

Volunteers

Story

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## **Volunteerism to empower women and prevent gender-based violence in Guatemala**

Gender-based violence is prevented through a comprehensive approach and interaction between the political, economic and physical autonomy of women, for the exercise of effective citizenship that ensures the sustainability of all actions. Through volunteerism, I can contribute to empowering women and building resilient communities in Guatemala.



Carlos Rivera, UN Volunteer with UN Women in Guatemala, working along empowered women to build resilient communities.

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According to the National Employment and Income Survey (ENEI), in Guatemala, 58.6 per cent of women live in poverty and 22.8 per cent in extreme poverty.

Poverty is greater in the rural population, particularly in the Maya, Xinca and Garífuna peoples, communities that live under a constant condition of injustice and deprivation of their basic rights, affecting their women, girls and adolescents with greater ferocity.

It should be emphasized that many of these women are victims of situations of systematic violence, without the support of adequate prevention and protection programs, which prevents them from accessing development opportunities and conditions them to experience even greater situations of vulnerability.

Only in 2017, the Public Ministry recorded 59,667 complaints for the crime of violence against women and the National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF) reported that, on average, 62 women die monthly in violent circumstances.

I am Carlos Rivera, a UN Volunteer from Peru, assigned to UN Women Guatemala as the Communications and Advocacy Officer. I advocate for human rights, gender equality and peacebuilding. I'm passionate about making a difference in people's lives.

UNV has allowed me to do that, but also, has made me a better professional and an even better person. I'd like to keep on sharing all the lessons learned and apply them in different cultures.

The country office in Guatemala aims to increase women's access to programs that support their economic initiatives, to guarantee sustainable incomes and raise their quality of life, and to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and their communities.

Comprehensive programmes to prevent violence against women and girls reduce the obstacles that women face to participate as equals in the labour market, in education and in the public sphere.

Due to the post-conflict nature of the State of Guatemala, the empowerment of women contributes to the consolidation of peace and respect for the human rights of women, to ensure a sustainable advance in accordance with the provisions of the Peace Accords.

I am a man and a proud feminist. Working for gender equality and for the empowerment of women, has allowed me to learn more about human and gender rights than ever before, and I only hope to get even further through this experience. The sky is the limit now, and hopefully is a sky filled with equal opportunities for everyone. --Carlos Rivera, UN Volunteer for UN Women in Guatemala

I majored in Communication for Development, and I hold a specialization in community organization, advocacy campaigns and public information. I started in the UN as an intern at the International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for the Andean Countries, where I supported internal and external communications.

I have further experience as a national UN Volunteer at UNDP and as a Public Information Consultant for ILO's Regional Office for Latin America and The Caribbean. As a UNV in my own country, I worked on training more than 1,000 young people on the SDGs in 2015. Ever since that experience, I knew I wanted to work internationally, so I could apply the lessons learned during my assignment.

I develop communications and media strategies for media outreach and inclusion at the UN Women country office. I collaborate with the RO and HQ colleagues to support resource mobilization and donor relations initiatives.

I also provide visibility for UN Women in key intergovernmental processes and observance dates and supports the planning and implementation of activities and special events organized by UN Women.

My work is to "give a voice" to the women, telling their stories and raising awareness of their needs and demands, so they live a life free of violence or any type of discrimination.

I have had many special or heartwarming experiences with community members. I have been able to travel within the whole country, meeting amazing women. The fact that I not only get to meet them, but also talk to them and listen to their incredibly inspiring life stories, is amazing, and what makes me feel the most excited is that my job is to make sure their voices are heard and considered.

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