

Empowerment of women and adolescents with social risk in Central America: Protection from sexual exploitation and promotion of Human Rights



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Guatemala; Honduras; El Salvador

Duration: July 2005 to December 2007

Implementing UN Agencies: UNIFEM

Other Implementing Partners: Government institutions; national and regional NGOs; national and regional research institutes

Budget: \$1,541,925

Key Words: Prevention of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV); access to health care; women

BACKGROUND

In 2005, widespread poverty coupled with rising economic inequalities weighed heavily on people in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. Persistent poverty, lack of education and proscribed gender roles put women at heightened risk of gender based violence and sexual exploitation, as well as drug addiction, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The threat of sexual exploitation was particularly acute in the region's port cities and border communities which served as way stations for sailors,

truckers and human traffickers. The interlinkages between poverty, gender inequalities, absence of family protection and sexual exploitation called for a multi-dimensional approach that targeted a broad range of interventions including economic empowerment, health-care services, social values and access to education. Such an integrated strategy was critical in assisting the participating communities to grapple with the root causes of their vulnerabilities in a comprehensive and preventive manner.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the project was to curtail sexual abuse among vulnerable women and at-risk youth in the border communities of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. To this end, the project focused on: (i) economic and social empowerment; (ii) protection from sexual exploitation and violence; and (iii) improvement of health conditions of women and adolescents, in particular, concerning HIV/AIDS and

other sexually transmitted diseases. To reach its goals, the project implemented a multi-dimensional community-based strategy that provided mental and physical health care; supported school subsidies, business and vocational training; initiated media campaigns and empowerment workshops for women; and advanced training of teachers, court officials and health workers.

BENEFICIARIES

The project benefitted over 1,900 women in 78 communities in the border regions of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. It also improved the

capacities of teachers, health workers and court officials on the rights of women and the prevention of SGBV.