



# Collective Women's Leaderships Confronting the Challenges in Nariño, Colombia

## Introduction

The Women Leading Change project positions the voices and leadership of women and contributes to strengthening the relationship with the humanitarian system for relevant and sustainable responses.

On this occasion, and with the purpose of recognizing how women-led organizations (WLOs) manifest their capacities to learn, adapt and maintain technical and financial resources over time within changing contexts in the country, an intentional sample of the 15 WLOs part of the Women Leading Change Project in Colombia was assessed. It was evident to see their capacities for innovative transformation, collective leadership, analysis of their contexts, and their resilience, and understand how the population has benefited from their actions.

Three of the Women Leading Change project organizations participated in this case study: Association of Women Entrepreneurs (ASOMUJER), Association of Venezuelans (ASOVENAR) and the Violet in Motion Corporation, which constitute a representative sample of the participants in Colombia and demonstrate the capacity to transform challenges into collective initiatives.

The data collection technique used was the community timeline, according to the Guide to Participatory Community Methodologies developed by Fernanda Solís and Adolfo Maldonado.

## Origin

### ABILITY TO LEARN

During the period prior to 2018, the country had a legal framework in force regarding violence against women. However, institutional response was weak and sustained by misinformation and prejudice for the upholding of rights.

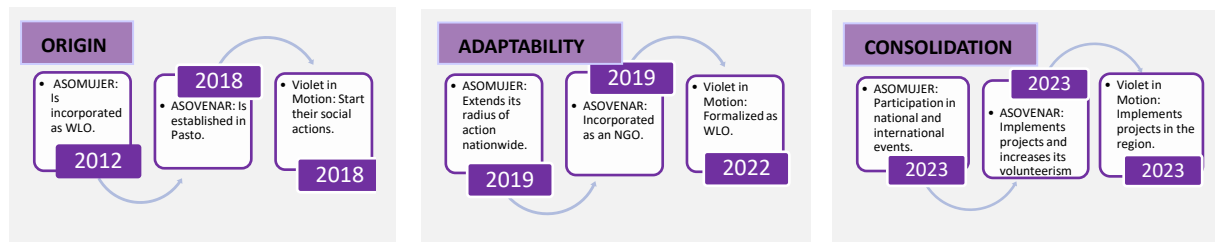
The history of the organizations arises from the restless interest of women to be heard, in search of community recognition and effective institutional response.

### THE VOICES OF WOMEN



*"Our dream is to contribute to social integration and achieve financial sustainability for the organization. To increase the scope of our actions and the comprehensive nature of our response."*

– ASOVENAR



WLO MILESTONES: Timeline of the organizations from their formation to date.



*The key was to recognize the experience that we brought from different pathways ...to contribute to a political position of women's freedom in the face of a system that makes us invisible." - CORPORACION VIOLETA EN MOVIMIENTO*



*" We met to knit and to talk, to cry, to heal, to look for support alternatives for all victims of violence, because before 2012 it was not possible to talk about it. " – ASOMUJER*

This is how they collectively implement actions that contribute to the mitigation of the identified risks and advance in the demand for their rights. Based on this reality, they realized that collective advocacy is more strategic than individual advocacy, making the decision to come together as organizations of women leaders.

## Adaptability ABILITY TO ADAPT

Starting in 2019, the WLOs consolidated safe itinerant spaces for women and girls, where their life stories and/or ancestral knowledge combined with interdisciplinary work and defined their methodological actions.

Women felt free to speak, they wanted to be heard and consider themselves an active part of a support network that looks for permanent responses.

Each organization identifies the resources that allow it to shape its learning from concrete spaces. ASOVENAR with the “School of Leaders” aims at studying the status of migrants and fostering assertive relationships with the institutions and the host community. "Our interest has always been to contribute to improving the situation of the migrant

population and the impoverished families living in our host community.”

For the Violet in Motion Corporation, the “Skin Inside” School allows them to mobilize a popular, political and feminist advocacy strategy that contributes to peace building "...We feel and think about the neighborhood/city and this helps raise awareness for the protection of women's autonomy over their bodies".

For ASOMUJER the the “Knitting Circle” is the space where bonds of trust are created with others, where the imaginaries of abuse are dismantled to avoid repetition. "It is where we can cry and allow women to emerge towards a life free of violence. We heal and care for our group".

## Consolidation ABILITY TO MAINTAIN

The WLOs search for sustainable transformation with strategies that allow the convergence of knowledge and collective action with innovative approaches to confront the suffering of women and girls who survive the effects of the humanitarian crisis. This contributes to the restoration of rights infringed both by migration and the armed conflict in Nariño.

The WLOs come from scenarios that encourage self-care and collective care and the strategic relationship that tries to understand: "How do we care for each other?" The objective is to generate positive synergies for social and community capital that contribute to the construction of spaces that are increasingly respectful of human rights.