



CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Improvement of maternal, neonatal, and reproductive health of marginalized populations
in Zulia state, Venezuela.

(L'appel aux parties intéressées est disponible en anglais uniquement. Il sera nécessaire de travailler avec nos partenaires au Venezuela et parler l'espagnol sera considéré comme un atout).

A. Introduction

The Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM), in collaboration with the National Council of Indigenous Midwives (NCIM), is supporting the implementation of a three-year UNFPA-led project in the state of Zulia, Venezuela. The project's overall objective is to improve maternal, newborn, and reproductive health outcomes of marginalized women, girls, and newborns of Wayuu and Yukpa Indigenous communities of Sierra Machiques de Perija and Maracaibo, Zulia state, as well as migrants from urban centers. This project is funded by the Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada.

Specifically the project will:

- Improve the provision of quality, respectful, gender responsive, culturally and environmentally appropriate maternal, newborn and reproductive health services in targeted health centers and hospitals
- Enhance the engagement of community agents, including Indigenous midwives, to support maternal, newborn and reproductive health needs of women and their families in target communities.

The project aims to address gender inequality and human rights inequities that exist in Venezuela, particularly in reproductive health services. It also seeks to advance women's health rights by challenging social norms related to gender, ethnicity and socially marginalized groups by enhancing intercultural communication and by promoting traditional medicine and other community-based expertise as valuable health assets. The project was developed and built on the premise that promoting an intercultural approach to health services can contribute, among other things, to removing barriers to accessing services and improving health outcomes for indigenous peoples and the communities in which they live.

B. Background

The Americas are a multiethnic and multicultural region where Indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups coexist. This uniqueness implies the acknowledgment of diverse realities and needs within the realm of health. Nevertheless, Indigenous populations and other ethnic minorities frequently encounter various forms of discrimination and exclusion. These challenges manifest in the elevated levels of multidimensional poverty experienced by these population groups, as well as in numerous inequalities when compared to other demographic groups. Indigenous women, in particular, often contend with at least a dual burden of discrimination – due to both their gender and Indigenous identity.

Venezuela is currently grappling with an unprecedented and protracted socioeconomic crisis, leading to heightened humanitarian needs and exacerbating structural vulnerabilities and inequalities. These challenges have significantly impacted all public institutions, in particular the healthcare system. The repercussions of this crisis has serious impacts on women and girls of reproductive age.

Zulia is home to 60% of the Indigenous population in the country, which equates to approximately 443,000 people. The majority of these people face precarious living conditions further exacerbated by the country's economic crisis and ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, Zulia was considered one of the regions with the highest poverty rates and the most outcomes in women's health indicators. Zulia witnesses a noticeably higher maternal mortality ratios than other states in Venezuela. Additional studies have revealed that Indigenous women in Latin America experience maternal mortality ratios that were 2-3 times higher on average than national ratios.

This objective of this project is to improve maternal, newborn and reproductive health outcomes for women, girls and newborns from marginalized populations, with a primary focus on indigenous communities, residing in the Sierra Machiques de Perija and Maracaibo within the state of Zulia.

Geographical context

The project is being implemented in three markedly distinct geographical and demographic contexts within the same state, Zulia (which borders Colombia) which are described below:

- The mountainous Sierra de Perijá where the Yukpa indigenous population lives predominantly in the Perijá sub-region.
- The more desert-like with a hot and dry climate of the Guajira sub-region, with a predominantly Wayuu and Añuu population.
- The urban setting of Maracaibo, the capital of Zulia. Migrant populations, including Indigenous people, from other municipalities and subregions are drawn to this city, seeking better livelihood opportunities.

The project has also planned for technical visits to take place in Colombia, specifically in northern Guajira, on the border with Venezuela, in the town of Rioacha.

C. Call for Interest to CAM/ACSF Members.

The Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM/ACSF), in collaboration with NCIM and under the leadership of UNFPA Venezuela, have initiated the project "Improvement of maternal, neonatal and reproductive health of marginalised populations in the state of Zulia, Venezuela".

As part of the community component of the project, which aims to enhance the engagement and recognition of community leaders within the project catchment area, the project will implement activities to strengthen their leadership and support their efforts to promote their knowledge and culture. Project efforts will focus on and engage specifically with Indigenous midwives.

In phase 1 of the project, UNFPA Venezuela facilitated participatory meetings with Indigenous midwives of Wayu and Yukpa to better understand midwifery practice and culture in their

communities and to listen to the requirements of the community to ensure appropriate and accessible reproductive health care. In the next phase, this year, NCIM is inviting 2 or 3 Indigenous midwives from its membership to participate, on a volunteer basis, in knowledge sharing and learning activities with Venezuelan indigenous midwives.

The NCIM midwives would participate in technical meetings and dialogue workshops during which they would:

- Present NCIM history, process, resources, and tools
- Present and discuss challenges and opportunities for indigenous midwifery in the Canadian context
- Participate in the development of a dialogue process with Indigenous Midwives from Zulia State
- Liaise with NCIM regarding their participation in the project

D. Time Commitments:

This is a 3-year project which started in May 2023 and will end in May 2026. In the next two years, it is anticipated that selected candidates will have to be able to participate in the project through remote meetings, some hours of preparatory work, as well as one visit per year, each lasting 5-10 days, to Zulia State in Venezuela or to the Colombian border town of Rioacha. These visits will provide Indigenous midwives to meet and work with Venezuelan Indigenous midwives and our partners. Coordination of this work will be completed with the support of CAM Global's project officer.

E. Compensation and benefits

Time invested in preparing for the meetings and visits to Venezuela will be given on a volunteer basis and will be recognized as in-kind contribution to the project. Time invested in the development of any tools or resources in response to needs that may be identified by and with our partners will be considered as consultancy work and compensated with consultancy fees.

Travel, accommodation, per diems (meals and incidentals) and all costs related to visa requirements, insurance and vaccinations will be covered by the project.

F. How to apply:

Interested midwives should send a letter of expression of interest with a copy of their resume by Monday March 4, 2024. Speaking Spanish and/or having global experience (including participation in international forums) will be considered an asset.

All applicants must be members of NCIM with experience as a practicing midwife. Please send your cover letter and CV with subject line: Venezuela project expression of interest by email to admin@indigenoumidwifery.ca

NCIM thanks all applicants for your interest in this project.