

News from Highlands' Partner the Artesana Collective, Guatemala

This is a loose translation, by the Global Connections team, of the article in Prensa Libre. For Spanish speakers, here is the link to the original article:

<https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/comunitario/bien-hecho-2022-desde-el-colectivo-artesana-se-intenta-romper-paradigmas/>

Well Done 2022: The Artesana Collective tries to break paradigms

Andréa Barrios, for her work at the head of the Artesana Collective of Guatemala, was recognized this year by the national Guatemalan newspaper *Prensa Libre* as “Well Done” in Social Projects.

By Sara Solórzano, 2022-12-30 in Prensa Libre



The stigma of society towards ex-convicts is real; and reinsertion into society very often seems like an elusive dream. The Artesana Collective and others are dedicated to ensuring that the dream is fulfilled, against a system that seems to be designed to not let it happen.

Artesana emerged in Guatemala in 2006, with the idea of working with popular artists in defense of human rights with attention to vulnerable groups. [Spanish “arte sana” = “art heals”] Since then, the work team has been made up of advisors, educators and ex-prisoners. They have joined forces to demand the human rights of female inmates and their children, particularly those who cohabit with their imprisoned mothers.

The road during these 16 years has not been easy for Andréa Barrios Paiz, legal representative and coordinator of the Artesana Collective, whose main objectives are that "the penalty is not transferred to the families of the people who are deprived of liberty", and ensuring food for children who cohabit with their mothers in Guatemala's prisons.

During 2022, the Collective has managed support and logistics for the distribution of food for infants and pregnant prisoners, in addition to promoting prevention programs in state institutions, the right to justice, and the guarantee of respect for their rights.

Artesana has presented legal actions that have brought about a ruling that orders the Social Works Secretariat of the Presidency to guarantee food for the little ones who cohabit with their mothers in prisons, as well as to promote protocols for visits by minors and programs focused on social reintegration.

Beat the stigma

Andréa says that the Collective began with the idea of promoting art to heal all the rights that were violated. With the passage of time it has been transformed and currently its fight is focused on "working against stigma, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion", as well as providing accompaniment to families of those deprived of liberty.

Every day Artesana seeks to find ways to work with those in charge of security and justice, as well as private organizations and society as a whole. The aim is to overcome all those limitations of study, work and social development faced by family members of imprisoned people.

Artesana also carries out advocacy actions with the Penitentiary System, the Ministry of the Interior, the Institute of Public Criminal Defense, and others to "transform this system that is not respectful of human rights of people, both prisoners and their relatives". The Collective's advocacy has been accepted and has allowed them to have signed agreements with the institutions.

Continuity of Policies

One of the main challenges that the Collective has is ensuring that agreements continue from one government to the next. They want to ensure that changes implemented continue, particularly in regard to the protection of human rights of family members of the imprisoned.

In January 2023, it is expected that a judicial process will definitively resolve the "institutional responsibility regarding the feeding of children who cohabit with their mothers in prisons, to receive decent and adequate food." The Collective will ensure nutrition for the little ones.

Artesana will also promote smooth processes for the benefit of women, with more effective integration into the community and job opportunities. In addition, it will strengthen the work

with the Judiciary and the Penitentiary System, so that it is a reflection of a State that really has a duty of secondary and tertiary prevention. Andréa says "Little or nothing has been done in the country."

Upon receiving the "Well Done!" recognition from the *Prensa Libre* team, Andréa said that this becomes a commitment to continue working for the rights of Guatemalan children and adolescents who have a family member deprived of liberty, and motivates us to move forward and to "not be discouraged by what can stagnate, go backwards or advance very little".