNITIES

Dear Friends,

We write to you from the vantage point of mid-2020, in a world made anew by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding economic impacts. While we face great uncertainty and unprecedented challenges ahead, we are grateful for this moment to pause and reflect on our accomplishments of 2019 and to express our deep appreciation for all of our supporters. We are proud of the work that we accomplished. We know our work in 2019 -- and our close relationships with our partner communities-- helped us to mobilize quickly to respond to the challenges presented in 2020. Now more than ever, we understand the role of women leaders in ensuring safe, strong, and resilient communities: for preventing violence against women and girls, as well as responding to crises and challenges as they emerge.

Looking back, 2019 was a year of significant impact and growth for WJI. We expanded into 13 additional communities within a second municipality, working in a total of 38 communities. Over the course of the year, we directly served 5,703 individuals, benefitting over 17,000 women, men, and children. We trained 58 Community Advocates and worked on 561 legal cases. We also grew as a team, adding five new staff members and building our staff capacity and organizational infrastructure to adequately track our impact and respond to the

developing needs of our partner communities.

Our work improves women's lives and strengthens communities. In 2019, 100% of women reported that they felt stronger and safer after going through WJI's programs and 95% said that WJI has helped prevent violence in their lives. This report will share more details from our programs, demonstrating their impact to improve access to justice for thousands of women and girls.

As we continue programming in 2020, the challenges are significant. Women and girls remain at a heightened risk of violence at home due to mounting stress and anxiety. COVID lockdowns have led to a dramatic increase in gender-based violence throughout Latin America. The need for WJI's work in our partner communities and across rural Guatemala remains more urgent than ever. We hope you will join us in protecting the rights of women and girls, and in building safer and stronger communities in Guatemala.

With gratitude,

Clara Ferraro
Board President

Kate Flatley
Executive Director



ABOUT WJI

The Women’s Justice Initiative advances gender equality and reduces violence against women and girls (VAWG) in rural Guatemala. WJI provides women and girls with the tools to create change in their lives and the lives of their families, empowering a new generation of indigenous women leaders.

OUR IMPACT TO DATE



+2,000
legal cases

+20,000
direct beneficiaries



+60,000
indirect beneficiaries



+700
community leaders,
police, and government
officials trained



OUR MODEL

WJI works to address the high levels of gender inequality and violence against women in Guatemala, implementing a community-based approach that takes into account the distinct challenges faced by rural, indigenous women and girls. All of WJI's programs are conducted in the local language and led by Maya women from our partner communities. WJI empowers women and girls to know and claim their rights, helping them become agents of change in their communities.

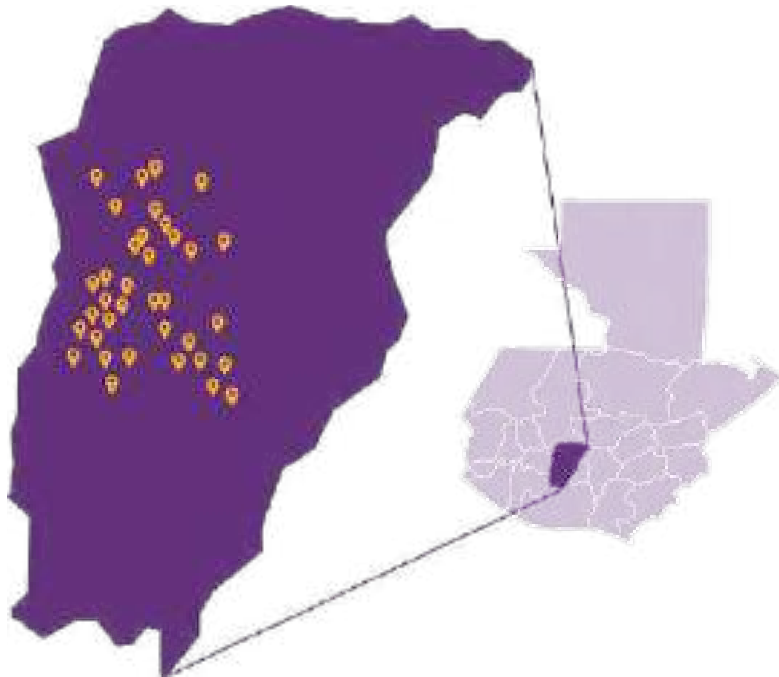
WHY GUATEMALA

10%
of indigenous people
have adequate access
to justice.

30%
of girls marry
by age 18.

1 in 3
indigenous women
who live with a man
experience domestic
violence.

2019 RESULTS



WJI Partner Communities

- 5,703 participants
- 17,000 beneficiaries
- 65 communities
- WJI assisted with 561 legal cases, helping women exercise their rights
- 58 women trained as Community Advocates, becoming stronger leaders and role models in their communities

2019 FINANCIALS

Revenue:

Individuals: \$263,082

Foundations: \$170,812

Corporations: \$10,000

Total: \$443,894

Expenses:

Programs: \$309,781

Development: \$31,235

Administration: \$29,908

Total: \$370,924

2019 financial information reflects audited results





UNDERSTANDING AND DEFENDING WOMEN'S RIGHTS:

WOMEN'S RIGHTS EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Women's Rights Education Program is a six-month legal literacy and empowerment course that educates women on their rights and builds the skills needed to exercise those rights. We provide workshops on critical topics such as domestic violence, sexual and reproductive rights, and property rights. Participants also strengthen leadership, decision-making, and communication skills, gaining the tools to know, use, and shape the law.



423 women graduated from the legal literacy course

Graduates were significantly more likely to:

- **Report violence**
- **Seek legal services** for the first time

95% of graduates felt that WJI helped prevent violence in their lives



339 program alumni continued their education through quarterly meetings

A portrait of Delfy Raquec, a woman with dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a colorful, patterned blouse with floral and bird motifs. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

DELPHY RAQUEC

WJI FACILITATOR

In 2012, WJI began implementing the Women's Rights Education Program in Los Pinos, a small community connected to Patzún by a single, unpaved road. Delfy Raquec decided to participate, not knowing how much the program would transform her life: "When I started attending the Women's Rights workshops, I realized how important it is to participate in community spaces. The topics discussed changed my way of thinking, I learned my rights and was more empowered." For Delfy, the Women's Rights Education Program was the entry point into a longer-term transformation, setting her on the path to become the leader she is today.

She shares, "The issue of gender inequality has been a challenge in my family, but the skills I developed in the training program have allowed me to combat inequality in my life and in my home. I know as human beings we are all equal and we deserve the same opportunities." After completing the course, Delfy was selected as one of WJI's first Community Advocates and

"...women learn their rights and use them to change their families and communities."

began applying her new skills in her home and community.

Her advocacy got results: "Beyond my family, the women and girls of my community have changed their attitudes. Because they know their rights, they change their homes and the lives of their families -- who now treat boys and girls equally. Half of the adolescent girls who participated in the program continued with their studies and over 80% of them are still unmarried."

In 2016, WJI hired Delfy as a full-time staff member. She now helps lead WJI's Adolescent Girls Program, passing on her knowledge to future generations of girls in communities like her own. In her words, "Thanks to WJI and the people who support us, women learn their rights and use them to change their families and communities. My hope is that the Women's Rights Education Program reaches more women and that they learn that violence against women is a crime that should be reported."



LEGAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:
LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

WJI's Legal Services Program provides free legal services directly to women in need by bringing lawyers and paralegals to their communities and by providing bilingual Maya Kaqchikel-Spanish resources. We support the well-being of our legal services clients by providing psychological services along with our legal services, and by helping women to exercise their economic rights, such as obtaining land titles or child support.

370 survivors
of violence received
legal services



WJI provided legal services in
65 communities

159 child support, custody
and **paternity** cases



57 survivors
of violence received
psychological counseling

120 property
rights cases



25 women
received land titles



TRANSFORMATION THROUGH LEGAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Achieving economic justice helps women live free from violence. For Rosa*, exercising her right to economic independence was an important step for achieving a safer life. WJI worked with Rosa for five years, first through a child support case and later assisting her in obtaining a land title. Her story captures the transformational potential of access to justice and claiming one's rights:

Before WJI gave a talk on women's rights in Rosa's community, Rosa felt trapped, with no real option to address her husband's abusive behavior. She didn't know how she and her son could survive without her husband's financial support. When Rosa found the courage to seek legal help from WJI, she was still terrified that her husband could retaliate. WJI's legal staff assured her that they would protect her and accompany her throughout the entire process. They assisted Rosa in filing for child support and provided free psychological counseling to help her move on from a traumatic past.

After a year, WJI's lawyers secured child

support payments for Rosa's son. When her ex-husband fell behind on his monthly payments, WJI helped her claim the money she was owed. WJI continued working with Rosa to help her obtain a land title for her property, ensuring she could continue to thrive. "It never crossed my mind that I could have a property title in my name, but now we are living on our own property. Now I don't feel afraid, I have more security and freedom in my life."

Five years later, Rosa and her son are happier, safer, and economically empowered. "It was not only an economic transformation, but also a personal one. At the beginning I felt afraid and my self-esteem was very low, but not anymore. I now tell other women not to allow themselves to live in trouble, in pain, because it's not worth it for us to be mistreated, as if we weren't human. Now there's WJI and its staff who work to help us have a different life. The important thing is to have the courage to stand up for yourself."

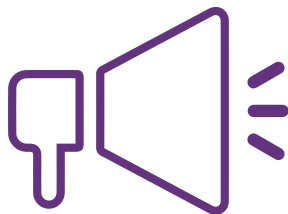
**The client's name has been changed to protect her identity.*



ROLE MODELS AND TRAILBLAZERS: COMMUNITY ADVOCATES PROGRAM

The Community Advocates Program supports local indigenous women to become women’s rights educators, grassroots legal advocates, and mentors to their peers through a two-year leadership development program. After completing the training program, Advocates serve as a resource for other women in their community, offering advice, leading workshops, and accompanying women who need legal services. They multiply and sustain WJI’s impact, helping us support communities for the long-term.

58 women trained as
Community Advocates



WJI convened **82 past and present Advocates** for a summit, strengthening its network of women leaders

Advocates used their leadership skills to independently implement the Adolescent Girls Program with **100 girls**



Advocates helped **31 women** access WJI’s legal services

DOÑA JOSE: CHAMPION FOR MAYA WOMEN AND GIRLS

Josefina Yos is a Maya-Kaqchikel woman from the rural community of Chipiacul, Patzún. She has been involved with WJI since 2013, when she first joined the Women's Rights Education Program. Today, she is 41 years old and has become a trailblazer for women and girls as a Community Advocate. "The most transformative topic for my life was working with WJI on improving my self-confidence. Now, I am strong and empowered. I defend my rights wherever I am. And in my home, I practice gender equality with my husband and my sons. If I had not participated in the program or WJI had not come to my community, I would be at home embroidering or weaving. But, because I participated, WJI helped me grow and improve my future."

Thanks to WJI's programs and Doña Jose's activism, her community is also making progress. "Working with WJI opened my eyes. Now I can participate proudly, raise my hand, and speak up during community meetings. I am



recognized as a leader. Before WJI came, there was very little female participation in community affairs. Now, there are usually more women than men at the meetings. I'm happy, knowing I'm advocating for my own wellbeing and that of my family.

Now women feel safer because

they know where to seek help and are not afraid to speak up and report violence. I want all women to receive these trainings, so that they have a voice to speak out against violence. My goal is to share my experience and continue with this work, so that no more women experience violence, and that we all live happier lives."



WJI's Adolescent Girls Program supports girls in asserting their rights and preventing early and forced marriage. To help ensure that girls grow in a supportive environment and ensure a sustainable impact, WJI also works with parents and community leaders to advance gender equality, support girls in delaying marriage, and transform local norms and attitudes.



368 girls participated in the program



Graduates are more likely to plan to **get married after the age of 21**



WJI engaged **150 policymakers and local leaders** on preventing child marriage



CLARA MICHELLE

A LIFE-CHANGING DECISION

When Clara Michelle was only 15, she made plans to leave home to be with her boyfriend. When the time came to move out, however, she thought back on what she had learned in WJI's workshops and made the life-changing decision to stay home and keep going to school. Today, Clara Michelle is proud of her decisions and how far she has come.

“The most important thing I learned with WJI was self-worth. My life goal right now is to grow up and have a successful future. I want a future in which I am happy. I have seen changes with other adolescent girls in my community too. Before WJI came, teens would move in with their boyfriends at a very young age. Now, they are making other, better decisions, and child marriage has declined in our community.”



PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHANGE:

STRENGTHENING LOCAL ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS

WJI trains community leaders and government officials to build their capacity to respond to violence against women and girls. We partner with local leaders to develop Community Action Plans to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and child marriage. By training local leaders, police, and health and judicial officials, WJI improves their responses to cases of violence against women and girls and helps create safer, stronger communities.



7 Community Action Plans were enacted



WJI trained **318 police officers**, government officials and community leaders



After completing our training, government officials referred **80 women** to WJI for legal services



STORIES FROM OUR ALLIES

DON PEDRO MEJÍA

MAYOR OF PAXIXIL COMMUNITY

After a year of participating in WJI's programming, the community of Paxixil has seen more women standing up for their rights and engaging in community decision-making than ever before. Community leaders, like Mayor Don Pedro, have been key allies in improving local responses to violence against women and girls.

What changes have you seen in the women of your community since WJI started working there?

"I've noticed that women are speaking out more and more. I've seen more cases in my office where women even say 'because I participated in WJI's workshops, I know I have rights.' It's a big change to witness women finding their voice."

After participating in WJI's trainings, what actions have you taken to include women in political spaces?

"[The other leaders and I] took the initiative of inviting women to our community meetings because we saw that they now know that they can participate in decision-making in the community. When they come to meetings, I encourage them to keep participating, to keep improving their lives, and [remind them] that they can hold a leadership position."

What advice would you give to other community leaders regarding WJI's work?

"I advise other leaders to work with WJI in their communities, because it will help women to increase their participation. Only in this way can we advance as a community--women and men working together--because the women can hold an elected position, can carry out a project, [and] can work. I advise both current and future leaders to give this opportunity to their community."

As Don Pedro shared, WJI transforms norms and attitudes that view gender-based violence and gender inequality as acceptable and equips women with the tools and knowledge to defend their rights and make their voices heard in their communities.

“As a Maya Kaqchikel woman, I firmly believe that WJI has provided valuable and powerful tools to women in the communities where we work, so that they may be actors in their own lives.”

-Viviana Patal,
Legal Director



Photo Credits: James Rodriguez, Robin Schmid, Anna Davidson, Lisa Shannon, and Jennifer Zelaya.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



Women's
Justice Initiative

www.womens-justice.org • info@womens-justice.org

Follow us!

