

STORIES OF CHANGE

Increasing bodily autonomy and improving decision-making through subsidy of medical services for women

 México



As part of the SGBV services provided by RNR (Mexico) within the framework of the FFFV project, Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services have been delivered to women in conditions of social and economic vulnerability and survivors of violence.

RNR established an alliance with a medical laboratory, with whom they held health days in several states, including State of Mexico and Yucatan, to grant access to essential laboratory tests such as pap smears, mammograms, and colposcopies to women users and beneficiaries of the project.

*Name and personal details have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality of the person

In addition, RNR has physical outpatient centers (named “Green Spaces”), where contraceptive methods, counseling and first-line support for low-income women and SGBV survivors is provided in 6 external care centers, that are its members, in the states of Morelos, State of Mexico, Chiapas, CDMX, Sinaloa and Tlaxcala.

Alice*, a liaison professional invited by RNR to carry out the activity of the health day in Merida, Yucatan to benefit the women who reside in the city. She expressed that through the coordination with RNR workshops or talks were held addressing with all the women users of the Municipal Institute of Women, making diagnoses of their situation related to their sexual and reproductive rights, prevention of diseases typical of women, etc.

They also raised awareness to carry out actions in favor of their self-care and this allows them to realize the lack of information and resources so that they can carry it out.

This action of the health day was significant because it identified a greater awareness of exercising actions in favor of their health, that they have had the opportunity to carry out offered studies, which were out of their reach, an improvement in their decision-making regarding their autonomy and independence with a view to a better quality of life. A greater closeness with women to share information, services and programs was appreciated, a better and greater interest in their self-care was detected, as well as in the range of alternatives that we can generate for the exercise of their human rights. This is important because women require affirmative actions always favoring our human rights, that more women continue to be free to exercise them is motivating, working in favor of them and contributing to their lives, is a great meaning for me, women are deserving of having and maintaining a free, dignified and recognized life.

For women like Grace, who live in the municipality of Chalco, State of Mexico, the possibility of participating in the health days at no cost to her, it is the only way to access this type of services.

I follow the RNR on social media and I saw a publication mentioning the performance of pap smears and colposcopies next to me neighborhood. I communicated by phone for registering and I went to have the studies done. I was interested since the publication mentioned that it was a free action and also, because two years had already passed since the last time I performed these studies due to the restrictions and fear of the clinics. For me, these actions have a lot of value because of the support that there is for my economy and health. Although I have social security, here it takes a long time both to schedule the appointment and at the time of waiting for them to be made and the treatment they provide is not always good and if you want to do it in a private laboratory, they usually have high costs. This health day was done near to where I work and that gave me the opportunity to go to the facilities.

In addition to facilitating access to laboratory tests, the creation of a professional, confidential, and friendly environment is essential for women to feel safe and to access to information, counseling and contraceptive methods such as condoms and intrauterine devices (IUD), allow them to exercise their right to sexual and reproductive health in a dignified and respectful manner.

The attention I received since I arrived was dignified and warm, the procedure was explained to me, as well as they offered me services such as psychological care, they also gave me a flyer that contained information about my rights. I would say that having attended was very good, because I rely not only individually to know what was happening with my health, but also to be able to see that there are more things I can do to take care of myself and the people around me and that they are also self-care actions to be able to identify my needs and that it is also a way to take care of my sexual health; affirmed Grace.

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The users of the Green Spaces have also significantly valued the quality and warmth of the care received and explain how they have changed their perception of themselves and their rights by prioritizing their health and wellbeing:

“ I have been attending therapy at the women’s improvement offices (green spaces). In one of my sessions, the psychologist asked me for time to explain some objects on display. She explained to me that these were actions implemented to encourage women to feel in control of their bodies and their sexuality. I had never spoken openly about these issues, and I realized everything that society sometimes does not allow us to know. Little by little, I lost my shame. The psychologist gave me some products and encouraged me to share the information with other women nearby. I gave my sister a lubricant along with a pregnancy test and shared what I learned about living our sexuality and our body without depending on our partner. I believe that this information should continue to be provided free of charge to clarify doubts. I felt good because there was privacy and time, considering that in schools the issue is not treated seriously and it is seen as something improper or bad. ”

Dina*

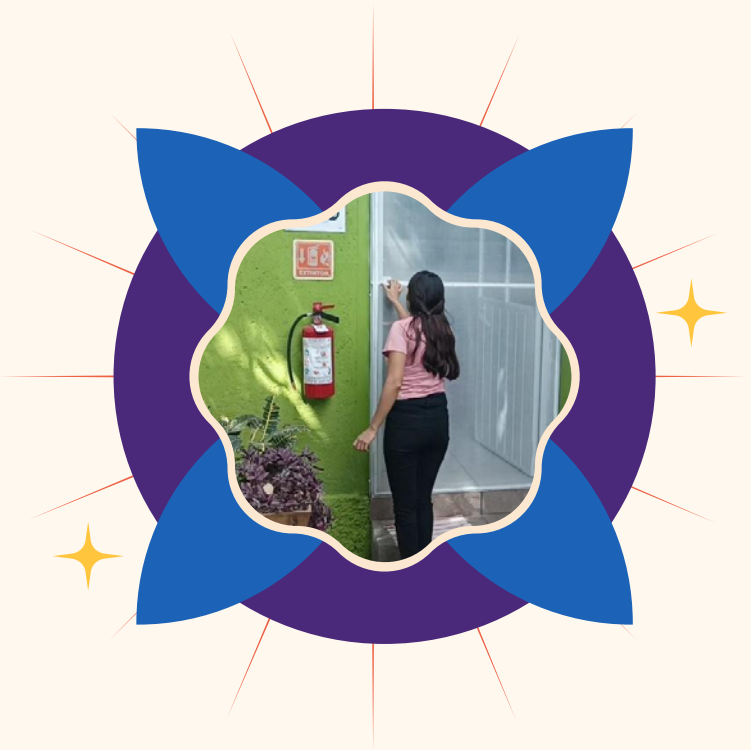


“ I received information about the importance of having a planning method, including that the barrier method does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases. I felt good and confident in addressing this topic, although at first, I was embarrassed because my family doesn’t usually talk about intimacy. I now know that it is my right and responsibility to decide how to take care of myself and when to get pregnant. No one has the right to judge me or make decisions for me. The IUD provided by the psychologist was placed in a health center near my home quickly and easily. I was informed that I must change it every 5 years or sooner and go for annual check-ups. I hope this information reaches more women. I thank them. ”

Kimberly*

“ Recognizing my sexual and reproductive rights has been useful to me because it has helped me grow as a person, my beliefs are not the same as before. Today I can say “NO” when I don’t want to have sex with someone. For me it was very difficult to use that word (NO) because to a certain extent I felt less like a woman if I said it. Today I know that “NO is NO” and that’s it. No one will make me feel less for saying it, it’s my body and I know how far I want to do things. Coming to this (green) space has been very helpful, since they have guided me in many actions of my life, as well as I feel very safe, and I can always count on personal care and hygiene items. ”

Iris*



“ I appreciate this space that allows me to express my thoughts in writing. Here I feel safe, and I learned to decide about my body, sexuality and freedom. This place offers self-care tools, comprehensive support, and access to intimate products such as pads, IUDs, and pregnancy tests. I was taught that I have the right to fully live every aspect of my sex life and to decide about my body and intimacy. Something I didn’t know before. Thanks to these teachings, my perspective on life has changed from being submissive to feeling free, living with greater attachment to my human rights. ”

Zoe*

These testimonies show that the provision of these SRH services have helped to break prejudices around gynecological examinations, improve self-confidence, increase bodily autonomy, and improve decision-making.