



Recommendation

Authority engagement Community engagement COVID-19 Culture

 Colombia

Recommendations for dialogue with traditional indigenous authorities of the Wayúu people

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The recommendations for dialogue with traditional indigenous authorities of the Wayúu people include:

1. First of all, identify traditional indigenous authorities who are recognised and respected by the communities, as well as both male and female leaders who can facilitate dialogue in order to carry out the initial consultation. Request authorisations to enter their territory and be aware of their interest in the planned actions.
2. Acknowledge internal procedures and time frames with regard to consultations and permissions to enter the territory. It is the indigenous authorities who convene (either personally or via the spokesman¹ and both male and female leaders) the members of the clans of their community in order to inform them about the consultation that is going to take place and its purpose. Internally, the community evaluates the impacts of the projects and decides on their viability.
3. Make advance contact with the authority or community leader over the phone with a view to holding consultations about the availability of care in the community, and agree a date, place and time for the presentation of proposals and the consultations, stressing the importance of relying on existing protection structures within the community.
4. Being punctual and respecting the date and time agreed (the members of the community do not like to be kept waiting) is a respect-based principle that the Oxfam teams must follow.
5. For the Wayúu people, “one’s word” and “trust” are fundamental elements rooted in the respect for and dignity of human beings, as well as their own culture and territory. Both concepts are required to forge any kind of relationship between the *alijunas* (non-indigenous people) and the communities as a whole, and form the basis for harmonious development, with the actions carried out in the territory being imbued with transparency and credibility. Taking this into account, we must do what is agreed with the communities.
6. Traditionally, every meeting in the communities begins around a coffee provided by the women to welcome the guests. For that reason, in the context of the current biosafety protocols, it is necessary to explain in advance the changes in relational dynamics, always stressing acknowledgement of and respect for cultural practices and giving examples of new forms

¹ In Wayúu culture, the *pütchipü* or *pütche’ejachi* – the “spokesman” – is the person who normally resolves internal conflicts in the community. The spokesman must always be a man.

of interaction and the reasons behind them, e.g. no food or drink can be consumed in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

7. It is advisable to have a Wayúu person who speaks the native language (*wayuunaiki*) to act as an interpreter and source of support in the exercise of intercultural dialogue aimed at the joint construction of lessons with an ethnic focus.
8. In the event of a family crisis in the community (such as a wake), postpone the activities agreed for that day, since the death of a community member is considered an important and sacred event in Wayúu culture.
9. Enquire in advance within the communities about any existing conflicts between clans, and cancel or redesign activities where there is knowledge of imminent conflicts in the territory.
10. Information management is very important for the communities, which is why we recommend **clarity and precision about what we are going to do**. This means responding comprehensively, adequately, responsibly, respectfully and in simple, inclusive language with an ethnic focus, to all considerations necessary for the people of the community to be able to understand and express their consent concerning the project.

For example:

- **What** are we going to do?
 - **Where** are we going to do it?
 - **How** are we going to do it?
 - **Who** is going to do it?
 - **When** are we going to do it? (when will the actions begin and when will they end?)
 - **Why** are we going to do it?
 - **Who** are we going to do it for?
11. Always take into account the initial consultation processes and participatory dialogue for cooperation, observation, monitoring and reporting purposes. To that end, community-based dialogue and feedback mechanisms must be facilitated that acknowledge the local forms of social regulation and law, in coordination with Western mechanisms rooted in regulations on the protection of human rights.