



Women's
Justice Initiative

2023 Annual Report

A Just Future for Women

Year One of WJI's Strategic Growth Plan

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

WJI envisions a world in which women and girls are active leaders in their communities, have access to legal services, know their rights, and live free from violence.

Letter from Our Leadership

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, we are so proud of WJI's success. 2023 was a year of tremendous impact: nearly 2,000 women and girls participated in our programs and we reached more than 24,000 individuals. We expanded our programming to twelve new communities and shared our legal empowerment methodology with partner organizations in three countries.

Our commitment to creating a world where women and girls can live free from violence is as urgent as ever. In 2023, we took a significant step toward this vision by launching a five-year strategic plan. A Just Future for Women, Investing in WJI's Legacy envisions WJI tripling our impact to reach 500,000 individuals by 2027. We will achieve this goal through three key strategies:

Replicate: Double our coverage in the region through evidence-based programming that combines rights education with mobile service delivery.

Scale: Multiply our impact by adapting and sharing our proven legal empowerment methodology with community-based organizations across Central America.

Sustain: Ensure WJI's legacy by investing in our organizational capacity and team.

WJI is investing in the transformative potential of women and girls, empowering them to become leaders and changemakers in their communities. Our success would not be possible without the dedication of our incredible partners. With your support, we are creating a just future for generations to come.

With gratitude,



Kate Flatley

Executive Director




Clara Ferraro

Board President




Gender-Based Violence: A Global Challenge

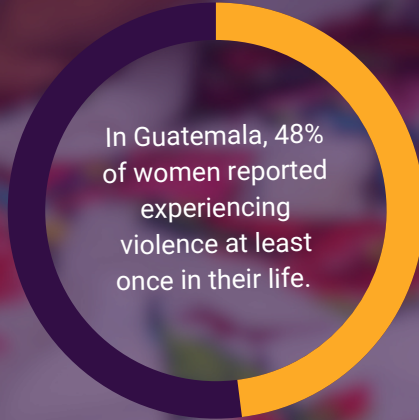
Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation worldwide. Despite decades of commitments to address gender-based violence in the region, Central America continues to face some of the highest rates in the world.



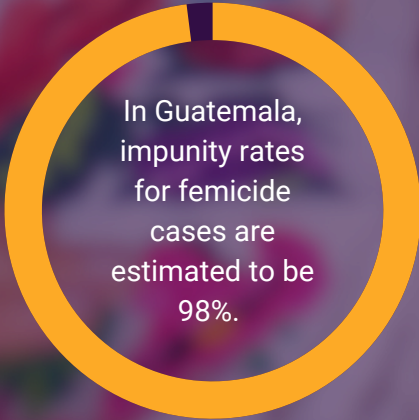
Globally, gender-based violence affects one in three women.



Latin America is home to 14 of the 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide.



In Guatemala, 48% of women reported experiencing violence at least once in their life.



In Guatemala, impunity rates for femicide cases are estimated to be 98%.



In the Maya-Kaqchikel region, 55% of women reported experiencing violence.

Gender-Based Violence: A Global Challenge... With Local Solutions



WJI's community-driven approach harnesses the transformative power of the law while recognizing that local knowledge and expertise are critical to securing sustainable change.



WJI has emerged as a regional leader in gender-based violence prevention and response. To date, more than 10,000 women and girls have participated in our programs, over 55,000 individuals have benefited from our work, and we have reached more than 150,000 individuals indirectly.

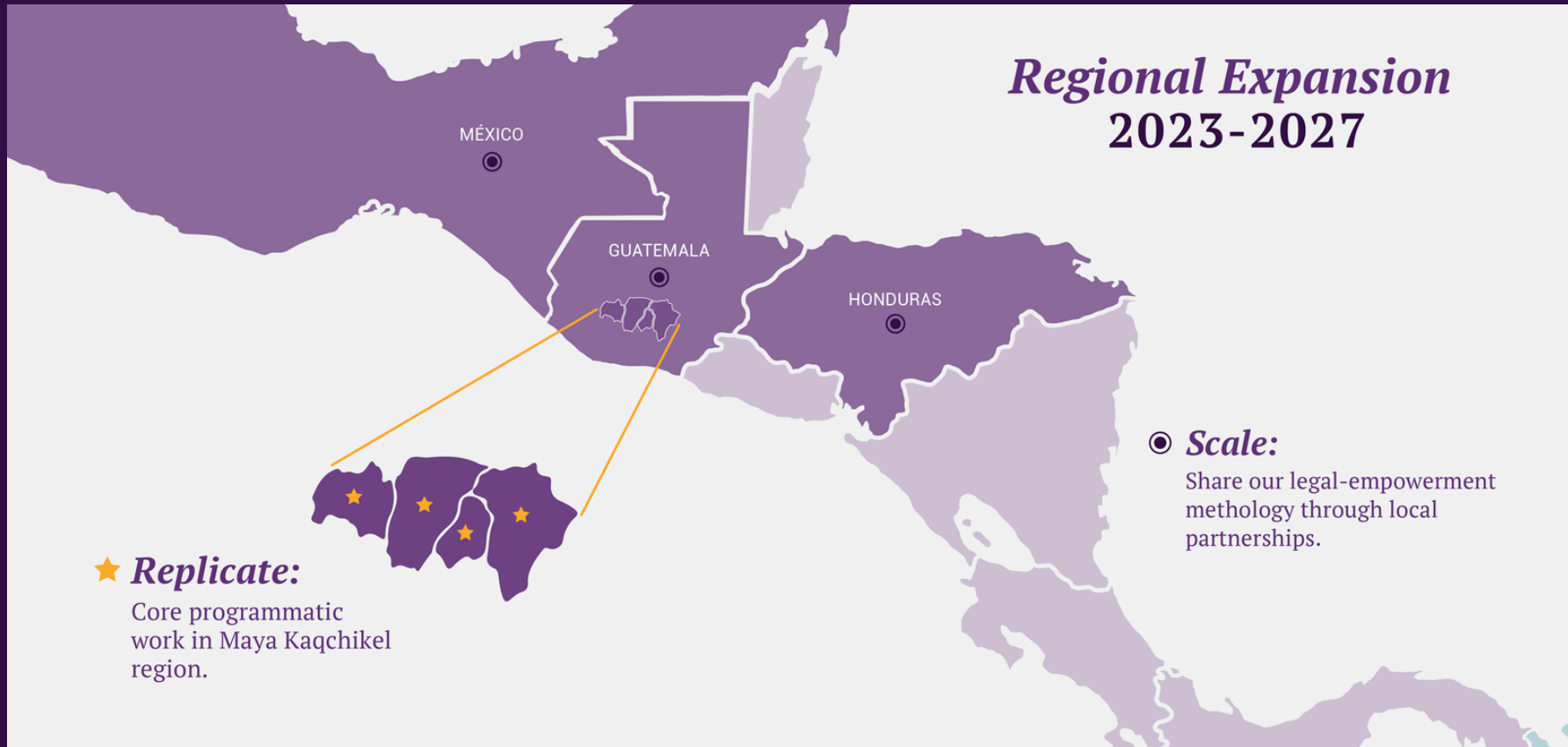


We combine rights education with mobile service delivery to empower women and girls to know and use the law. By providing culturally responsive programs in the local language, WJI is addressing many of the systemic barriers indigenous women face when accessing justice.



With the success of our legal empowerment methodology in the Maya Kaqchikel region of Guatemala, we are ready to scale across Central America in partnership with local organizations. Today, we are looking to the future, and implementing an ambitious strategic plan to reach 500,000 individuals, more than tripling our impact by 2027.

Where We Work



WJI implements programming in **85 communities** in the Maya Kaqchikel region of Guatemala, and shares its methodology with partner organizations in **three countries**.

Program Participants



“I trusted WJI because I saw their wide reach in many communities and I was impressed by the extent of their work with women. Through the Advocates Program, I realized how valuable leadership training is for our communities. I improved my self-esteem and decision-making skills, and I learned about my rights. I encourage other women to join this transformative program. I hope WJI continues expanding to other communities. Women really need this.”

Raquel Asituj, San José Poaquil,
Paxcabalché

Program Participants



“[As a Community Advocate,] it was a great experience to facilitate workshops with adolescent girls. They felt confident asking me questions and many of them approached me outside of the workshops. I didn’t receive this education when I was their age. Knowing their rights makes them more likely to respect themselves, be respected by others, and to make their own decisions.”

Karol Ordoñez, San Juan Comalapa,
Panabajal

Program Participants



“When I was growing up, there weren’t many educational opportunities. I’ve learned so many important skills, like public speaking, which gives me more confidence to participate in leadership opportunities in my community. The program motivates us; we see men leaving their homes and their communities to participate in their activities all the time. We can too!”

Cata Sipac, Community Advocate,
Chipiacul Patzún

Program Participants



“Well, the truth is, I was surprised. Before, I felt that indigenous women were hardly valued [and seen as] almost nothing. Seeing [my attorney], she's an example for me. What she is, and what she has achieved as an indigenous woman. The truth is, I felt proud that she took care of me, that she helped me.”

Paulina*, San José Poaquil

Emerging Leaders in the Field

In 2023, WJI's talented team attended conferences, participated in panels, and shared their unique expertise all over the world!

Members of our team participated in numerous forums and events, from New York City, at the United Nations and the Ford Foundation, to the Women Deliver Conference in Rwanda. They spoke alongside some of our incredible partners, including the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, the UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur, and Namati's Grassroots Justice Network.



Women Strong International, Marrakech, Morocco



Namati's Grassroots Justice Network, Kampala, Uganda



Women Deliver Conference, UNTF Panel, Kigali, Rwanda



**Working Group on Customary and Informal Justice and SDG16+,
UN Special Rapporteur, New York City, USA**



Girls Not Brides, Cartagena, Colombia



**Namati Strategic Council of Latin America, Buenos Aires,
Argentina**

2023 Impact Statistics

8,167

women, men, and girls benefitted from WJI's programs.

185

adolescent girls gained knowledge and skills to prevent child marriage and gender-based violence.

843

women graduated from WJI's Women's Rights Education Program.

684

women received free legal services from WJI.

44

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

535

police officers, service providers, and community actors were trained in adequate responses to violence.

A hand-drawn sign on a green background with the text "Violencia en la Par" and "AS" written on it. The sign is being held by a hand. The background is a blurred image of a person's hands holding a similar sign.

Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Replicate Harnessing the Transformative Power of the Law

WJI's community-driven approach harnesses the transformative power of the law, helping women to know and exercise their rights while increasing their access to the justice system.

In 2023, WJI expanded its legal-empowerment methodology into two new areas of the Kaqchikel region. We initiated programming in twelve communities with high levels of gender-based violence, limited access to justice, and few educational and economic opportunities for women.



Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Replicate

Ashley*, a woman from Poaquil, entered a union with her ex-partner when she was only 14 years old. She had her first child at 15, and she is now a mother of six. Her husband's abuse started not long after they began their relationship.

"He always criticized me, he hit me, he mistreated me and our children, and I endured it. He didn't provide any money. In fact, I always went to look for work, I went out to wash, and clean, and I did all the chores at home. Even when I was two days away from giving birth, I still worked."



Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Replicate

Two years ago, Ashley's partner abandoned her and their children. She asked for child support, but he refused. Shortly after, Ashley participated in WJI's legal literacy course. She says, "I know what my rights are now. Now, I know we don't deserve this. The workshops gave me hope." Ashley recognized that the physical and economic violence she experienced was neither normal nor acceptable.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding two bright yellow roses. The person is wearing a purple sweater with a colorful, patterned scarf. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the person's clothing and a hint of another person's arm in a pink sleeve. The overall lighting is soft and slightly dim, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Replicate

After attending the workshops, Ashley sought legal services from WJI “to ensure I received the child support payments. I was desperate, but WJI gave me the support I needed.” WJI provided comprehensive legal services, helping Ashley navigate the bureaucratic processes, ultimately winning her case and obtaining child support payments from her ex-partner. Now, she lives peacefully in her home with her children.

“I don't have a mother and my family didn't help me, but I trusted WJI and they delivered. Who was my family? WJI.”

Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Replicate

At WJI, we are committed to empowering indigenous women with the legal and social resources they deserve. When women gain agency, when they lift their voices, and when their experiences are valued, they become agents of change in their communities.

**Name has been changed to protect the identity of the client.*



Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Scale Cacao Producer and Advocate: Meidy Posas Journey to Fighting GBV with WJI

WJI is scaling our impact across Central America. To scale sustainably, we are sharing our legal empowerment methodology with community leaders who possess a profound understanding of the local context and the needs of their communities.

As part of USAID's Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative, WJI is transforming the lives of vulnerable women and girls in Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico through collaborations with community-based organizations across the region. WJI equips these organizations with culturally relevant training and technical assistance to address gender-based violence (GBV) and enhance women's knowledge of their rights.

Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Scale

Meidy Posas is a 29-year-old cocoa producer from Honduras who co-founded Chocomer, a women-owned business dedicated to cocoa processing. From an early age, Meidy has actively participated in community-driven initiatives that create equitable opportunities to empower women.



VIOLENTOMETRO

- AGREDER
- MUTILAR
- VIOIAR
- FORZAR UNA RELACION SEX
- AMENAZAR DE MUERTE
- ENCEJERAR O AISLAR
- CAPTIVAR
- EMPUJAR Y JALONEAR
- PELIGRO
- GOIPEAR JUGANDO
- CARICIAS AGRESIVAS
- MANDO SEAR
- DESTRUIR ARTICULOS PERSONA
- CONTROLAR PROHIBIR, FAMILIA, AMISTADES ETC
- INTIMIDAR
- HUMILLAR EN PUBLICO
- RIDICULIZAR / OFENDER
- DESCALIFICAR
- CULPABILIZAR
- CEJAR
- IGNORAR / LEY DEL HIELO
- MENTIR, ENGAÑAR
- CHANTAJEAR
- BROMAS HIPIENTES

¿Que entiende violencia



Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Scale

When WJI launched its GBV work in Honduras, Meidy eagerly participated in the three-day capacity-building workshop and worked with WJI staff to adapt and replicate our methodology to best fit the needs of local women. Through this collaboration, Meidy and her team learned about their rights and how to support other women and girls in their communities.

Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Scale

This experience led Meidy to new opportunities. She now mentors other young cocoa producers, serves on the governing boards of two organizations and promotes GBV prevention in her community.

By investing in young leaders like Meidy, WJI is strengthening the capacity of local leaders and community-based organizations to better prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.





Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Sustain

Empowering Our Team to Sustain Long-Term Impact Through Growth and Leadership

As an organization, investing in our team and providing opportunities for professional growth and skills development is fundamental to our success.

"As an organization that champions women's rights, our organizational culture must reflect the principles that safeguard the rights and well-being of the individuals who work tirelessly to support the communities we serve. If we prioritize the needs of our team, our success in the field will reflect that." Gabriela Palacios, Director of Operations

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a vibrant pink and blue traditional Guatemalan blouse and a colorful patterned skirt, stands in the foreground. She is smiling and holding a white document. In the background, several other women in similar traditional attire are visible, along with colorful balloons and a banner with the word 'Mujeres' in yellow. The scene is set outdoors, possibly at a community gathering or festival.

Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Sustain

Lidia Ajbál is from Chuatzité, Tecpan, a community where WJI has worked since 2015. In 2019, she joined WJI as a program facilitator. Lidia has a deep commitment to her role and provides indispensable contributions to breaking barriers and being a catalyst for change in the lives of women and girls whose lived experiences are not so different from her own.



Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Sustain

Lidia excelled at her role early on and eagerly participated in the opportunities for professional development that WJI offers. This included a two-year intensive leadership course for indigenous women and a yearlong professional development and coaching course tailored to eight WJI team members.

In 2023, Lidia was promoted to Program Coordinator. She now supervises a team of six women and has become an invaluable asset to the strategic design and implementation of WJI's programs.

"WJI has been fundamental to my growth. It has offered me these opportunities to strengthen my knowledge and skill sets. My position was never limited to where I began. I am constantly learning."

A group of women and children in a rural community. In the foreground, a woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a vibrant, multi-colored embroidered blouse, looks off to the side with her arms crossed. Behind her, other women and children are visible, some wearing similar traditional clothing. The background shows a chain-link fence and lush green foliage.

Year One of WJI's Strategic Plan: Sustain

Lidia's journey exemplifies the internal growth that WJI strives to provide for its staff. Lidia is inspiring to her colleagues and a powerful example for the women and girls in rural communities.

"I know the reality of the women, how they live, and what the communities are like. There is a lot of work to be done, it is not easy. But, if I can change my life, other women can do it too."

Our Impact to Date

58,123

direct beneficiaries.

175,080

indirect
beneficiaries.

2,794

community leaders,
police, and government
officials trained.

5,522

legal cases related to
economic rights or
violence against women.

150

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

5,572

graduates from the
Women's Rights
Education Program.

1,319

graduates from the
Adolescent Girls
Program.

2,066

parents and community
leaders gained skills to
prevent child marriage.

4,757

men and boys reached through
radio programming to raise
awareness of VAWG and
improve family communication.

Financials

Expenses - \$999,557

■ Programs: \$806,590 ■ Development: \$103,336 ■ Administration: \$89,631



Revenue - \$1,362,622

■ Institutions: \$784,202 ■ Individuals: \$548,174 ■ Corporations: \$30,246



2023 Ending Net Assets: \$1,927,952

Thank you

WJI is building a just future by investing in the transformative potential of women and girls. Your continued support empowers them to become leaders and changemakers in their communities, creating a brighter, safer, and more equitable future.



Photographer Credits

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Women's
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