

INFORMATION



SAVES LIVES

ADDRESSING COVID-19 IN
BOLIVIA, BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR,
GUYANA AND PERU

OCTOBER 1, 2020 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2021



List of Acronyms

APA	Amerindian Peoples Association (Guyana)
BS&MP	Branding Strategy and Marking Plan
CEJIS	Center for Legal Studies and Social Research
CIR	Indigenous Council of Roraima (Brazil)
CIRABO	Center of Amazonia Region of Bolivia
COICA	Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin
CONFENIAE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana
CORAPE	Coordinator of Popular and Educative Radios of Ecuador
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FIMI	International Indigenous Women's Forum
HRSM	Human Rights Support Mechanism
IBC	Institute for the Common Good (Peru)
IEB	International Institute of Education of Brazil
INA	Information Needs Assessment
INSPIRES	Illuminating New Solutions and Programmatic Innovations for Resilient Spaces
IPO	Indigenous People Organization
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ONIC	National Indigenous Organization of Colombia
OPIAC	Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SERVINDI	Intercultural Communication Services (Peru)
SCIOA	Strengthening the Capacity of Indigenous Organizations in the Amazon
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

HUMAN RIGHTS SUPPORT MECHANISM

Leader Cooperative Agreement: ID-OAA-A-16-00044

HRSM Amazon Basin Activity

Period of Performance: October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

Primary Partner: Internews

Final Narrative Report

Report Period: October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021

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Project Description



The HRSM Amazon Basin Activity (hereafter referred to as HRSM Amazon) was a twelve-month rapid response activity under the Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM) led by Freedom House. HRSM Amazon aimed to ensure that accurate, timely, and contextualized information about the COVID-19 pandemic reached indigenous communities in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana and Peru so that they are able to make informed decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities and to mitigate the impacts of misinformation, disinformation, and rumors.

The project sought to achieve this objective through two intermediate results:

- **(IR.1)** **increase access to accurate, timely and contextualized information around the COVID-19 epidemic,** including access to medical support, from trusted sources in indigenous communities in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana and Peru and;
- **(IR.2)** **increase capacity of indigenous communicators** as critical resources for better advocacy, coordination and logistic efforts between the indigenous communities, coordination bodies and governments.



Executive Summary

Internews designed the HRSM Amazon project to provide adequate information about COVID to vulnerable communities. Each local partner maintained relationships with indigenous communities and remote sectors that received inadequate state health care, had high rates of mis/disinformation, and lacked information about the pandemic.

Partners adapted project activities to these communities' needs, providing information in their native languages and supporting community members to lead fact-based content production. For some communities, these trainings offered their first experiences ever in producing communications materials, and partners ensured indigenous values directly informed content creation with an intercultural approach.

Internews observed the project's direct and indirect positive impacts on shifting perspectives of indigenous organizations. For example, SERVINDI reported that when they first conducted their health diagnosis, indigenous communities rejected the vaccine; however, the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA) requested more vaccination information in their native languages following the campaign's implementation. Similarly, communication narratives that placed traditional and Western medicine in dialogue helped communities consider alternative strategies for coping with the pandemic.

Throughout HRSM Amazon's 12-month timeframe, the project consistently evolved to adapt initiatives to community needs. To reach last-mile communities in Colombia and Guyana, for instance, partners stored audio on flash drives to play repeatedly over loudspeakers where internet was not available. The pandemic not only heightened the visibility of digital connectivity challenges, but it particularly amplified the health realities of the most remote indigenous communities ignored by the State. According to local organizations, health problems extend far beyond just COVID infections. Indigenous communities face limited medical presence or no medical supplies on a regular basis; for example, the Araona Territory previously lacked a health center nearby, so the population had not received medical attention for 15 years. CEJIS adapted its project activities to go beyond preventing COVID-19 transmission in the Araona communities, providing radio listeners and national media across Bolivia with health information and updates on the Araona situation.

As the project concluded, HRSM Amazon partners left indigenous communities equipped with their own communication initiatives, such as communicator networks and informational podcasts that community members are now continuing to lead independently, setting them up for greater long-term connectivity and information access. Not only will communities be able to more effectively share information among themselves moving forward, but this greater visibility will also help the State understand primary needs among indigenous communities, create culturally relevant health information campaigns, and act with increased respect for indigenous autonomy.



The project in numbers



KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

Audio	96
Video	58
Online	60
Other	63

COUNTRY	SUPPORTED INDIVIDUALS	LANGUAGES	INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES	LOCAL GROUPS
BRAZIL	265	Portugues, Macuxi (Macushi)	Quilombolas community: Cumbe quilombola community (Aracati), Quilombo São Sebastião do Burajuba, Quilombo Sítio São João, Quilombo Gibiriés de S. Lourenço, Quilombo Sítio Conceição and Quilombo Cupuaçu), with association Malangú, Pará. Association Macambo and CEDENPA, Pará Indigenous communities: Wapixana, Macuxi	IEB, RBJA
BOLIVIA	30	Spanish	Charagua, Tim, Tipnis, Chacobo, Cavineños	CEJIS
COLOMBIA	39	Cubeo, Piratapuyo, Barasano, Camsá, Koreguaje, Huitoto	Desano, Koreguaje, Camsá, Awa,Embera, Inga, Kamentsa, Kichwa, Kofán, Murui, Nasa, Pastos, Siona	Sinergias
ECUADOR	31	Amazonic Kichwa, Shuar, Spanish	Shuar and Kichwa	CONFENAIE and CORAPE
GUYANA	20	Akawaio, Wapichan, Makushi, Spanish, English	Akawaio, Makushi and Wapichan	APA
PERÚ	16	Shipibo-konibo, Spanish	Federación de Comunidades Nativas Fronterizas del Río Putumayo, Union de Nacionalidades Ashaninka y Yanasha, Quechua, Awajún, Aymara, Asháninka, Shipibo Konibo	Instituto del Bien Común and SERVINDI



Overall Project Highlights



Localized content offers information in indigenous languages: Overall, HRSM Amazon partners created locally adapted content for indigenous and Quilombo communities to discuss health issues focused on COVID-19 and vaccination programs. Particularly in Amazonian areas where the State is absent and communities face issues like domestic violence, elevated school drop-out rates, and minimal technology access, audiovisual materials empowered individuals to confront the pandemic independently. CONFENIAE's series, "Jambi: Amazonian Communities in the Face of COVID," collected information about ancestral medicinal practices through audiovisual materials from Ecuadorian indigenous communities. In Peru, SERVINDI created a series to share vaccination information in the indigenous territories of the Awajún and Wampis peoples of the Amazon, Quechuas of Ayacucho, and ancestral medicine practices of the Shipibo-konibo peoples and the indigenous communities of Loreto, Awajún, and Asháninka. APA's "COVID-19 and YOU" campaign also gathered information from Guyanese indigenous communities and Venezuelan migrants in these communities. Akawaio, Makushi and Wapichan communities gathered ancestral medicinal knowledge and diet health tips, positioning them with opportunities to build their own health-related stories grounded in their own values and cosmovision.



Regional coordination strengthens organizational capacity to shed light on local problems: HRSM Amazon activities strengthened networks through strategic collaborations and mentorship opportunities with **Agenda Propia** and **Salud con Lupa**. Partners in Peru, Bolivia, Guyana and Colombia received trainings from Agenda Propia to improve social media campaigns and communication strategies, becoming more informed about health communication research and approaches. In Bolivia, CEJIS worked with Agenda Propia to devise a culturally relevant communication strategy, reactivating its social networks and planning future digital communication strategies according to the community's realities. CEJIS is implementing a communication plan they built with Agenda Propia in a project developed with PAHO to create images and videos available in indigenous languages. In Colombia, Sinergias worked with Agenda Propia to create a guide on mental health practices and first aid tips during crises. These collaborations also enabled Sinergias and APA in Guayana to access new communities. Furthermore, Salud con Lupa worked with organizations in Ecuador and Brazil, including **CONFENIAE**, **COICA**, **CORAPE**, **IEB**, **CIR** and the **Wakyway network**, for the first time through HRSM Amazon. These organizations learned about intercultural approaches to health communication and common vaccine myths in indigenous communities. According to CONFENIAE, the new information they accessed through this collaboration shaped the material that they plan to incorporate in their own workshops. Salud con Lupa also learned first-hand about the limitations of journalists' information access in Bolivia, leading them to adapt their methodologies to provide information in person, interview experts to clarify doubts, and build a collective source directory. Thus, network building provided two-way learning opportunities.



HF radios establish connection in hard-to-reach areas:

IBC helped the Putumayo indigenous federations of FECONAFROPU communicate with previously disconnected communities through two HF radios, one in Nuevo Perú and one in El Estrecho. HF radios helped these communities save lives by enabling them to send requests for food, mobilizations, and information to nearby communities. Installations occurred in July, benefitting 7,000 people in El Estrecho and 200 people in Nuevo Perú. Prior to HRSM Amazon, Rhizomatica was not connected with IBC; project activities enabled them to establish a new partnership to build lasting impacts. Moving forward, a new Internews project supported by the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) COVID-19 Response Fund will position IBC to coordinate HF radio installations and provide technical trainings in FECONAFROPU communities.



Radio dissemination reaches a large percentage of Latin American population: CORAPE's network of 15 community radio stations reached a notable audience of 4 million people, not only in the Ecuadorian Amazon, but also nationwide. In Bolivia, CEJIS shared COVID-19 prevention audios produced with CIRABO. Radio Santa Cruz broadcast these segments with an intercultural approach, reaching an audience of 800,000 people throughout Bolivia, particularly where the State does not disseminate information. In Guyana, the National Communications Network (NCN) is broadcasting PSAs and audios, such as the "Voice of Guyana," nationally. Signals transmit over eight regional radio stations, including Radio Orealla, which covers communities in Suriname (a border village), in addition to FM and AM radio. APA is also using a loud-speaker in hard-to-reach villages. In Colombia, podcast content was broadcast through the local indigenous radio station, Yurupari Estéreo, and the radio station of the National Army, which has coverage across the Mitu municipality and reaches approximately 43,828 people. In Putumayo, we worked with Radio Waira, an indigenous radio station of the OZIP (Organización Zonal Indígena del Putumayo) that has coverage in the middle and lower Putumayo. Their main audience accounts for 11 indigenous groups, encompassing 8,000 listeners. Finally, the Guacamaya indigeous radio network broadcasted the podcast in Caquetá.

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El Canto del Tucán podcast builds dialogue between ancestral and Western medicine:

In Colombia, Sinergias supported the development of radio show El Canto del Tucán to build community connection and inform listeners about health-related topics. In one episode, communicators highlighted the importance of indigenous knowledge and local experiences to consider how these approaches can complement Western medicine. By uniting these approaches, radio communicators worked to encourage listeners to ground COVID-19 vaccination decisions in scientific research and avoid misinformation.



COVID-19 jingles included in nationwide event organized by the Guyana government:

In September, Guyana celebrated its national Ameridian heritage month. The celebration's last performance of the night was by The Castro Brothers, a local indie band that collaborated with the APA to create two jingles to combat the spread of the virus and promote vaccination. This event was livestreamed across many platforms, including the national TV broadcaster, NCN CH 11, E-Networks, and national radio.



HRSM Amazon Overall Project Analysis



Centering Indigenous People and Indigenous Experience:

This project strengthened engagement with Indigenous Peoples to safeguard against harm and support their development priorities and self-reliance by putting indigenous people at the center of the management process. **Sinergias**, a Colombian NGO, started to collaborate to create better content that allowed indigenous communities to discuss different topics, thinking of themselves as a network from different regions of Colombia. In Brazil, Internews worked with **IEB's Quilombola office** and **RBJA** to offer training, content production, and dissemination activities for Quilombola communities. Collective efforts ensured that communication pieces reflected Quilombola identity and values in color choices, terminology, and discussions about pandemic-related topics to reach communities that lacked inclusion in vaccination campaigns. Through these partnerships, we adhered to a methodology that centered the indigenous identity, culture, world views, ancestral knowledge, and experience. We were able to accomplish this in no small part due to our staff, who have spent the past 6+ years working in partnership with indigenous communities and spent time building trust with community leaders. We established our methodology for program implementation by entering communities with humility – starting with listening and learning. We took the time to nurture mutually beneficial relationships, which we maintained over time, and utilized our knowledge of communities and cultures, time commitment, trust-building, personal qualities, and current events to build and expand networks.



Embracing an Intersectional Approach:

In order to increase the integration of Indigenous Peoples' concerns across all sectors and promote cross-sectoral development approaches, we approached indigenous issues from an intersectional perspective throughout this project. This approach proved particularly key to expanding the inclusivity of health journalism efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our programs emphasized a respect for ancestral medicine in dialogue with Western medicine, connections to the territories, and strategies for translating pandemic news and funding to the realities and priorities in the territories, with a focus on storytelling and indigenous-led narratives. For example, in the Colombian Amazon, the podcast **El Canto del Tucán** helped to strengthen spaces in which indigenous women leaders could discuss mental health issues, which have remained taboo in communities during the pandemic, while **Servindi** produced a campaign called “Emergency in the Health of Indigenous People” to dispel myths about COVID-19 in partnership with indigenous organizations, media, and government entities. Indigenous women in particular act as the owners of this ancestral knowledge, as they served as primary caretakers during the pandemic and carry medicinal practices forward.



Building Capacity to Increase Sustainability:

In order to effectively support the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and representative organizations, our programming focused on capacity and skill-building efforts. These efforts increased the expertise of indigenous community members to carry on the work themselves, while maintaining an emphasis on indigenous-led programming. Indigenous community partners co-created activities and projects to ensure that they saw their unique identities and needs reflected in the programs. For example, the pandemic exacerbated the critical health situation of the Araona Territory in Bolivia, leading **CEJIS** to adapt its *Take Care of Your Community* campaign. This initiative coordinated with members of the Araona Territory to produce audios about COVID-19 prevention measures, misinformation about the vaccine, the importance of using masks, and strategies for communities to face the pandemic in Bolivia. In Brazil, IEB prepared the Wakywai network to carry out the Wakywai workshop for indigenous communicators in Roraima. This workshop involved trainings led by indigenous communicators to create pieces related to COVID-19, thereby preparing the network to continue programming independently in the future.

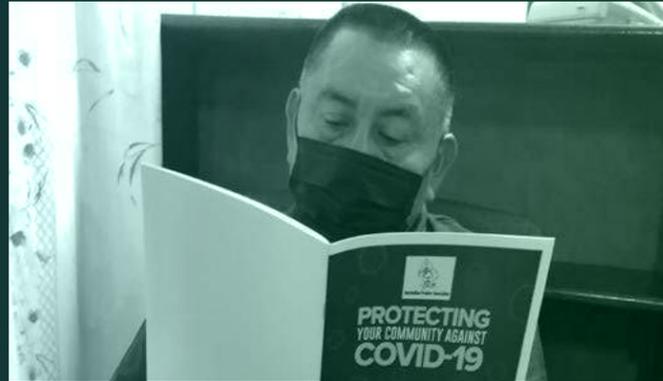


Removing Barriers to Communication and Collaboration:

In order to foster an enabling environment for Indigenous Peoples to advocate for and exercise their rights, we worked to remove barriers to communication and collaboration between indigenous communities, host-country governments and civil society. Specifically, we focused on filling the connectivity gap, combatting mis/disinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic, and supporting indigenous groups in elevating their issues to achieve consistent indigenous representation with decision-makers whose policies directly impact these communities. To combat mis/disinformation, **Servindi** diagnosed the health situation among indigenous peoples and focused its campaign on three areas: explaining to the State how to disseminate information to indigenous communities, calling for vaccination, and eliminating vaccine myths.



Testimonies



“One of the highlights of the project was to be able to work side-by-side with the indigenous communities in different parts of Guyana.

The APA is an organization based in Georgetown and the core team doesn't have many opportunities to directly interact with the indigenous leaders in the regions. This has been a great opportunity to strengthen our networks despite the connectivity challenges. Also, talking with the Venezuelan indigenous community has been something new for us and represents greater inclusivity.”

-- Paul Graham Atkinson,
Project Coordinator, APA, GUYANA



“It has been reassuring to know that we can maximize impact with the resources provided by Agenda Propia and without the need for too much time investment,

focusing on what we know how to do well (presenting an image of respectability and trust), but trying to incorporate a variety of formats and presence of human faces that make us feel closer and kinder. We are moving forward with generating more of our own content instead of sharing relevant topics from third parties. The political context has captured our attention in the last two months, but despite this, we maintained and exceeded engagement.”

—Maria Rosa Montes,
Director of the Communications Area, IBC, PERÚ



“As indigenous peoples, we have not had priority for the State. The State did not give us adequate information on what to do, or on how to begin to live with the norms and laws that changed.”

--Indira Vargas,
indigenous communicator who participated in CONFENIAE's trainings in Ecuador



“The media is a power that should be used more. Today, we communicators have come out stronger, each one of us will use the skills we learned.

Seeing our indigenous relatives applying their knowledge and giving classes to other relatives makes us very proud. And from now on we can teach others in our networks. I'm already anticipating that we will not stop here, because we have continued support. We have communicators from the network who will work in the media and build from this workshop.”

--Marcia Fernandes,
Communications Department of the CIR



Program Challenges and Lessons Learned



Turbulent elections and politics in Bolivia:

Amidst a volatile political situation, many Bolivian CSOs have faced a moment of uncertainty, as many organizations fear repercussion for accepting funds from international donors. Given the importance of partnership dynamics, Internews only worked with organizations comfortable partnering with us under this context and prepared to quickly adapt to partner needs. Specifically, Internews had to work to build a relationship of trust with CEJIS in order to reach indigenous communities. From the beginning of the project, CEJIS requested not to include branding on materials, as it could compromise their work with indigenous organizations. Internews worked with CEJIS to accommodate this request and adapted content production to the schedule needs of indigenous leaders, as many faced delays in scheduling meetings due to the country's complicated political and social context. During this time, indigenous organizations prioritized other agenda items and delayed trainings until April to accommodate the needs of communities in Beni and Santa Cruz and to discuss topics such as exercising the collective human rights of indigenous peoples.



Digital connectivity challenges:

In Peru, IBC used WhatsApp to develop training workshops. They built a semi-presential methodology in FECONAFROPU and UNAY communities due to poor connectivity, offering valuable lessons for future work in communities with connectivity challenges. Consequently, Internews included this experience in a guide called: "Message-based training guidelines" (publication in process). This guide presented training examples around the world that used messaging apps in low-connectivity territories so that Internews trainers around the world can apply similar strategies to their own contexts.



Protecting journalist security in Colombia:

In Putumayo, **Sinergias** prioritized coverage on violence that resurged during the pandemic by producing an episode that gave voice to targeted territories. However, the organization faced challenges in protecting people who shared their experiences and local journalists from Radio Waira who feared retaliation. To overcome this challenge, Sinergias encouraged a female journalist at Radio Waira to tell a story using metaphors and sounds to portray a violent situation that many have experienced in the region. Secondly, the Sinergias team in Vaupés offered support by reading the text written by another local journalist so that he could maintain his anonymity. Internews worked closely with Sinergias to ensure access to local resources and to check in on safety measures along the way.



Mobility and connection obstacles in Colombia:

Sinergias developed a project in one of the municipalities with the highest population dispersion, precarious communication infrastructure, and geographical conditions that have historically hindered mobility. This context proved especially challenging amidst a global pandemic, a national strike, flooding, and a 10-day blackout. While these obstacles posed barriers to project completion, Sinergias managed to hold weekly workshops during the first months of the project (when COVID-19 cases decreased, vaccines were available in the region and mobility restrictions were loosened), providing a solid foundation from which to create the podcast episode content and gather a strong group that could work together even without regular meetings. During the peak of the pandemic, Sinergias communicated with participants by phone or in one-on-one meetings. This allowed them to finalize the communication pieces and build relevant material that reflected local cultures and their cosmivision. As USAID's Colombia Digital Ecosystem Country Assessment indicates, a notable digital gap appears between Colombia's urban and remote communities, yet efforts such as those of Sinergias can encourage open, inclusive digital ecosystems that in turn promote self-determination. By working in hard-to-reach communities, Sinergias has established the foundation for long-term efforts to expand digital connectivity and the reach of high-quality information.



Staff adapted administrative level of effort (LoE) to support partners:

Over the course of HRSM Amazon activities, Internews staff learned to adapt the LoE required to assist partners in administrative activities to ensure timely, accurate reporting. This proved particularly helpful for grassroots and indigenous organizations with smaller administrative capacities to complete subgrants, such as CONFENIAE, which lacked administrative staff dedicated to HRSM Amazon. The project start-up phase offered valuable lessons on best practices for subgrants and contracts, while the monthly reporting process taught staff the importance of frequent check-ins with partners and schedule reminders. These experiences will prove crucial to future projects that require similar levels of administrative coordination with multiple partners, who are juggling many different tasks, to maintain sustainable partnerships.



Avoiding cultural appropriation and extraction in sharing indigenous knowledge:

Collaborations with HRSM Partners have underscored the importance of preserving ancestral memory and maintaining community knowledge of indigenous ancestral medicine. However, the greater visibility of these traditional practices also raises concerns that outside, non-indigenous entities will appropriate this knowledge as their own, potentially for profit. As ancestral medicine plays a key role in a variety of projects, Internews is committed to continue prioritizing non-extractive approaches that center on intersections of the environment, health and land rights when designing future methodologies for working with indigenous communities. Further lines of work could include initiatives to teach indigenous community members how to license their knowledge with peer licenses that allow ancestral knowledge to remain free but protected from extraction.



Bolivia



30
indigenous
communicators
trained

10
audios in
Spanish about
the pandemic's
effects

Webinar
for indigenous
communities
about COVID-19

KEY RESULTS

- **CEJIS responds to critical health needs with audio content, reaching 800,000 listeners in the Araona Territory, gaining national attention:** The pandemic exacerbated the critical health situation of the Araona Territory, subsequently informing their decision to focus three out of 10 audio productions on Araona needs. Produced in coordination with the Araona Territory and CIRABO, CEJIS' audios lasted approximately 30 seconds and discussed COVID prevention measures, misinformation about the vaccine, the importance of using the mask, and strategies for how communities are facing the pandemic. This campaign was called *Take Care of Your Community*, and CEJIS has continued this campaign with the support of the WHO1.

Podcasts have been shared on Radio Santa Cruz, which reaches 800,000 listeners daily in La Paz, Pando, Beni, Santa Cruz, Sucre, Tarija, and the Bolivian Chaco. The audios about Araona people were shared on Radio Éxito, which has national coverage, and Radio Splendid, which reaches La Paz. Furthermore, CEJIS produced articles that garnered attention from media platforms such as Página Siete, El Diario, FM Bolivia, and Opinión Bolivia, and others, calling national authorities' attention to the situation of the Araona territories.

- **CEJIS further develops relationship with PAHO to inform indigenous communities:** CEJIS collaborated with Internews to build a webinar for indigenous communities about COVID-19 and invited PAHO to collaborate on the initiative. Subsequently, they re-started work they had begun through a strategic alliance between PAHO/WHO Bolivia and the Departmental Health Service of Pando to support the vaccination process among indigenous peoples located between the borders of Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. This alliance is of utmost importance due to the vulnerability of the five different indigenous peoples living in this department, three of which benefitted from these efforts: Ese Ejja, Cavineño and Tacana. Project activities sought to encourage the COVID-19 vaccination process with culturally-relevant information (in terms of language, content, culture and means of transmission), diagnose communication needs, and dispel common myths. CEJIS published these materials on its Facebook page and distributed them to pages accessible to indigenous groups. These efforts helped build strategic alliances to continue disseminating materials in the region, expanding their reach.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

CEJIS focused on two main activities throughout this project while successfully adapting to the country's complex political context: **communications training and work with indigenous communities**. First, the organization planned a training process with 30 indigenous communicators (13 women and 17 men from Guaranis, Chiauuitanos, Sirionos, Territorio Indígena Multiétnico (TIM I), and TIPNIS) to train communicators in health information, communication, and production. Poor internet connectivity arose as a primary challenge, limiting the organization's time available for consulting with communities and delaying the start of audio production by two months. As a result, CEJIS shifted methodology and wrote audio scripts so that community members participating in trainings could receive information about pertinent COVID-19 measures and subsequently provide feedback. CEJIS proposed creating 10 audios in Spanish about the pandemic's effects on indigenous territories to share on local radios. They worked with **Agenda Propia** to analyze the organization's social networks; this allowed them to build a social media plan, which they are now implementing. Finally, CEJIS created a communications campaign about the Araona Territory that impacted the Municipality of Ixiamas and the Department of La Paz, empowering these communities to fight for their rights and highlighting the role of HRSM Amazon in promoting long-term indigenous self-determination through communications platforms.



Brazil



KEY RESULTS

15

leaders protecting
Black and Quilombola
Rights

One

network of indigenous
communicators
strengthened

FINAL REPORT
2.0.2.1

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Internews partnered with **IEB** to expand inclusion to Quilombola, indigenous and Black communities, inform indigenous territories that previously lacked connectivity, and train indigenous communicators in audiovisual, audio and graphic design content production. Internews originally planned to work with **CONAQ** to provide tailored health guidance to Quilombolas, but given the health emergency in Brazil, foreign capital control, and CONAQ's existing administrative structure, the organization had limited bandwidth to manage a subgrant, and we ultimately decided to move forward with other partners. Together with new HRSM Amazon partner **RBJA**, Internews consequently worked to reach the communities that CONAQ had originally planned to, expanding efforts to include Quilombos in Para in May 2021. Internews collaborated with IEB's Quilombola office to offer training, content production, and dissemination activities for Quilombola communities. Furthermore, many activities switched to a virtual format during the spring of 2021 to ensure adequate COVID-19 health safety protocol. Internews worked with partners to re-program and continued to successfully offer trainings, demonstrating the importance of quick adaptations that will inform Internews' approach to partner support in the future.

Overall, partners in Brazil found that communication methods adapted to indigenous and Quilombola linguistic and cultural norms were key to engaging with participants. By building materials that centered these values, audiences were able to establish trust in the health information they received over communications platforms and subsequently shift their perspectives.

- **Quilombola and indigenous perspective highlighted in communication materials:** The project included a group of 15 leaders who work to protect Black and Quilombola rights at the local and state levels as project participants, expanding the project's inclusivity and relevance for vulnerable populations. A collective effort ensured communication pieces expressed Quilombola identity; visual pieces referenced Quilombola culture through color choice, and audio and visual materials utilized language common among the region's population (including the indigenous peoples of Roraima). Topics included COVID-19 safety protocol and vaccine attitudes, expanding public health awareness in communities where doubts about the salience of the vaccine are common, and many believe the pandemic is over.

- **Strengthening of the CIR's Communication Department increased indigenous visibility and improved communication in Roraima, Brazil:** Adequate equipment proved crucial to improving the structure of the CIR's Communication Advisory, enabling it to act as an alternative media platform in Roraima. This structural improvement facilitated greater visibility for indigenous peoples and the CIR in Roraima and Brazil. Local communicators were also able to improve communication strategies regarding information on health, education, sustainability, women and youth. Beyond the pandemic, the Communication Department hopes to become more active in indigenous communities' social policies and replicate the experience in other regions, such as in the south of the Amazonas state. They hope to incorporate individuals from this region into the Wakyway network using funds raised by IEB. In Brazil, Internews, IEB and CIR are working together to continue strengthening the network of indigenous communicators with future activities developed through another Internews project, Rooted in Trust.¹

1. Internews' Rooted in Trust project is a global pandemic information response program countering the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation.



Colombia



KEY RESULTS

43,828
people were reached
by radio shows

Improved
communication
strategies

- **Creating a safe space for female leaders:** In Vaupés, Sinergias worked with roughly 11 indigenous female leaders on a weekly basis, discussing the pandemic and identifying best practices to prevent the virus with a feminist and gender-focused perspective. The sessions included activities to strengthen communications skills, placing participant experience and knowledge at the center of the discussion. This approach proved extremely beneficial, as participants were able to acknowledge their existing capacities and discuss how to share this expertise with their communities. Important conversations touched on themes such as traditional practices for preventing COVID, the role of female leaders in their communities, gender-based violence, and other topics often considered taboo. Sinergias recorded the discussions and complemented this material with audio recordings of local songs, interviews, and stories that the participants collected for the final podcast episodes. They transmitted radio shows through a local indigenous radio station, Yurupari Estéreo, and the radio station of the National Army, which has coverage across the Mitu municipality, reaching approximately 43,828 people. One primary challenge that Sinergias faced was communication leadership identification; the organization could not identify more than a handful of indigenous journalists in Vaupés to lead communications processes. However, this project provided the first steps for women to narrate their stories and carry the initiative forward so that indigenous communities can continue to share experiences and wisdom with other departments in Colombia.
- **Creative approaches to dispelling COVID myths and strengthening cultural bonds:** In Caquetá and Putumayo, Sinergias began by mapping the population's doubts, worries and myths about COVID-19. Participants communicated with communities by phone and WhatsApp, interviewing individuals to record their main concerns and best practices for virus prevention. Sinergias also spoke with elders and traditional medicine doctors, who shared their experiences with listeners. Sinergias' health team then complemented this wisdom with Western biomedical knowledge and adapted vaccine information to local languages and indigenous cultural contexts.
- **El Canto del Tucán offers hope and reliable information:** The radio show/podcast about COVID-19 prevention provided listeners with not only a source of information, but a source of hope. Listeners in Putumayo and Caquetá shared positive experiences of strengthening family bonds, opportunities for youth to learn about forgotten cultural traditions, and strategies for la Guardia Indígena to protect the territory. The only LGBTQ+ group in Vaupés also requested a special production of El Canto del Tucán to discuss experiences as indigenous people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Design and recording for this episode are in progress.
- **Protecting communicators from retaliation:** In Putumayo, Sinergias prioritized discussions about resurging violence during the pandemic. They produced an episode of El Canto del Tucán that touched on the subject and gave voice to targeted territories. One primary challenge was protecting local journalists from Radio Waira and people who shared their experiences from retaliation. One female journalist from Radio Waira told stories using metaphors and sounds to portray a violent situation in the region, while the team in Vaupés supported another local journalist by reading text so that he could maintain his anonymity. Nathaly Espitia Diaz, an Internews staff member, shared useful resources to ensure the participants and staff remained safe throughout the process.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Internews partnered with Sinergias to inform communities in Vaupés, Putumayo and Caquetá about COVID-19 through discussions combining approaches from both indigenous and Western medicine. Through radio, podcast, WhatsApp, and phone, Sinergias strengthened community connectivity and used a model based in gender equity and justice to empower community members in safe spaces. By drawing on traditional health wisdom and centering indigenous cultural norms, these efforts helped to dispel myths about COVID-19 and encourage trust in vaccines.

Although participant numbers and digital connectivity proved challenging throughout the project, Sinergias adapted by exploring distinct methodologies, such as USB distribution, solar-powered radio, and loudspeakers, to reach communities that lack sufficient connection. The organization ended activities by implementing a connectivity fund in the Department of Vaupés and installed internet in three last-mile regions, Pueblo Nuevo, Timbo and Wacara, to connect over 590 indigenous people.

Sinergias also offered a unique approach to HRSM Activities by drawing on in-house medical experts to inform the media content they produced. These creative strategies offer valuable insights for future work with communities facing connectivity challenges and engaging with those that doubt the legitimacy of public health information.

FINAL REPORT
2.0.2.1



Ecuador



ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Internews partnered with the organizations **CORAPE** and **CONFENIAE** to strengthen the capacities of indigenous communicators. Through HRSM Amazon activities, **CORAPE** and **CONFENIAE** encouraged open discussion about vaccination among indigenous populations, many of which were initially very reluctant to receive vaccines. These open conversations allowed participants to create materials with an intercultural perspective on COVID that helped other institutions start effective vaccination campaigns. *This approach highlights the value of listening to indigenous communities and working to create culturally and linguistically relevant communications products that establish trust.*

203

interactions with the ChatBot

20

Amazonian communicators attended the virtual training campus

500

people benefitted from the high-frequency radio in Shamato-Napo and two internet access points

KEY RESULTS

- **Virtual training campus encourages content creation:** **CORAPE** began activities by mapping the COVID situation among indigenous communities, building a virtual training campus with 20 Amazonian communicators (11 of whom were indigenous). This virtual methodology provided information, training, and games that allowed participants to “learn by playing.” Following the training process, **CORAPE** provided economic incentives to the 20 communicators to create their own materials; participants produced 20 audiovisual materials about the pandemic’s effects on communities and schools, medical treatments, and community strategies for dealing with the pandemic despite a lack of state support. These materials included seven audio productions, three videos, and ten infographics, as well as a Facebook page to share materials. From May 3 to June 30, 21 radio stations in **CORAPE**’s network shared the podcasts, reaching an audience of a potential four million listeners.
- **ChatBot documents attitudes towards pandemic and expands reach:** **CORAPE** developed a ChatBot system to collect information on how Amazonian Kichwa and Shuar communities reacted to the pandemic. The ChatBot offers a critical resource for updated information on how these communities are dealing with the pandemic, as there are no official records on this context. The organization received 203 interactions with this system; the majority of participation came from Kichwa and Shuar indigenous peoples, who reported consuming television most frequently and were in favor of vaccination. This type of information offers useful input to inform future content production tailored to community needs and establishes the foundation to continue ChatBot development in a new partnership between Radio Santa Cruz (Bolivia) and **CORAPE**, expanding ChatBot technology to Bolivia under a new Internews project funded by USAID/INSPIRES. Internews ensured that ChatBot information collection adhered to ethical privacy principals, as the database of the 203 participants will only be used for analytical purposes, and information collected includes no sensitive data. Participation is optional, and only **CORAPE** and Internews will have access to this information; they will not share it outside of their respective organizations.
- **Trainings for indigenous community members encourage COVID-19 communication materials reflective of the Ecuadorian indigenous cosmovision:** **CONFENIAE** began activities with three trainings for 45 indigenous communicators from Limoncocha - Sucumbíos, Ishayakyu – Napo, and Sucua - Morona Santiago. Participants learned about COVID-19 and communication strategies, often for the first time, and subsequently worked with Lanceros Digitales and Tawna Films to develop 19 audiovisual materials. These materials focused on providing information about COVID prevention in Spanish, Kichwa and Shuar; some were broadcast through the radio station La Voz de la **CONFENIAE**. Meanwhile, infographics centered on violence against Amazonian women, environmental contamination, and the impact of COVID on education. The nine participants who received economic incentives to take part in trainings titled their initiative “**JAMBI: Amazonian Communities Facing the Pandemic**” and presented nine products, including an illustrated book on the use of medicinal plants to treat COVID-19. Participant Indira Vargas received support from the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI) to print and distribute 500 copies of this book among Ecuadorian indigenous peoples, COICA, CONAIE and international organizations such as Hivos, OPS, WWF, the Government of France, and national media at a public event celebrating **CONFENIAE**’s 41-year anniversary in September. This reach enabled **CONFENIAE** to center indigenous perspectives on the pandemic on a broader scale, encouraging support for indigenous self-determination through communications platforms.
- **HF radios connect remote communities:** To expand connectivity, **CONFENIAE** installed a high frequency radio in Shamato - Napo for the Kichwa People of Rukullakta and two internet connection points for the Siona Nationality of Ecuador in Sucumbios and Chontapunta in Napo. These systems benefited 500 people that otherwise lack communication avenues to receive assistance, particularly in the event of COVID-19-related emergencies, as well as other common health incidents, such as snake bites, accidents, and evacuations. In particular, communities have benefitted from these radios to warn other communities of serious COVID cases, advise against travel, and request food, medications, and other supplies.



Guyana



KEY RESULTS

29
audiovisual materials
about COVID-19
made by the community
members

Increased social cohesion
between APA and
Venezuelan
migrants

40
indigenous regional
leaders reached by the
National Communication
Network's campaign.

FINAL REPORT
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ACTIVITY SUMMARY

In Guyana, Internews worked with APA to provide reliable COVID-19 information to communities with limited connectivity, combining traditional and modern medical approaches through a variety of audiovisual mediums. For the first time, APA included Venezuelan migrant voices in the Warru nation to expand inclusivity and translate radio materials to indigenous languages to reach wider audiences.

Vaccination policies, government policies and implementation plans in Guyana changed periodically throughout the project, underscoring the importance of attentive updates to content and flexibility in activity timelines to maintain project success. In August, APA adjusted content to report on new government policies for vaccination of indigenous populations and to combat vaccine hesitancy. While finishing communications pieces, APA selected stories from the community that discussed COVID-19 and vaccines, as well as changes in territorial dynamics due to the pandemic. They adapted information to include new regulations from the Guyanese MoH and updated their COVID-19 manual to discuss vaccination for children and the use of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in target locations. This flexibility enabled APA to begin disseminating 29 audiovisual materials; they produced 27 audios, one manual on COVID-19, and one manual on audio story collection. As a result of HRSM Amazon activities, APA expanded its skillsets and is prepared to continue dialogue with communities.

- **Audio materials dispel COVID-19 conspiracies:** Internews partnered with APA to address conspiracy theories surrounding COVID-19 among indigenous peoples and disseminate information to communities with limited connectivity. The organization began by compiling audios on how indigenous peoples combatted the virus and reconciled with their ancestral beliefs. They also circulated short audio segments over social media, broadcast messages over loudspeakers, and printed leaflets in English, Portuguese, Spanish and indigenous languages to reach the broadest audience possible. HRSM Amazon Internews staff provided mentorship on sound production to create radio pieces that could serve as conversation-starters, rather than solely public service announcements. As a result, APA reached out to indigenous communities in June to create a facilitator network to create soundscapes and interview communities about their experiences with COVID. They then compiled audio content to disseminate a series called "COVID-19 and YOU" in Spanish, Akawaio, Wapichan and Makushi. Internews offered guidance on interviewing and sound recording without professional equipment so that content creators could continue producing materials beyond the life of the HRSM Amazon project. APA is now sharing a manual on strategies for interviewing communities in vulnerable contexts about the pandemic.
- **Centering Venezuelan migrant voices:** As a result of trainings, APA decided to add the voices of Venezuelan migrants to their stories, as many members of this group live close to indigenous communities and share similar concerns. This was the first time that APA included migrants of the Warru nation of Venezuela, many of whom sought refuge in Guyana, providing insight into

how these communities faced the pandemic in a predominantly English-speaking country. Audio pieces from this community were recorded in their territories and included their voices speaking in both Spanish and their indigenous languages. These experiences also indicate that radio continues to offer a successful platform to build social cohesion between migrants and receptor communities; this finding could be instrumental to supporting the seamless integration of Venezuelan migrants in different countries in the region.

- **Culturally relevant health information in Guyana reaches new audiences:** APA concluded production by translating a PSA voice-over to indigenous languages. The National Communication Network's campaign also distributed audio stories, PSAs, a manual about COVID-19, and jingles through nine regional radio stations, reaching 40 indigenous leaders in the region via schools, health posts, and community meeting spaces. Local leaders are now re-broadcasting the PSAs and audios on their radios, highlighting the project's continued legacy.
- **Inclusion of jingles created under the program during the Amerindian heritage month:** In September, Guyana celebrated this important event with a national concert hosted by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs that was livestreamed across different platforms, including the national TV broadcaster, NCN CH 11, E-Networks, and national radio. All artists who participated were of indigenous origin. One participating artist group was The Castro Brothers, which created two jingles as part of HRSM Amazon that they used at the end of the event, crediting APA. Following the jingle, they closed the show by encouraging Guyanese audience members to get vaccinated against COVID-19.



Peru



ACTIVITY SUMMARY

SERVINDI and IBC worked with indigenous communities to produce materials with an intercultural perspective and built capacities to produce community-based journalism in their territories. Through HRSM Amazon, IBC helped facilitate FECONAFROPU's hopes of maintaining direct communication with their bases through the installation of two HF radios. SERVINDI was able to work collectively with civil society organizations to create their COVID prevention campaign, which allowed them to impact both public institutions and indigenous communities. They also created a network of indigenous communicators to produce materials with an intercultural approach and will continue work after the project's conclusion.

2,000+
people connected
between El Estrecho and
Nuevo Perú through
HF Radio

9
audiovisual
materials developed
by indigenous
communicators

30+
communication
materials about
COVID-19 were made
for the SERVINDI
campaign

KEY RESULTS

- **Health diagnosis reveals structural deficiencies in health access for communities in the Peruvian Amazon:** SERVINDI began activities by working with organizations such as Radio Kampagkis, Consejo Shipibo Konibo Xetebo – Coshikox, Aidesep, ORPIAN, UNAY, Fernamad, Comando Matico, CODEPISAM, COICA, CENSI, and the Ombudsman's Office, among others, to build a diagnostic report titled "Health in the Amazon in Times of Crisis." With diagnostic inputs, SERVINDI built a campaign called Emergency in the Health of Indigenous Peoples, which included 10 articles, 9 infographics, 11 podcasts and 1 jingle; they recounted the pandemic's impact on indigenous communities and clarified questions about COVID-19 vaccines. With an intercultural approach, this campaign opened community debate about vaccination and revealed deficiencies in the health system available in indigenous communities. In particular, many indigenous communities receive inadequate health care from the State on a regular basis, thereby heightening their situation to a "health emergency" extending beyond the scope of the pandemic.
- **Indigenous communicators work to change vaccine attitudes:** Servindi's campaign provided a firsthand account of how indigenous federations and native peoples have changed their positions on vaccination. The organization communicated with the Regional Health Directorates (Diresa) of Loreto and Ucayali so both State entities could disseminate materials, such as a jingle, regarding myths and truths about indigenous vaccination and how a lack of information jeopardizes indigenous vaccination. Servindi has always been in contact with indigenous communities such as Shawi, which broadcasts the jingle over the Radio Amazonía Yurimaguas signal.
- **Indigenous communicators respond to population questions:** Finally, SERVINDI established a network of indigenous communicators from Cusco, Amazonas, San Martín, Lima, Junín, Ayacucho, Loreto, and Ucayali who belong to the following groups: Quechua, Awajún, Aymara, Asháninka, Quechua, and Shipibo Konibo. This network produced nine audiovisual

materials that offered an easy method to learn about community demands, indigenous initiatives, and the population's view on the COVID-19 vaccine, offering materials unavailable through other media platforms.

- **Fourteen communicators publish culturally-relevant content and COVID-prevention information after communication and technology trainings:** IBC's work with FECONAFROPU and UNAY allowed 14 communicators from these federations to access communication training to share their realities; for example, a communicator from FECONAFROPU, Astrid Chicaco, began to document cultural practices in her community thanks to these trainings. In addition, the campaign to disseminate prevention materials has reached communities such as Puerto Elvira, Maridicai, Nuevo Horizonte, Puerto Aurora, Garza Playa, Nuevo Antonio, Unidad Yanesha, Nuevos Unidos Tahuantinsuyo and Puerto Libre, which lack information about COVID-19.
- **IBC connects remote FECONAFROPU communities through HF radio.** The leaders of the native communities on the Putumayo Frontier have long hoped for direct communication with their most distant communities. With support from the HRSM Amazon project, they were finally able to connect more than 2,000 people between El Estrecho and Nuevo Perú. Furthermore, IBC acquired the basic knowledge to replicate this connectivity effort in other communities by generating an alliance with Rhizomatica. With Rhizomatica's guidance, they will be able to continue connecting distant communities in the future, underscoring HRSM Amazon's long-lasting impact on more effective communication among indigenous communities.



HRSM Amazon Project Methodology:



This project's success hinged on a methodology that relied on the skills, experience, and networks of Internews staff. Internews coordinators worked to guide partners throughout each step of the project process, moving beyond administrative support to offer guidance for methodologies, resources for content creation and activity planning, and connections with other individuals and organizations to gradually build a trusted network. Internews coordinators met frequently with partners to guide content themes, offer a source of direct connection to respect partners' standards, and maintain a presence in organizational spaces. Furthermore, Internews encouraged a varied methodology to accomplish project goals that incorporated initiatives beyond training and production. For instance, SERVINDI conducted a diagnostic to assess the health situation among indigenous peoples and established a network of communicators, thus building their own lasting infrastructure to continue similar activities in the future. With efforts to build strong relationships and develop tailored communication initiatives, HRSM Amazon activities have laid the framework to respond to community information needs well beyond the timeframe of this project. This unique approach is one grounded in mutual trust, relationship-building, and responsiveness to current needs, rather than solely focused on producing a set number of deliverables.

Moreover, the pandemic directly shaped organizations' methodologies for conducting HRSM Amazon activities in all target countries, highlighting the importance of flexibility and working in a diversity of formats. While COVID-19 infection rates required many partners to transition to conduct activities virtually, connectivity also proved particularly challenging in remote and indigenous communities. By combining in-person and virtual formats, installing internet connection points, and using applications like WhatsApp, partners were able to increase accessibility and continue to reach their intended audiences. These adaptations offer valuable lessons for accommodating to diverse contexts in other Internews projects, where the pandemic continues to universally shape territories' agendas at the intersection of health, justice, and human rights.

Personnel:

Two coordinators were based in HRSM Amazon target countries and have significant experience working with indigenous communities and community radio throughout the region:



Nathaly Espitia Diaz:

Her work lies in the intersection of technology, human rights, communication, culture and social change. She is a communication and advocacy strategist and content creator, and she works to develop projects related to grassroots communications, digital security, privacy and internet freedom. Currently a program officer at Internews; part of the Internet Freedom Festival as one of the regional organizers for Latin America; Digital security advisor for a Global Voices project; co-funder of the community and alternative communication collective Noís Radio and member of Ciberseguras, she mainly works with indigenous, Afro and campesino communities. Through the HRSM Amazon project, Ms. Espitia Diaz oversaw operations in Brazil, Colombia and Guyana.



Clara Robayo Valencia:

Based in Quito, Ecuador, her work focuses on gender, the right to communication, and technology access for communities. She is a radio producer that works with organizations such as Radialistas Apasionadas and Apasionados to run trainings in radio technology, digital security and radio production in Latin America and the Caribbean. She is a doctoral student of Communication, Gender and Technology at the University of Malaga. Currently, she is working as Program Officer at Internews.





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