Tackling gender equality as an indigenous UN Volunteer

Ingrid Sierra is a Guatemalan indigenous woman from the Poqomchí linguistic community, with a Q’eqchi identity. She has been serving as a UN Volunteer within UN Women since 2016, convinced that this UN agency offers her an enabling framework to promote respect and protection of women’s human rights, a pre-condition to achieve the 2030 Agenda. On the occasion of International Women’s Day, Ingrid shares her story.

“Me atreví a soñar y a buscar una oportunidad como Voluntaria en ONU Mujeres. Desde mi profesión como trabajadora social he podido contribuir a garantizar la expansión de nuestras voces como mujeres, fortalecer liderazgos y reivindicar nuestros derechos.”

Being volunteer gave me, as an indigenous woman, the opportunity to be an agent of change, coherent with my community’s cosmovision. Volunteering is an ancestral treasure that should be transmitted from generation to generation. This guarantees good living, with respect and harmony between humanity and nature. Let’s boost our communities to gain
“awareness of gender equality, as a pre-condition to progress towards sustainable development. --Ingrid Sierra, UN Volunteer with UN Women

Before being part of the UN family, Ingrid worked in public entities and civil society organizations. She brought with her the experience she acquired in the Rural Women for Life, Land and Dignity Alliance, the Land Fund and the Office for the Defence of Indigenous Women, among others. Once in UN Women, she served in the fields of women’s economic empowerment and peace, security, justice, and humanitarian actions.

“Being a volunteer means to put yourself in the shoes of others, and to search together for alternatives to achieve the good living we all crave and deserve. Volunteering unites us and commits us to fulfill a specialized service, that comes from each person reality and life’s history. --Ingrid Sierra

The role of Ingrid is to give technical assistance to local governments for integrating an integral approach to decision making. This means to promote dialogue with citizens while considering gender indicators.

The system Ingrid promotes includes two mechanisms: a dialogue between women, followed by extended roundtables with the participation of women and men. Respect, distribution of taking the floor and active listening for everybody are some of the rules laid down.

“I am proud of being a UN Volunteer. I am committed to serving my female sisters with passion and inspiration. Since I became a UN Volunteer, I bear witness every day to the transformation of women’s
Ingrid's contribution as UN Volunteer has been crucial not only to get the state closer to citizens but also to get the commitment of local authorities to promoting equal conditions between men and women in all relevant areas of development in their communities.

"I dare say that we, volunteers, are promoters of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We contribute to the promotion, orientation and implementation of them all," Ingrid shares. "In my case, my work is oriented to achieve SDG 5 targets. However, due to the territorial dynamic and because the local government plans are linked to the 2030 Agenda, my gender-oriented perspective contributes to the rest of the SDGs as well."

Amérique latine et Caraïbes

• International women's day • IWD • gender equality

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals