

PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

IN THE COMMUNITY OF PUEBLO LIBRE, BELEN, LORETO



PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AND ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY IN A CONTEXT OF EXCLUSION

Belen is a district of Iquitos, capital of the Peruvian Amazon, where approximately 76 thousand people live. Nearly a third of the population, especially children and adolescents, live in situations of vulnerability and exclusion due to poverty¹.

About half the population is female and one in two is in reproductive age (from 15 to 49 years of age). One third of women has been mothers or has been pregnant during adolescence and many of them suffer or have suffered psychological or sexual violence from their partners².

During the winter season, the waters of the Itaya River flood Belen. This aggravates the vulnerability of its inhabitants. Access to the district is restricted and risks to public health increase as it is an area where waste and garbage quickly accumulate and where households do not have access to any form of drainage or sewerage system. On the other hand, organized crime linked to drug and human trafficking is a persistent problem.



(1) National Institute of Statistics, INEI (2013): District Poverty Map. Graph N°2 (pg. 127)

(2) National Institute of Statistics, INEI (2016): Demographic and Family Health Survey, ENDES. 2015

These conditions are common in the community of Pueblo Libre, one of the poorest areas, and with the highest exclusion rates in Belén. Here, 9 out of 10 children and adolescents have reported being victims of some type of violence³.

Given this situation, the Municipality of Maynas, the Municipality of Belén, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the organization “La Restinga Association” developed an intervention to improve the prevention of violence and pregnancy in girls and adolescents under 18 years of age, starting with the adoption of articulated protective measures within the community and among families.



(3) La Restinga Association: Project “Go, run and tell, for the intervention against violence in children, girls and women in Belén, Iquitos” A Diagnose of the Context (pg.3).



THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The project was implemented in the community of Pueblo Libre in Belén, between August and November 2015.

Another important space for its implementation was the House of Friendship (Casa de la Amistad), a multi-sectoral space for social intervention from the Municipality of Maynas, whose objective is to improve social services for the prevention and response to gender-based violence and to enhance the quality of life of women and youth.

This space also shares offices with the Child and Adolescent Ombudsman (DEMUNA), the National Youth Secretariat, the Emergency Center for Women (CEM - Maynas), the Peruvian National Police (PNP) and the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP), among others.

PARTICIPANT POPULATION

The project worked directly with 73 girls and adolescents under 18 years of age and their families, as well as 30 community leaders and defenders, and 15 public officials of the Municipality of Maynas responsible for dealing with cases involving pregnancy in girls and adolescents, and sexual violence.

STRATEGIC AXES

Generation of evidence

Baseline adjusted to the needs of the project for theoretical and methodological support of a future intervention.

Advocacy and incidence

Presentation of the project in work meetings with key actors and decision makers from the State, civil society and the community.

Strengthening and developing skills

Analysis and reflection sessions on teenage pregnancy and sexual violence directed at girls and adolescents, as well as deconstruction of myths that naturalize violence. Strategies and methodologies were identified for the prevention of violence and pregnancy.



Home visits to caregivers

240 in the diagnostic phase and 360 in the intervention phase, in addition to two educational sessions outside the community of Pueblo Libre (recreation centers of Catholic schools and House of Friendship) and 36 recovery sessions.

Awareness and information

Information and sensitization sessions to strengthen the skills of community agents, as well as to promote more responsibilities.

Educational visits to community agents in the House of Friendship regarding protection services for girls and adolescents when faced with cases of violence. Informative and preventive community fair with the participation of public officials of the specialized services for social care, located in the House of Friendship.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- **Strengthen the capacities** of girls and adolescents on how to prevent and act in cases of sexual violence and early pregnancy.
- **Improve caregivers' capacities** for the upbringing and protection of their children, as well as for the healing, and coming to terms with their personal history of violence.
- **Increase sensitivity** among community leaders and advocates towards sexual violence and pregnancy in girls and adolescents.
- **Strengthen the capacities** of officials of the Municipality of Maynas to improve their response in cases of sexual violence and pregnancy in girls and adolescents.
- **Improve the House of Friendship's scope of action** when it comes to addressing cases of gender-based violence for a more comprehensive response of adolescents and youth, offering them specific and quality social services.



MAIN RESULTS

- **73 girls and adolescents between the ages of 7 and 15 with strengthened capacities to identify and develop protective factors:**

they have a greater knowledge of their rights and of public response and protection services, and can identify situations of risk associated with violence and pregnancy in adolescents.

- **73 caregivers with strengthened prevention capacities:**

they show a better recognition of violence practices in parenting, identify situations and messages that are hazardous to pregnancy in girls and adolescents, and have improved their understanding about bed-sharing, identifying it as a situation of risk for girls and adolescents.

- **Community leaders and advocates trained to better perform their role:**

they have more information, and analysis and reflection tools on pregnancy in girls and adolescents, they recognize false myths about the profile of boys, girls and adolescents in situations of exploitation, and identify strategies and methodologies for the prevention of violence and early pregnancy.

- **Public officials are more capable of providing a better response:**

they have more capacities to analyse pregnancy in girls and adolescents and their links to sexual violence, recognize conditions that favor family, sexual and gender violence, and identify successful experiences, among others.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Addressing the prevention and response to sexual violence and adolescent pregnancy requires a multi-sectoral approach that encourages the participation of public administration and is complemented by social monitoring developed by civil society.
- The organized community is a relevant space to promote messages and protective factors to denaturalize sexual violence and adolescent pregnancy.
- Establishing alliances with community leaders and advocates is critical to create protective factors that prevent sexual violence and teenage pregnancy in the community.
- The individualized approach (home visits) with the families, through the caregivers, was very efficient to generate higher levels of confidence and closeness.
- It is necessary to continue working with the community of Belen and Pueblo Libre, particularly with community leaders and community advocates, to achieve the enhancement and permanence of protective factors against sexual violence and adolescent pregnancy.









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