



2021 Annual Report

Hope Renewed: Reimagining a Safer World for Women



OUR MISSION

The Women's Justice Initiative (WJI) improves the lives of indigenous Guatemalan women and girls through education, access to legal services, and gender-based violence prevention.

Letter from Our Leadership



Kate Flatley
Executive Director



Clara Ferraro
Board President

Dear Friends,

We are immensely proud of the Women's Justice Initiative's accomplishments in 2021. This year we found ways to thrive despite the enduring challenges that the pandemic presents. We are so thankful for your continued support during this year of resilience, adaptation, and expansion.

In 2021, **WJI expanded into 24 new communities** in the municipalities of San Martín Jilotepeque and San José Poaquil through a partnership with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women. As we expanded, WJI added twelve talented members to the team and continued to invest in our organizational capacity.

We reinforced our commitment to women and girls by providing our **legal literacy program to 959 women, teaching 293 adolescent girls the importance of delaying marriage, and providing legal services to 576 women.** We piloted a program for boys and strengthened our work with fathers to reduce violence and improve gender equality. Our **67 Community Advocates** took on advanced leadership roles in their communities. Overall, our programs reached **13,100** individuals.

In 2021, we also joined an ambitious USAID-funded initiative to increase women's economic empowerment and reduce gender-based violence in Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Now, **WJI is reaching women in diverse areas of Central America** by sharing our rights-based methodology with local organizations and collaborating with new partners in the fight to end violence against women.

The past two years, while challenging, have strengthened our dedication to advancing equality and ending gender-based violence in indigenous communities. We look towards the future with renewed hope and excitement, ready to lead the way to create a safer world for rural women and girls.

Thank you,

Kate and Clara

The Context

Guatemala has one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. Rural, indigenous women are disproportionately impacted by violence due to social isolation, discrimination, weak public institutions, and limited access to resources.

Since the start of the pandemic, indigenous Guatemalan girls have faced an especially high risk of child marriage and early termination of their studies, as families attempt to respond to the economic repercussions of COVID-19.





WHERE WE WORK

WJI works in 72 Maya Kaqchikel-speaking rural communities across 5 municipalities in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

WHAT WE DO



WJI uses a holistic, community-based approach to improve access to justice and prevent gender-based violence and child marriage in rural Guatemala.



WJI's Women's Rights Education Program teaches women about their rights and helps build the self-esteem and the communication skills necessary to exercise those rights.



The Legal Services Program provides free legal support in cases related to violence against women and girls and economic rights.



To sustain change for the long-term, WJI trains local women to become Community Advocates, or rights educators and mentors in their communities.



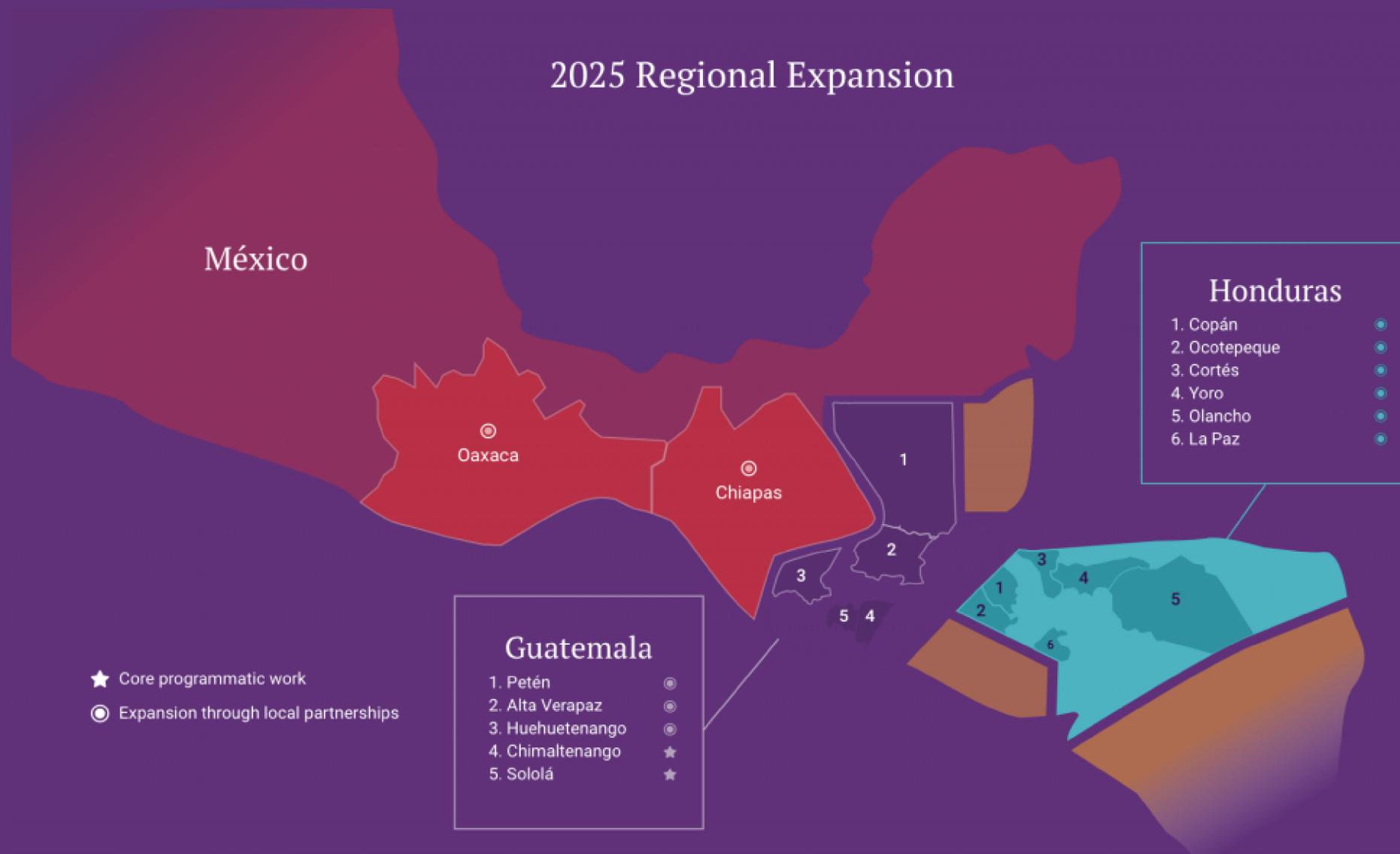
Advocates also help lead WJI's Adolescent Girls Program, which improves girls' knowledge of their rights and encourages them to delay marriage.



100% of WJI's services are offered in Kaqchikel, the local Maya language.

Regional Expansion

In 2021, WJI took a **landmark step**, joining an ambitious initiative to increase women's economic empowerment and reduce gender-based violence throughout Central America as part of the **Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative** funded by the United States Agency for International Development. WJI is providing technical assistance to community-based organizations in **Honduras, Mexico, and three new regions of Guatemala**.



2021 Impact Statistics

13,104

women, men, and girls benefited from wji's programs.

500

women and girls gained knowledge and skills to prevent child marriage.

959

women graduated from WJI's legal literacy program.

576

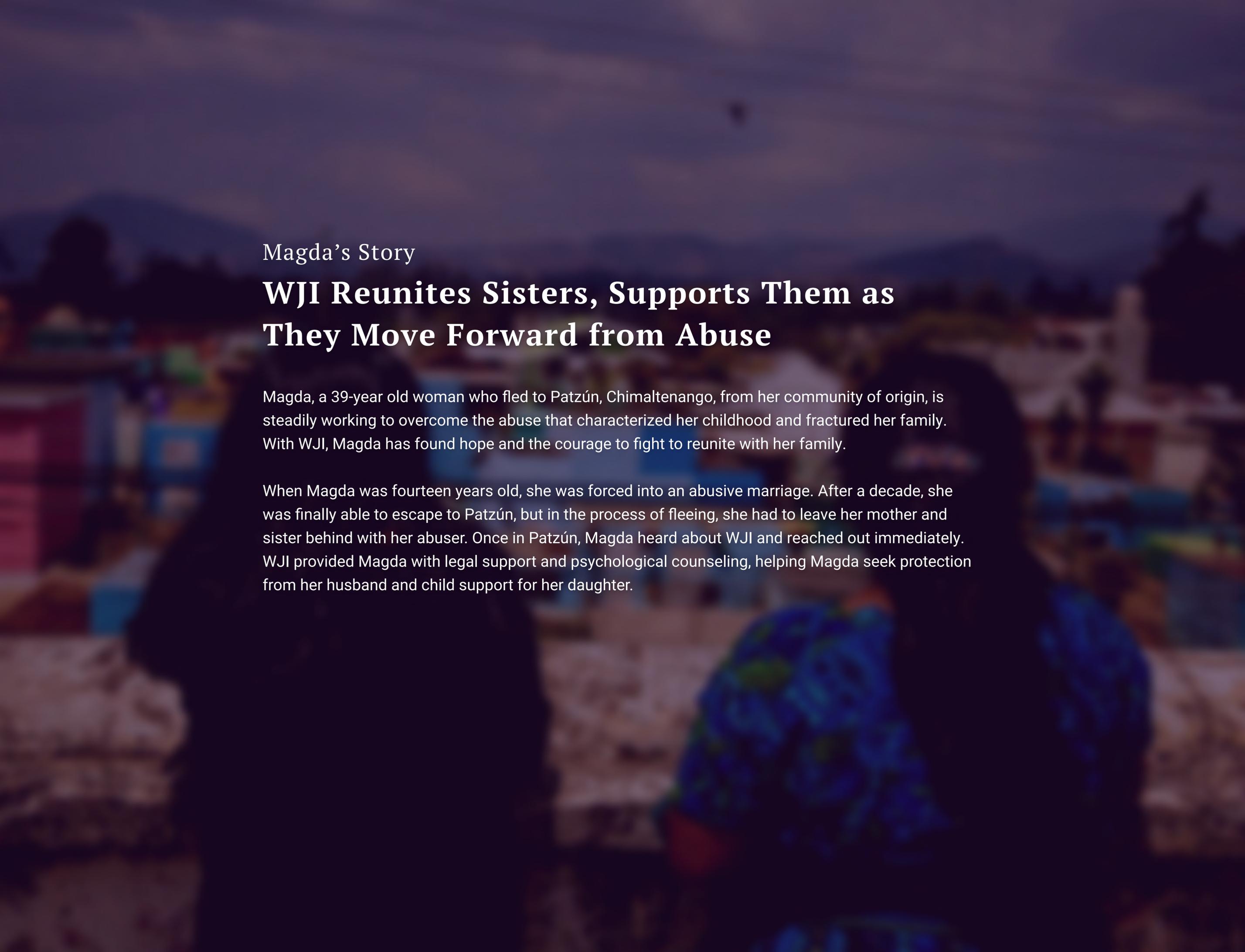
women received free legal services from WJI.

26

women completed their two-year training to become Community Advocates.

247

police officers, service providers, and local leaders were trained in adequate responses to VAWG.



Magda's Story

WJI Reunites Sisters, Supports Them as They Move Forward from Abuse

Magda, a 39-year old woman who fled to Patzún, Chimaltenango, from her community of origin, is steadily working to overcome the abuse that characterized her childhood and fractured her family. With WJI, Magda has found hope and the courage to fight to reunite with her family.

When Magda was fourteen years old, she was forced into an abusive marriage. After a decade, she was finally able to escape to Patzún, but in the process of fleeing, she had to leave her mother and sister behind with her abuser. Once in Patzún, Magda heard about WJI and reached out immediately. WJI provided Magda with legal support and psychological counseling, helping Magda seek protection from her husband and child support for her daughter.

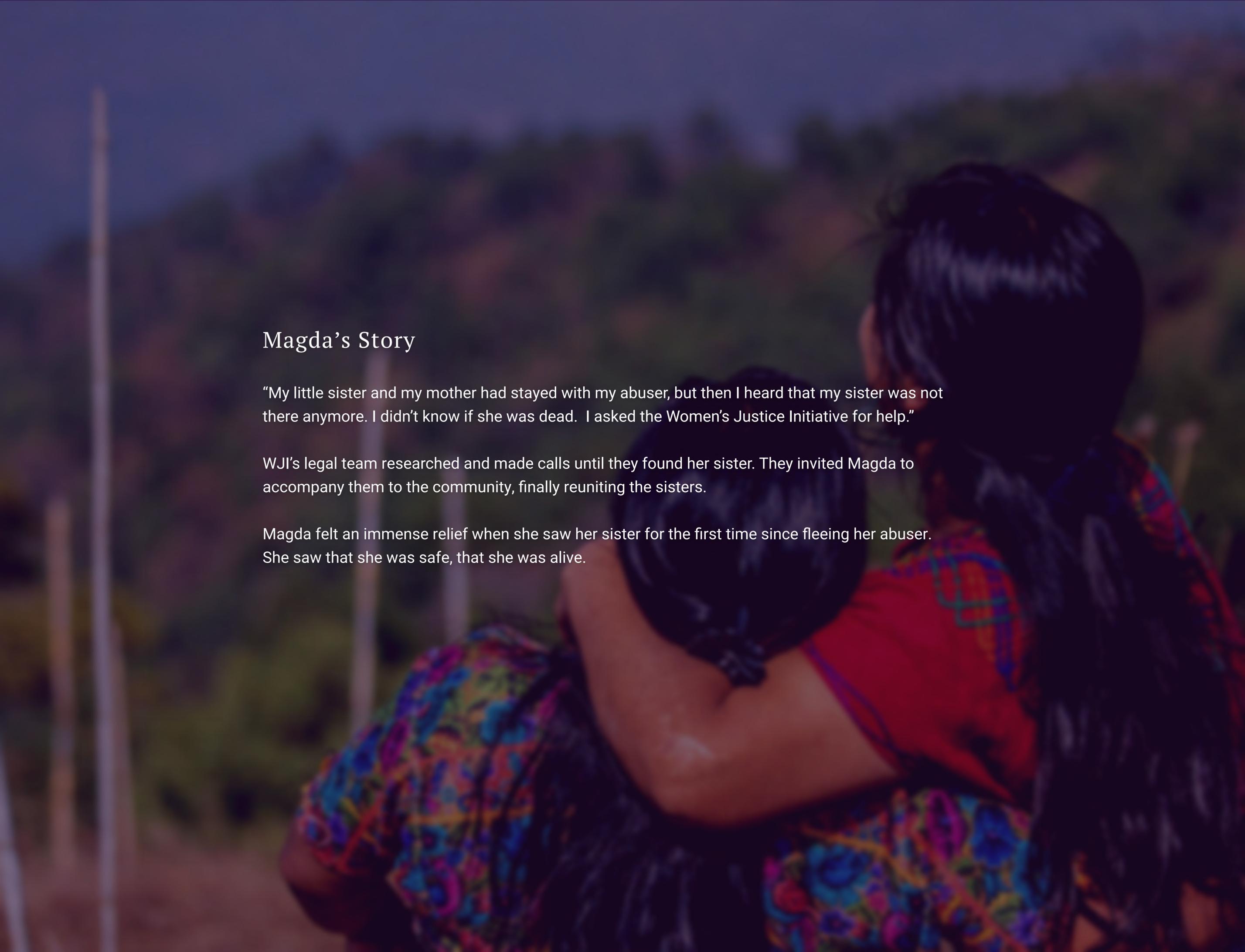
Magda's Story

"Where I'm from, there are no legal services available in my language. No one helped me until I came to Patzún and discovered the Women's Justice Initiative."

Magda also enrolled in WJI's Women's Rights Education Program. Connecting with WJI and other women brought Magda peace and inspired her to begin her search to find and reconnect with her younger sister.

With the encouragement of her fellow program participants, Magda sought the help of WJI's legal team.





Magda's Story

"My little sister and my mother had stayed with my abuser, but then I heard that my sister was not there anymore. I didn't know if she was dead. I asked the Women's Justice Initiative for help."

WJI's legal team researched and made calls until they found her sister. They invited Magda to accompany them to the community, finally reuniting the sisters.

Magda felt an immense relief when she saw her sister for the first time since fleeing her abuser. She saw that she was safe, that she was alive.

A group of women are walking away from the camera on a dirt path in a rural, hilly area. The women are wearing traditional clothing, including long skirts and blouses. The background shows a dirt road, trees, and hills under a clear sky. The overall scene is peaceful and suggests a community setting.

Magda's Story

Magda ended the cycle of violence that began in her childhood and she encourages other women to do the same. She says, "I was so young when [my ex-husband] sexually assaulted me, when he did all those things to me. Young women should join groups like the Women's Justice Initiative, because they will help."

After participating in WJI's programs and building community with other women, Magda no longer feels alone or powerless in the face of violence.

She says, "We have the law behind us now."



Irma's Story

A Legacy of Knowing our Rights: A Community Advocate Leads the Next Generation

Irma, a Community Advocate from Tecpán, is one of many Advocates that have taken on increased leadership roles to prevent violence and child marriage.

In 2021, Irma and 17 other Advocates began implementing WJI's Adolescent Girls Program in their communities. This new approach strengthens Advocates' existing role as leaders in their communities, building powerful connections between generations.



Irma's Story

By leading the Adolescent Girls Program, Advocates share their deep knowledge of women's rights and leadership skills with girls in their community.

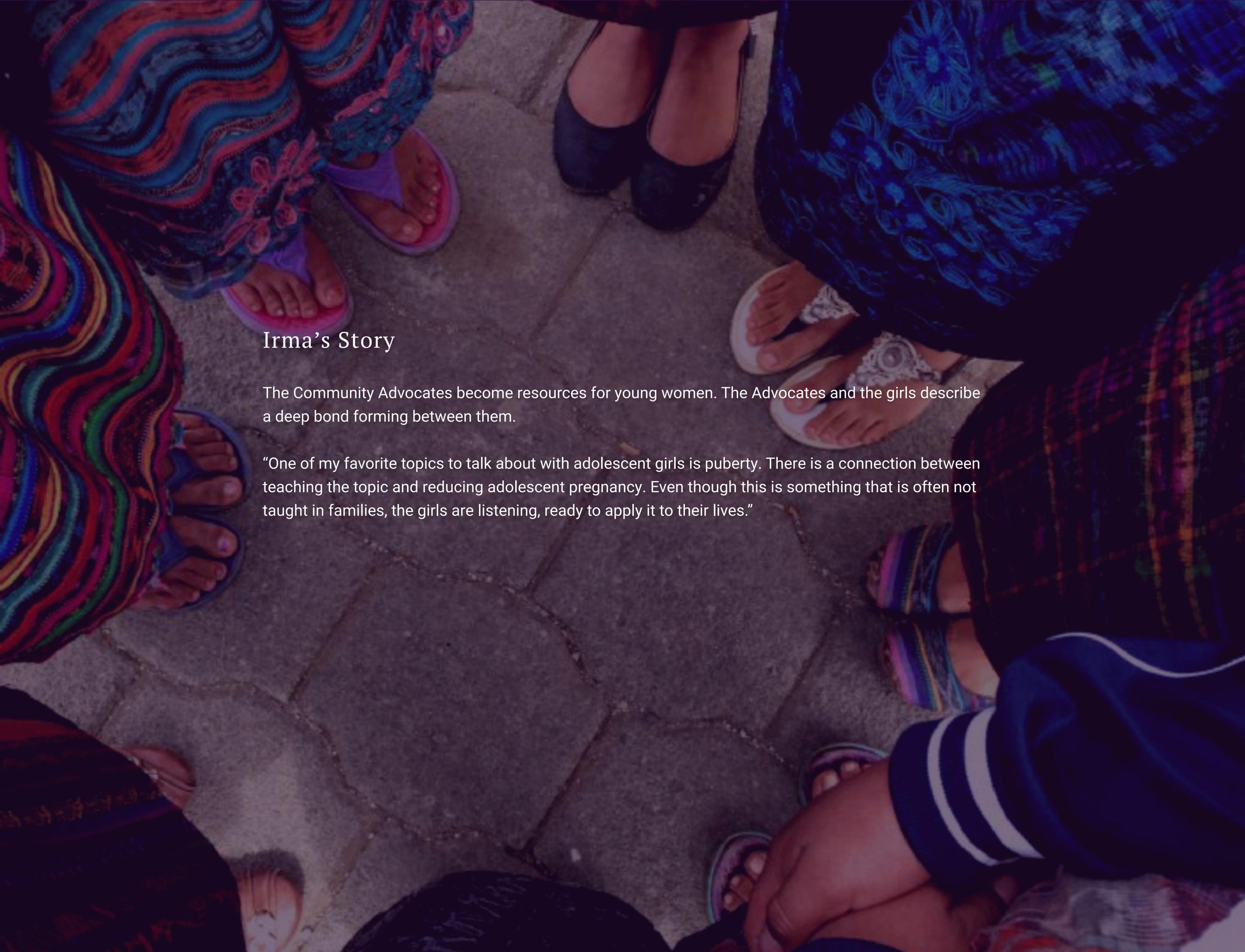
"My favorite part about being an Advocate is sharing with the girls what I have learned and transmitting the legacy of knowing their rights, knowing they have value, that we as women have the right to protect ourselves."

Irma's Story

Community Advocates use their experiences and knowledge to guide young women through topics such as sexual and reproductive rights, delaying marriage, financial literacy, and creating life plans.

"I got married quite young, at 19, and had my first child soon after. I did not know about the danger of having children at a young age, and my pregnancies and breastfeeding were difficult. I don't want young girls to have the same experience. I only want them to have kids once they are physically, emotionally, and financially prepared."

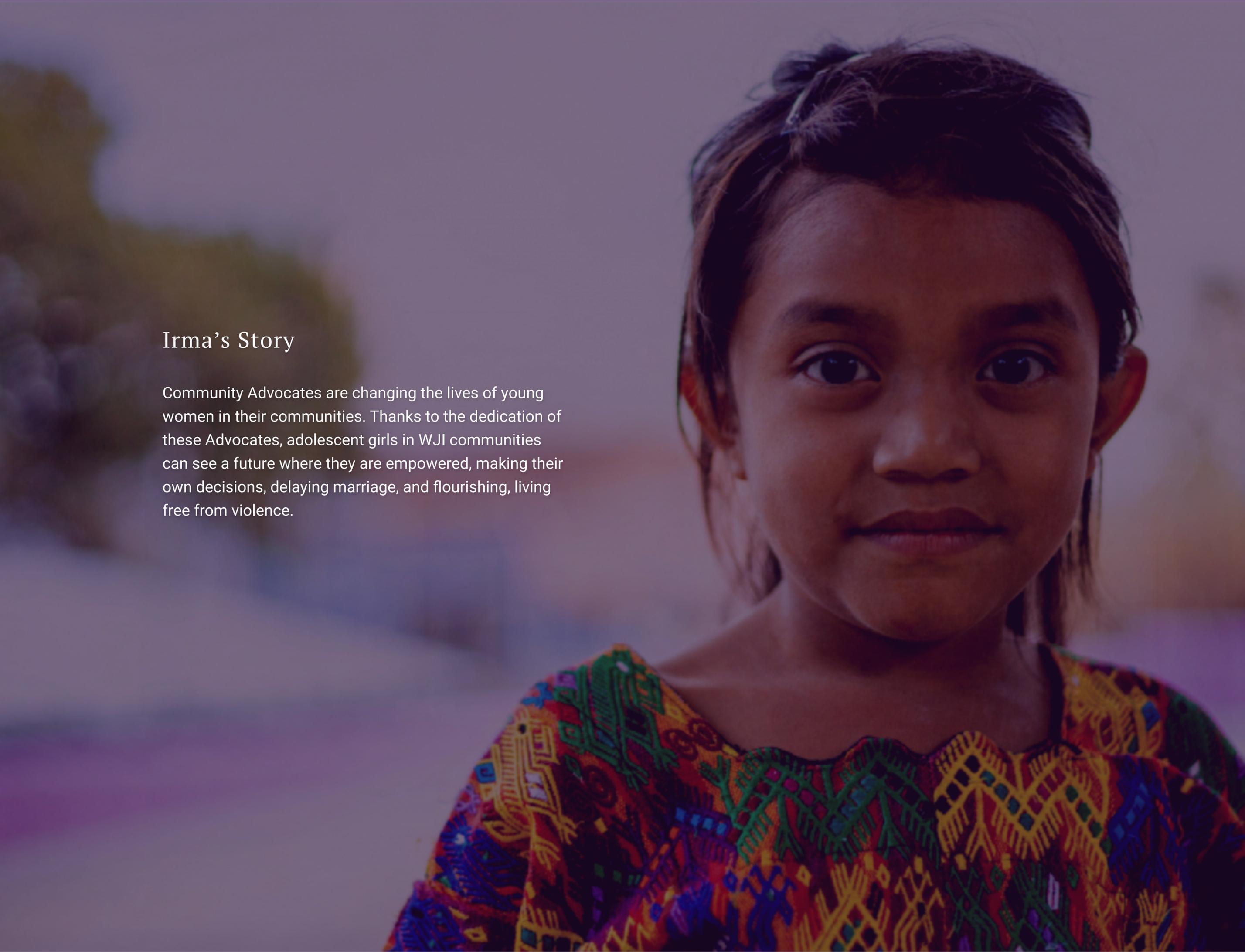




Irma's Story

The Community Advocates become resources for young women. The Advocates and the girls describe a deep bond forming between them.

“One of my favorite topics to talk about with adolescent girls is puberty. There is a connection between teaching the topic and reducing adolescent pregnancy. Even though this is something that is often not taught in families, the girls are listening, ready to apply it to their lives.”

A close-up portrait of a young girl with dark hair, looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a vibrant, multi-colored patterned top. The background is softly blurred, showing hints of green foliage and a light-colored wall. The overall lighting is soft and natural.

Irma's Story

Community Advocates are changing the lives of young women in their communities. Thanks to the dedication of these Advocates, adolescent girls in WJI communities can see a future where they are empowered, making their own decisions, delaying marriage, and flourishing, living free from violence.



Staff Highlight: Estela Calcá

Leading the Way in WJI's 2021 Expansion

In 2021, WJI launched a regional expansion into 24 new communities, reaching over 5,700 women, men, and children.

Estela Calcá has worked with WJI for ten years and has played an instrumental role in the expansion process. Here, she discusses the process and importance of reaching new communities.



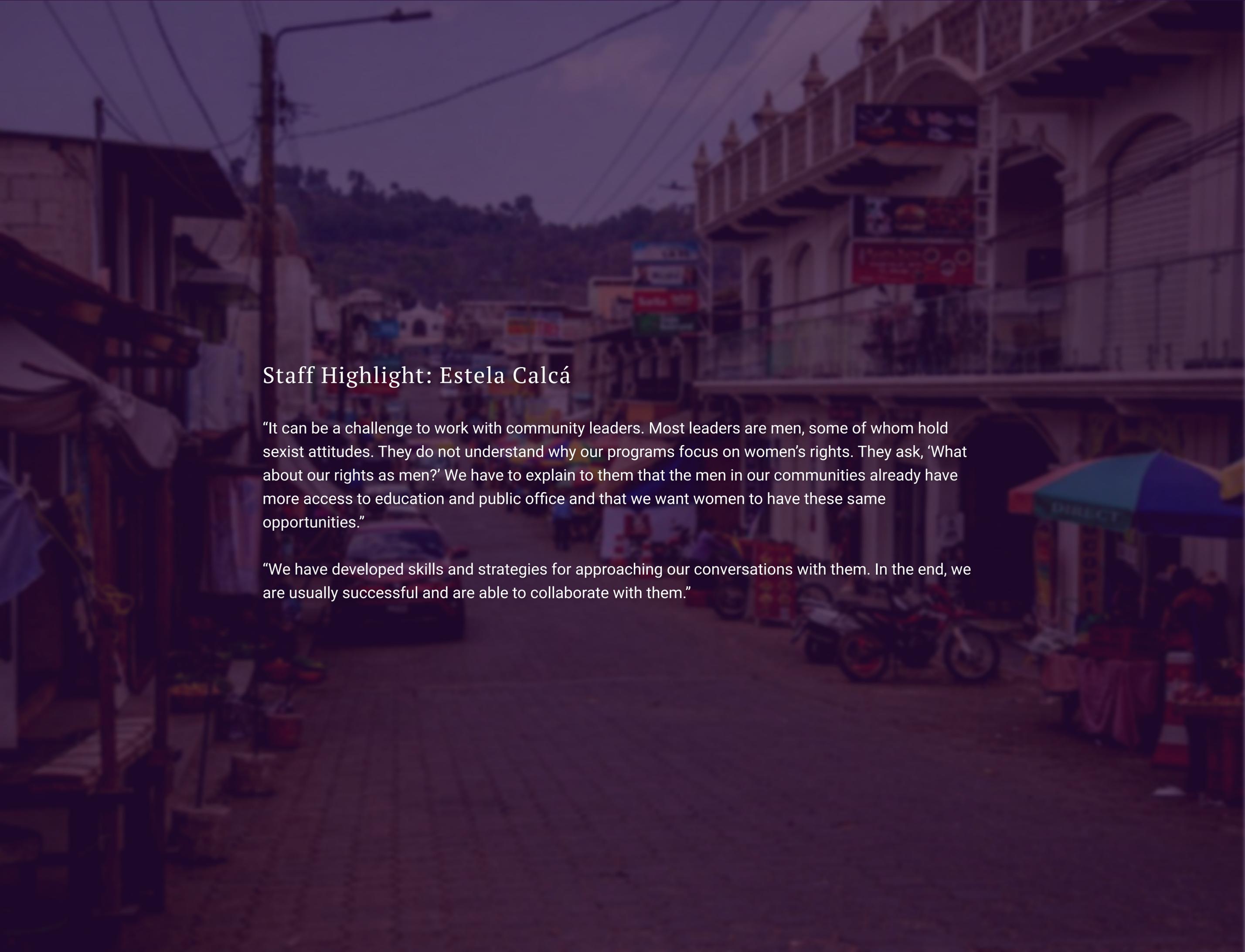
Staff Highlight: Estela Calcá

“Every time that WJI grows and expands into new municipalities, we are changing gender dynamics in entire families and communities. Combatting machismo and sexist attitudes is difficult, but little by little, step by step, we’re changing people’s perspectives.”

An aerial photograph of a rural community nestled in a valley. The landscape is characterized by rolling hills and mountains in the background, some covered in dense green forest. The foreground and middle ground show a mix of agricultural fields, some with distinct rows of crops, and clusters of small, simple buildings with light-colored walls and dark roofs. A dirt road winds through the area, connecting different parts of the community. The overall scene depicts a typical rural settlement in a mountainous region.

Staff Highlight: Estela Calcá

“In our expansion efforts, I help lead our community mapping. Before launching our programs, we go to the communities and get to know the places and people. We conduct surveys to collect information to help inform our expanding programs, including the average age of marriage and number of children in families throughout the community.”



Staff Highlight: Estela Calcá

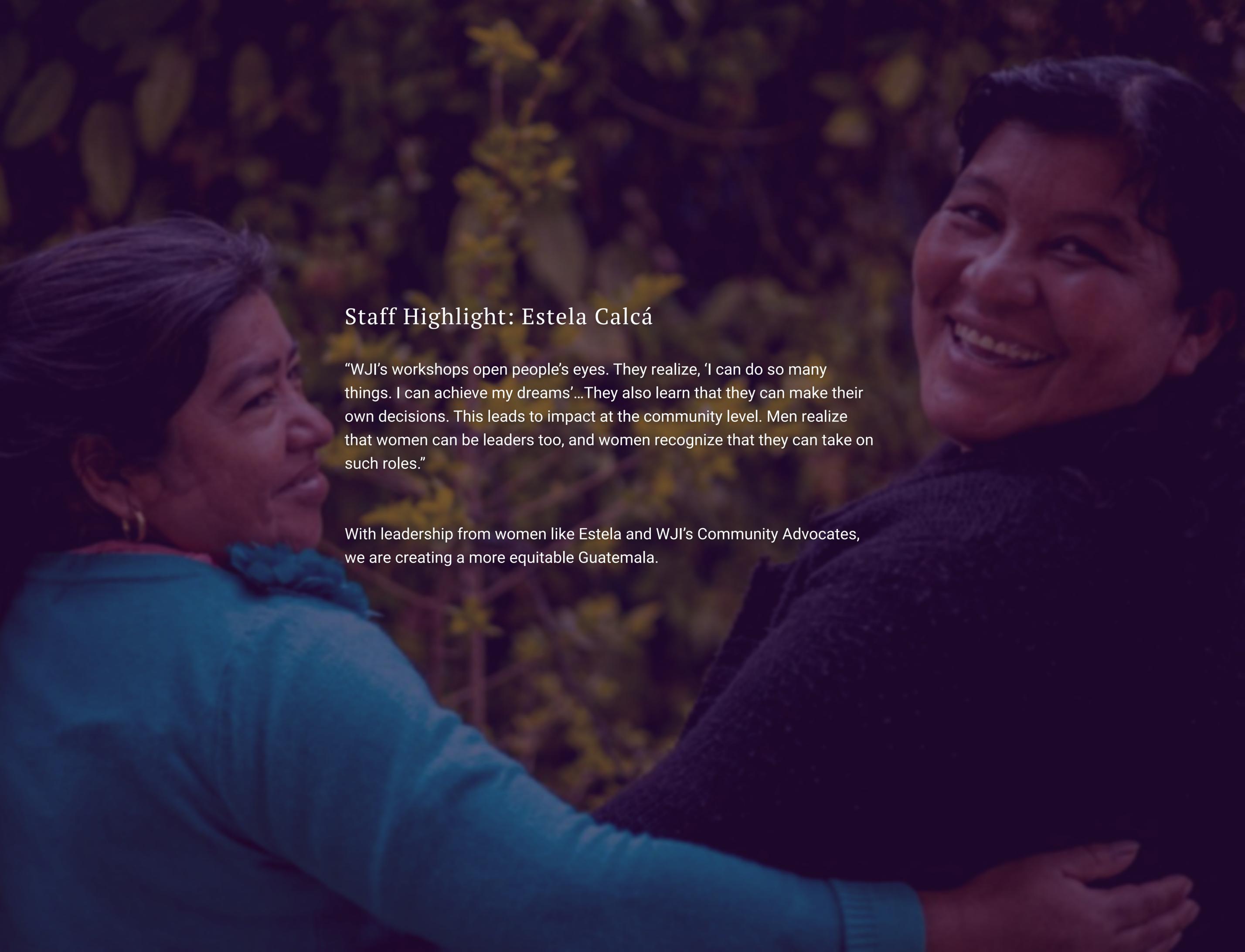
“It can be a challenge to work with community leaders. Most leaders are men, some of whom hold sexist attitudes. They do not understand why our programs focus on women’s rights. They ask, ‘What about our rights as men?’ We have to explain to them that the men in our communities already have more access to education and public office and that we want women to have these same opportunities.”

“We have developed skills and strategies for approaching our conversations with them. In the end, we are usually successful and are able to collaborate with them.”

A group of approximately 20 women are posed on a wide set of stone steps. They are dressed in traditional Mexican clothing, including colorful blouses and patterned skirts. In the background, a large, ornate building with a central dome and arched windows is visible. The scene is set outdoors under a clear sky.

Staff Highlight: Estela Calcá

“Prior to attending WJI workshops, some women will ask things like, ‘Why is my son washing dishes?’ Even some women hold sexist attitudes, because that is what they have been taught. Yet, because of WJI’s work, we’re beginning to see more gender equity in homes.”

A photograph of two women smiling and looking at each other outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a teal top and has her hair pulled back. The woman on the right is wearing a dark sweater and has short dark hair. They are standing in front of a background of green and yellow foliage. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark blue overlay.

Staff Highlight: Estela Calcá

“WJI’s workshops open people’s eyes. They realize, ‘I can do so many things. I can achieve my dreams’...They also learn that they can make their own decisions. This leads to impact at the community level. Men realize that women can be leaders too, and women recognize that they can take on such roles.”

With leadership from women like Estela and WJI’s Community Advocates, we are creating a more equitable Guatemala.

Our Impact to Date

47,000

direct beneficiaries

141,000

indirect beneficiaries

1,455

community leaders, police,
and government officials
trained

3,446

legal cases related to
economic rights or violence
against women

86

women trained as leaders,
mentors, and rights
educators in their
communities

3,512

graduates from the women's
rights education program

1,043

graduates from the
Adolescent Girls Program

1,791

parents and community
leaders have gained the skills
through WJI workshops to
prevent child marriage

Financials

Expenses - \$622,522

■ Programs: \$478,326 ■ Administration: \$59,594 ■ Development: \$84,062



Revenue - \$777,044

■ Foundations: \$436,060 ■ Individuals: \$323,615 ■ Corporations: \$15,265



2021 Ending Net Assets: \$1,013,768

Thank You

The Women's Justice Initiative would like to thank all of its Board members, partners, and donors for supporting our work. With your help, WJI is providing thousands of women and girls with the tools to transform their lives and strengthen their communities.



Photographer Credits

Jonathan Coronado

WJI Staff Members



Women's Justice
Initiative

GUATEMALA (Office)
3ra. Avenida 1-46, Zona 1,
Patzún, Guatemala

Follow Us



USA (Mailing Address)
PO Box 21540
New York, NY 10087-1540