ORDINARY PEOPLE CREATING AN EXTRAORDINARY WORLD!

Heartland Alliance International (HAI) believes in the power of people’s resilience and transformation in the midst of humanitarian crises. In Colombia, we train community leaders from the regions most affected by armed conflict and migration to provide basic legal orientation and emotional support to program participants.

Our mission is to provide innovative, participatory and community-based services including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), access to justice, prevention and response to gender-based, sexual and reproductive violence, support on migration routes, prevention of statelessness, and protection, prevention and integration services for underserved populations.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE IN?

- Strengthening local knowledge and capacity.
- In the relationship between mental health and access to justice.
- In the hope and resilience of local communities.
- In communities as agents of change.
- In culturally-appropriate programs that promote emotional healing.
- In gender equity to promote leadership and reduce gaps in the exercise of rights.
- In a governance model which responds to humanitarian crises using a human rights-based approach.

THROUGHOUT HAI’S HISTORY IN COLOMBIA, WE HAVE:

- Established presence in TEN departments across the country.
- Supported more than 58,000 direct participants and more than 8,500 Venezuelan migrants.
- Trained 130 Community-based Psychosocial Workers.
- Trained 1,948 public servants.

- Achieved a 74% reduction of symptoms among surveyed participants.
- Achieved a 71% improvement in well-being among surveyed participants.
- Achieved a 99% satisfaction rate among surveyed participants.

ABOUT HEARTLAND ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL

HAI is the global arm of Heartland Alliance, a family of organizations leading human rights and justice work in Chicago since 1888. HAI implements programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and in Chicago at the Marjorie Kovler Center. HAI’s technical areas include mental health and psychosocial support, gender equity, access to justice, and stigma-free healthcare. Across all programs, HAI promotes progressive, innovative approaches to human rights protections, and gender equity.

OUR DONORS:
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN COLOMBIA

- Five decades of civil conflict in Colombia has resulted in more than nine million recorded victims. In late 2016, the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) signed a Peace Agreement, ending the longest armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere.
- The country is experiencing heightened levels of persecution and violence against human rights defenders and social leaders. Substantial differences in statistics make it impossible to determine the reality of the situation; however, recorded cases suggest that since 2016, between 555 and 971 assassinations of human rights defenders and social leaders have occurred (1).
- The proliferation of other armed groups poses a challenge to the country. In 2016, the ELN was active in 96 municipalities and, by 2020, their presence expanded to 167 municipalities, primarily in the departments of Chocó, Antioquia and Nariño.
- The Venezuelan migration crisis has led to an influx of approximately 1.7 million Venezuelans in Colombia. Regardless of whether or not they intend to remain in the country, Venezuelan refugees and migrants require a humanitarian response that addresses their needs.
- The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the already precarious humanitarian situation for the civilian population residing in most of the country. COVID-19 allowed armed groups to establish or strengthen territorial control, resulting in humanitarian impacts including confinement and increasing reports of sexual and GBV. Government entities and organizations operating in the areas altered service provision and care channels.

OUR MODEL
Professional psychologists train community leaders and survivors to be community-based psychosocial agents (CPAs).

- CPAs identify community members in need and explain HAI’s services.
- CPAs provide basic legal guidance, emotional support, gender-based violence (GBV) awareness and prevention activities individually or in group sessions.
- Participants better manage trauma-related stress and depression.
- Participants become agents of change for healthier, more resilient communities.

IN COLOMBIA, HAI:

- Trains survivors of the conflict as CPAs who can provide services to other survivors of violence.
- Provides MHPSS, sexual and reproductive health services, and legal guidance for people affected by the armed conflict, migrants, refugees and returnees.
- Supports people who have experienced displacement, forced disappearance, sexual violence, or other traumatic events.

WHAT’S NEXT?

In conjunction with strategic partners, HAI Colombia will continue to support communities in their recovery and development processes, contributing to social transformation and peace building through the following programs:

- MAS RESILIENCIA: Supported by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), MAS Resiliencia (“More Resilience”) provides high quality MHPSS services, legal advice and sexual and reproductive health services in Chocó, Valle del Cauca, Córdoba, Nariño and Cauca.
- PASOS: Supported by PRM, Pasos (“Steps”) ensures that the urgent needs of Venezuelan refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants are met through the provision of health and protection services, maternal and reproductive health services, legal services, and prevention and response to gender-based violence in Cali, Atlántico, Cundinamarca, Boyacá and Nariño.
- UNHCR: This project implements a strategy to reduce the risk of GBV among women, children and LGBTI people in Valle del Cauca, Nariño and Putumayo. In Quibdó and Turbo, Antioquia, HAI provides MHPSS services.
- RESEARCH:

HAI employs an evidence-based research approach to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and evaluate, validate and strengthen programs.

HEALTH EVALUATION AND APPLIED RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT (HEARD) PROJECT: HEARD evaluates the effectiveness of a community-based psychosocial support intervention for communities affected by violence in Colombia through a mixed-method study. The research seeks to strengthen the community-based model to scale up to other areas affected by armed conflict. Research is possible thanks to the generous support of the United States Agency for Development (USAID).

1. The Colombian Ombudsperson’s Office recorded at least 555 assassinations of social leaders between 2016 and 2019. However, the Institute for Development and Peace Studies – Indepaz has data that suggests that 971 homicides of rights defenders occurred between January 2018 and October 2020 in the country.