

De Mujer a Mujer (Woman to Woman)

Centro Campesino is ambitious to implement the De Mujer a Mujer Program whose main focus lies on disaster preparedness, but whose concept allows for the participants to address a variety of immigrant women's issues. De Mujer a Mujer will link two existing programs, the JobsPlus training and the YouthPride program, an effort to reach out to women in the immigrant community. Funding has been requested from The Women's Fund of Miami-Dade.

Background

In the aftermath of the 2004 hurricanes Centro Campesino conducted an unscientific survey to determine the level of need in the areas of DeSoto and Hardee Counties, an area with a large immigrant population. Findings from the survey indicated that immigrant families were disproportionately affected by disaster and were less likely to receive assistance. Additionally, it reflected that the majority of individuals completing the survey were women. It was the women struggling on the phones with bureaucracy from FEMA, Red Cross other relief agencies. These women were literally crying and begging for assistance after having been turned away by relief agencies. Most affected women are indigenous who are marginalized and face extraordinary cultural barriers such their inability to communicate in English or Spanish or to read mainstream materials.

Program

Based on Centro's experience in hurricane relief and recovery, De Mujer a Mujer will empower immigrant women to take control of their family's disaster preparedness and recovery. The empowerment of immigrant women will enable them to take the first step to reaching their full potential by acquiring the ability to gain personal decision-making power through educating themselves and others. Despite the formidable problems faced by immigrant women, De Mujer a Mujer focuses on the premise that with training, immigrant women themselves will be able to find solutions to the problems that most directly affect their lives.

Goals and Objectives

Goal

1. Immigrant women become aware of their own capacity and are prepared to deal with future disasters that they may experience.

Objectives

- 1.1. Acquire input from immigrant women on culturally appropriate modes of communication for use in instruction and fieldwork, particularly in the indigenous communities of Maya and Mixtec
- 1.2. Immigrant women will gain critical information needed to keep their families safe in the event of a disaster.

- 1.3. As informed peer mentors, immigrant women will continue promoting disaster awareness and preparedness in their community through one on one sessions with other women

Strategies:

- 1.1.1. Conduct a focus group representative of the target population (February 2006)
- 1.1.2. Analyze information from focus group and develop appropriate materials(March & April)
- 1.1.3. Develop networking strategy (March & April)
- 1.2.1. Partner with the Miami Dade Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) and Florida Regional Interfaith/Interagency Emergency Network in Disaster (FRIEND, Inc.) to provide three two-hour Informal Interactive Workshops on disaster awareness and preparedness for initial target group (May 2006)
- 1.2.2. Initial target group receives training on utilizing culturally sensitive materials to train immigrant women (May 2006)
- 1.2.3. Initial target group applies what they learned in their disaster training and cultural training by providing peer training to immigrant women at appropriate venues (June –November, 2006)
- 1.2.4. Target group members, volunteers and staff to disseminate culturally sensitive materials at key sites in the community: churches and work pick up stations, etc. (Ongoing)
- 1.3.1. Peer mentors will facilitate informal meetings in the field to train other women and to provide them with disaster preparedness educational packets (Ongoing)
- 1.3.2. Each newly trained woman will be tasked to train at least one other women and to provide them with the disaster preparedness packet which will be available at Centro Campesino.
- 1.3.3. Encourage women who have had similar life experiences to continue meeting as an informal support group. (Ongoing)
- 1.3.4. Document oral histories (Ongoing)

Management and Personnel

Centro Campesino is well equipped to undertake this program with its ethnically diverse staff and 32 years of experience working with immigrants, including immigrant women both documented and undocumented.

Key staff for this project is Kristin Pongé, currently the coordinator for the Centro's WIA Jobs Plus, a training program for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and Mayra Rodriguez, client specialist. Kristin studied at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City and is fluent in Spanish, English and German. Her thesis was on the correlation between Border and Migration with emphasis on the Mexican-Guatemalan Border.

Mayra Rodriguez is a first generation immigrant from Mexico and daughter of farmworkers. She holds a BS degree in Criminal Justice from Florida International University.

Consulting on this project is volunteer, Juanita A. Mainster, former migrant worker. She recently coordinated disaster relief efforts for Redlands Christian Migrant Association in eight Florida counties in the aftermath of the 2004 hurricanes. She is currently Centro's Disaster Relief and Recovery Volunteer. Juanita holds a Masters degree in sociology from Florida International University.