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Vulnerability and Resilience of Indigenous Women through the COVID–19 Pandemic
Experiences from Rural Guatemala

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
ILO	International Labour Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

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This Research Paper is dedicated to my sister Marjorie, and all the lives lost to COVID–19. Marjorie supported me in life and in death in every goal I set for myself. In her own words:

> "Be grateful with what you have, enjoy, love, laugh, listen and be happy! Because life is today!" –Marjorie Arriaza Grotewold (1981–2020)

May she rest in peace.

Abstract

The COVID–19 is the fifth global pandemic categorized as such by the World Health Organization (WHO) and it has significantly impacted the livelihoods of communities across the world. Indigenous people and women are especially vulnerable population to the disease as well as to the economic and social consequences of the measures taken to cope with the pandemic. This study uses the concepts of vulnerability and resilience to understand the social and economic impact for indigenous women in rural Guatemala, as well as to understand how they are dealing individually and collectively with the crisis. The study finds that poverty and informal economy put them at a higher risk, with many facing significant difficulties with food security. Other difficulties along with loss of income include distrust, educational difficulties, lack of access to health services and mental health issues. It is observed a disconnect between national policies and with the inability to make decisions and set measures at a local level, which decreased its ability to cope with the difficulties. The coping mechanisms at a household level included using formal employment of one member to support the family, entrepreneurship and growing their own food. At a community level, it was highlighted the social cohesion through neighbor solidarity as well as organized cooperation and volunteer work.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research is important to document the effects of the pandemic in vulnerable populations like indigenous communities in Latin America. The effects of the COVID–19 will be seen in every area of social and economic life and it is important to document how it is affecting disproportionally diverse populations.

The World Health Organization (2020) is prioritizing as one of the areas of research the understanding of unintended consequences and how it is affecting vulnerable populations. Indigenous people in Guatemala, especially indigenous women, are one of the most vulnerable populations in the country, with higher rates of poverty, malnutrition, and less access to education, health services, and formal employment. It is key to understand how indigenous women are being affected during the COVID–19 pandemic in areas of health, economic, and social aspects. Furthermore, this research is important for policy development in Guatemala and Latin America in how to create targeted policies for the recovery of the pandemic and differentiated strategies for indigenous communities and women.

Keywords

COVID–19, women, local development, indigenous communities, vulnerability, informality, livelihood resilience

Chapter 1 Introduction

When I started this Research Paper I was interested in understanding how indigenous people are disproportionally affected by the COVID–19 Pandemic. Social disparities like migration and returning to hometowns or cities, language barriers, education, as well as contextual like access to water, comorbidities and access to health have affected how indigenous people are more vulnerable to the pandemic (Diaz de León, et al., (2020), p.1). Many of the policies in the country are taken at a centralized national level that has little information about how lives are immensely different for indigenous rural populations than for urban ladino people. I come from Guatemala City, and it wasn't until I had moved to Sololá to work with indigenous women that I saw not only how they are excluded from decision making and policies, but also how they have different ways of addressing conflict, disaster, and crisis. With this research I was attempting to explore how indigenous communities are experiencing the pandemic and questioning how they are being impacted. However, two things happened during my research process that impacted my focus: first, I lost my oldest sister to the COVID–19 disease, a young and healthy mother of three. Her passing impacted everyone emotionally, but it also brought light to the role of women during the Pandemic as her absence made us realize the amount of work being done by women in my family during the Pandemic and quarantine, that goes way beyond the house and economic work. Secondly, my initial interviews started to highlight the role of women as decision-makers, breadwinners, resilient members of the community. These two dimensions pushed me to focus my research from an intersectional feminist perspective.

The COVID–19 disease spread rapidly across the world in the first months of 2020, being the fifth declared pandemic since the Spanish Flu in 1981. With a high and fast method of contagiousness, global governments opted for social and physical distance strategies to slow its spread and avoid the collapse of the health systems. Its impact is therefore also on social life, as businesses closed, social events are canceled, and overall social interaction is brought to the minimum. Most guidelines established by governments across the world advise maintaining social and physical distance, and for months most social interactions were canceled.

Guatemala is a country with ethnic diversity, but with a great divide between rural and urban communities, indigenous and non–indigenous peoples, and formal and informal economic activities giving place to a significant equality gap, directly related to ethnicity and region of living. As much as there seem to be two different countries under the same government, the policies to stop the spread of the pandemic were the same for every region in the country. There are 22 Mayan linguistic communities in the country, I chose as a case study the municipality of Santiago Atitlan as a case study for their ethnic homogeneity and strong cohesion and communal identity. Santiago Atitlan is a municipality where 97% of its population is Indigenous Mayan of Tz'utujil descent. It is a community with a rich historical and cultural background, marked by inequality and discrimination but also by collective fighting and a strong sense of identity. Indigenous Mayan population represents 41.7% of the population in Guatemala, distributed in 22 linguistic communities, Tz'utujil being one of them (INE, 2018). Although Guatemala's constitution recognizes indigenous populations per their language and costumes, and the peace accord in 1996 included the importance of maintaining, respecting, and prioritizing the traditional beliefs of indigenous communities. However, in reality, this is rarely recognized in public policy, which and can be observed in many areas like health (Giralt, 2012), and education (Arriaza and Rodas, 2014).

During the 2020 COVID–19 Pandemic, Santiago Atitlan was one of the first towns to have a hike in contagions, but the national and local measures were able to stop the spread before having major health risks or fatalities. However, it had a big impact on social and economic life since some of the measures started before having any registered cases. Being a population that lives primarily on informal economic activities, the sudden stop of activities, mobility restriction, and access to the local market caused a major impact on access to food and basic services.

The community has had a history of violence and conflict since the precolonial era, but it is also marked by the Spaniard colonization and by the Guatemalan civil war in the 1980s; historically, the community has responded with resistance towards structures of power. It is interesting to see how to see this history influences how the community reacts to crises, like the COVID–19 Pandemic. For example, Carlsen (2009) talks about how during the outbreak of Cholera the government sent the military to help con-tend the epidemic, but the town refused, saying they would rather get sick than have the military there. Coche (2020) mentioned the same happened during COVID–19, where the military was refused entrance to the town. She also reflects on how the community uses solidarity as the main tool to address the crisis. How then does the community change in their social and economic life to adapt and deal with the COVID–19 Pandemic? How did they adapt? And what are other consequences of the Pandemic for the rural communities?

Data from indigenous communities is important to develop effective policies and programs, and the current pandemic has reflected the lack of data coming from vulnerable populations (McNeely, Schintler, and Stabile; 2020). This research project falls under one of the research objectives defined by the World Health Organization concerning the COVID–19 Pandemic: "To understand non-intended consequences of epidemic-control decisions" especially the first and third specific objective: (1) Understand contextual vulnerability, and (3) understand how social and economic impacts need to be mitigated (WHO, 2020; p.64).

1.1 Justification of Research

With the foreseeable economic crisis that will hit globally concerning the COVID–19 Pandemic, it will be even more important to find alternatives to globalization that focus on community and local development, through building social and trading networks. According to the European Commission (2020), the European Union will face a decrease of 7.5% in its GDP. The economic consequences will have an impact worldwide. However, its impacts will go farther than public health and economic impact, as it is affecting everyday interactions within communities. This research will support the academic literature on the impact of COVID–19 in local communities and societal life.

Lupton (2020) argues that "social research is again urgently needed to document people's experiences of living in this moment, how different countries and governments are addressing the pandemic and what social changes are occurring now or will be happening in the post-Covid world". In countries like Guatemala, access to data and information is scarce, and decisions are taken based on data from developing countries, while the population has extremely different characteristics. It is then important to document the experiences of local communities and the indigenous population as the world continues to deal with this and future health and social crisis.

The World Health Organization (2020) identified three objectives for research from the social sciences about the COVID–19 Pandemic. The third objective reads: "To understand non-intended consequences of epidemic-control decisions" which in turn has three specific objectives: "(1) Understand contextual vulnerability, (2) understand how decisions

in the field may inadvertently undermine response goals and (3) understand how social and economic impacts need to be mitigated" (ibid, p.64).

The UNDP (2020) identifies indigenous communities as one of the vulnerable groups that might be disproportionally affected by the Pandemic in Latin America, in health, social and economic terms. Their low access to health services, education, technology, and sanitation puts them at risk, but isolation policies may not be followed due to their dependence on daily wages. Friesen argues that "community institutions and information channels and networks are opened through community social contact", which is key to economic prosperity. However, social life was dramatically changed during the Pandemic due to social distancing and isolation policies. It is then important to understand how social life changed and how people and the community reacted to such changes. For example, in Santiago Atitlán, the local market was closed as a social distance measure, but merchants were allowed to sell at their home.?

This research will support this objective by describing the local experiences of national and international policies, in relation to understand non–intended consequences of such policies. The on–going pandemic is a complex phenomenon with many unforeseeable consequences, which makes any policy decision highly complex and based on a process of successes and failures (Angeli and Montefusco, 2020). Emerging data is important to adapt the decision-making process for the current approach of the disease as well as for the short and longer future in dealing and recovering from the pandemic. Indigenous communities are constantly left out of the decision–making in Guatemala. Collecting knowledge from the ground level is a way to address participation from indigenous communities in policies for this and future crises. It will be important to understand how communities are changing to develop bottom-up policies for the medium- and long-term response to the pandemic. The findings from this research will be useful to inform policy and programs that work with local and rural communities in Guatemala and across Latin America as the world attempts to react and recover from the social, health, and economic impact of COVID–19.

1.2 Objectives

The WHO (2020) prioritizes the understanding of unintended consequences of the measures taken to address COVID–19 as one of the key areas of research moving forward. In that sense, the objective of this research initially was to understand how the primarily indigenous community of Santiago Atitlán experienced the first months of the Pandemic and the changes to their social and economic life. However, during the initial interviews and literature review, some other topics came to relevance like the historical relationship of the community with the state and how it affects their response to the crisis, as well as other unintended consequences like a rise in child labor. Therefore the objective of the research was:

- To document bottom-up information of community life during the pandemic to support policy development.
- To document how indigenous women are experiencing the pandemic and how they perceive changes to their social and economic life.
- Describe how indigenous women are responding to the challenges related to the COVID–19 pandemic.
- To identify community characteristics that influence the community response to the pandemic.

1.3 Research Questions

What were the main changes to the social and economic life of the indigenous community as perceived by indigenous women of Santiago Atitlan and how are they responding to the challenges of the COVID–19 Pandemic?

Sub questions

- How do indigenous women experience impact of the COVID–19 pandemic and government measures?
- What are indigenous women doing to adapt and respond to the challenges posed by the COVID–19 Pandemic?
- Why are indigenous women disproportionally vulnerable to the COVID–19 Pandemic?

1.4 Methodology

This research project is a case study to understand thoroughly how a community was affected by the COVID–19 pandemic and the measures taken by the national and local governments. It used qualitative methods to understand the community's experience during the times of pandemic and combined secondary data and descriptive qualitative data through individual interviews. The purpose of the study is exploratory since it attempts to describe the broad experience of the indigenous community and how they experienced the COVID–19 Pandemic.

This research project is exploratory since it is describing a phenomenon from the individual and community experience. The methodology was designed using the case study methodology, which is a deep focus on a bounded system, individual o process. (Jones, Torres and Arminio, 2013). This entails a case study because it is focusing on a specific and limited community. Merriam (1998) defined it as an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" which goes farther than simply limiting the boundaries of the case of analysis. Merriam describes three types of case studies: pluralistic, descriptive, and heuristic. The approach for this research was the descriptive case study since it is emphasizing on the description of the specific phenomenon within a specific group and presenting it as a narrative.

1.4.1 Data collection and analysis

• In–depth Semi-structured interviews: qualitative semi-structured interviews were performed with fifteen individual participants and community leaders to deepen on aspects of social cohesion and construct an understanding through the individual experience. The semi-structured method allowed the researcher to search for the information relevant to the topic while allowing for different experiences to be shared through each participant's perspective. Interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and later transcribed and translated. For the interviews, two college students participated as a research assistant to meet in person with the interviewees and connect online with the main researcher, as well as serve as translators when the main language was Tzutuhil.

Participants were individual women between 20 and 77 years old of Santiago Atitlan that participated voluntarily. They were invited through personal connections and word of mouth. Participants were adults of Mayan Tz'utujil ethnicity. 14 individuals

participated in the individual interviews done online with the researcher and a local research assistant.

Interviews with community leaders: Two community leaders were interviewed at the beginning and during the research to obtain general information about the community and their perception of social changes and the implications of the pandemic for community life in Santiago Atitlan. They are identified through their involvement in the community through social organizations and participate voluntarily.

- Secondary data: Secondary data was used to contextualize the community of Santiago Atitlan, using government data and independent reports; including demographic data, national COVID–19 pandemic data.

The methodology is descriptive to explore the data rather than interpret to present the perspective from the interviewees. Data is analyzed through a coding qualitative methodology to identify categories and topics from the participants' answers. The interviews were transcribed and read multiple times to codify the data. The codes were developed based on the interviewees' answers rather than pre-set categories.

1.4.2 Limitations and Positionality

I am a Guatemalan ladino (non–indigenous) woman from Guatemala City and I have had a very different experience of being a woman in Guatemala than the interviewed women. I have worked for the past five years in Sololá with indigenous girls and women, so I have a close relationship with women in Santiago Atitlán, some of which participated in the study or facilitated contacts and information. My experience in working in Sololá has allowed me to see the differences of life experiences for indigenous women in Guatemala, but I attempt to take a position on an external subject and tell their stories from their perspective and not from my interpretation. However, it also posed some challenges for the development of the research.

First of all, I was living in The Netherlands during the time of the Pandemic and was not able to participate in the interviews in person. Due to the lack of access to technology, two research assistants were hired to conduct the interviews in person while I participated through online communication platforms. Had I been in person I would have been able to take a more directive interview approach and go deeper into some issues and questions. Secondly, with older participants who have little knowledge of Spanish, the interview was conducted in Tzu'tujil by the research assistants, a language that I am not fluent in. Translations poser another limitation to the interpretation of data as I worked from the translations done by the assistants and it also limited my participation in the interview. To ensure credibility, however, the translations were worked by the two assistants to increase the validity of the data.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Intersectionality

This research is done from a feminist intersectional perspective as it aims to understand the complexities of indigenous women as it relates to gender issues, race, ethnicity and other dimensions. Intersectionality, according to Blige (2010) "reflects a transdisciplinary theory aimed at apprehending the complexity of social identities and inequalities through an integrated approach" and it rejects the idea of compartmentalization of axes of social differentiation. It attempts to go beyond the recognition of different systems of oppression and rather look into how the interplay as social inequalities.

Indigenous women, as mentioned above, are one of the most vulnerable and discriminated populations in Guatemala in terms of poverty, level of education, ethnicity, gender, and others. It is then of high importance to consider this research in the light of intersectionality to understand how these intersections put them at a higher risk of impact from the COVID–19 Pandemic and it's measures, as well as identify areas where indigenous women will be resilient and thrive amidst the crises.

2.2 Vulnerability

Hilhorst and Bankoff (2013) argue that to understand vulnerability we need to take into account people's experiences and perceptions, which is why this research takes a qualitative methodology to explore the women's perceptions and experiences. Vulnerability as a term has had complex and diverse definitions in literature as it is understood by theorists and practitioners in multiple disciplines from engineering and geography, to anthropology, sociology and development to global health and environmental sciences. Additionally, it is complex in how multiple vulnerabilities are placed on top of others and play dynamic roles (Wisner, 2016; p. 7). Wisner (2004; p.11) defines vulnerability as the "characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard (an extreme natural event or process). Oliver–Smith (in Lyon, 2018; p.82) defines vulnerability as "the extent to which a community, household, or individual is either susceptible or resilient to the impact of the natural hazards within given socioecological system". Similarly, Alexander (2016; p.196) highlights that vulnerability "encompasses factors that affect the degree to which a household's livelihood, property, and other assets are put at risk by identifiable events that occur in nature or society" and it relates to the resilience which a how a household or community will use to able to cope, resist and adapt to the threat or hazard.

Hilhorst and Bankoff (2013) propose two levels of vulnerability, on the basic one as it relates to poverty, resources and marginalization and at a more complex level as the "diversity of risks generated by the interplay between local and global processes and coping with them on a daily basis". Vulnerabilities change and intensify and the ability to cope diminishes. The complexities of local and global realities call for multiple definitions and understandings as well as diverse solutions. Vulnerability engages with social security and sustainable livelihoods and relates how individuals and communities cope with risk, uncertainty and insecurity in their lives. The second level relates to Cannon's (1994) argument that social processes make some people more exposed to disasters than others and is related to power relations in societies. His work with disaster vulnerability finds that some hazards are natural but that disasters are not and human systems put people at different levels of risk than others; it is such conditions of the people or communities that makes a hazard into a disaster. Vulnerability in this frame, refers to such relationship at an

individual, household, community or society's level. It is complex and is derived from the interaction of factors like class, gender and ethnicity. Cannon's model of vulnerability analysis parts from the idea that the environment provides both opportunities and risks, but that both are distributed unequally, which can be influenced by class, gender and ethnicity among others and are maintained by social systems and power relations and by political and economic systems at a national or international level (p.15). Vulnerability is more concerned with how such systems put people at different levels of risk towards hazards. Sischaraneco (2018) also observed powerlessness and anxiety from a sense of weakness associated with vulnerability and uncertainty.

Cannon (1994) divides vulnerability in three components: livelihood resilience refers to the "degree of resilience of the particular livelihood system of an individual or group and their capacity for resisting the impact of a hazard" and it reflects economic resilience and the ability to recover from the event. Secondly is the health component that relates to aspects of the individuals as well as social measures like preventive medicine or access to health. And the third component of vulnerability is de preparedness of the person or group, like available protection which depends on individual capabilities as well as social factors (p.19).

While, disaster planning and prevention focuses mainly on preparedness to design preventive interventions, and the health aspect relates to the health factor of COVID–19, this research focuses primarily on livelihood resilience in the community and individuals. I will use vulnerability not as an intrinsic characteristic but as an outcome of social relations as defined by Hilhorst and Bankoff (2013), in a way that is also dynamic and evolutionary (Lewis, 1999).

2.3 Resilience

Various authors find resilience and vulnerability interrelated and need to be understood together. Resilience emerges from vulnerability and how individuals and groups deal with situations of risk and levels of control (Wood, 2018). Tucker and Nelson (2017) relate resilience to vulnerability to explain the amount of change a system can go through while maintaining its function and ability to develop. Rijanta (2008) describes conditions and sources of capital that foster livelihood resilience like natural, physical, human, social and financial capital, which includes land ownership, machinery, human resources.

Sischaraneco (2018; p.2) argues that through trust and informal relationships entrepreneurs that experience fragility and vulnerability are able to cope with such risks. In her research, she uses vulnerability in association, not to marginalized populations, but to the insecurity of the market economy in exploitation and employment. She cites Mistzal (in Sischaraneco, 2018) relates vulnerability to "fragile and emotional aspects of human lives".

Lyon (2018; p.83) found that social relationships and support were critical to resilience for vulnerable coffee farmers. Duffy, Wood, Whyte, Yell and Carroll (2016) use the definition of Maguire and Cartwright of resilience defined as "the capacity of an individual, community, or environmental system to cope with stress, overcome adversity, and or/adapt positively to change". The authors in their research again highlight social cohesion as an element that facilitates resilience from the sense of engagement of the individuals to the communities and the feeling of facing challenges collectively. Trust and partnerships also relate to the ability to recover from crisis.

Kim and Kim (2016; p.227) highlights external factors like economic and political reforms and internal factors like hope and faith as a source of resilience. They point to religion as a possible source of community organization and resilience when beliefs are used as motivators for action. Osborne, Grant–Smith, and Morgan (2016) point to community

participation as a fosterer of resilience, from planification to response and recovery interventions. However, they also describe community–driven interventions that are performed outside the governance pathway which may be described as insurgent and that may result in exclusion of the participants.

Alexander (2016; p.196) identifies four key elements of resilience which are: "capacity of learning and adaptation, ability of a system to self–organize, competence for maintaining functions and feedbacks following stresses, and at the household level, the means by which households access physical, social, or emotional resources to cope with climate–related events". According to Alexander (2016;p. 203) social connectedness and neighborhood cohesion improved community resilience to deal with vulnerabilities, and to respond to hazard events, even when asking for help of family or friends was not their first choice. It also helped the community organize efficiently in crisis and it can also help impulse learning of effective coping behaviors.

2.4 Informal economy

The majority of people in Latin America, as is Guatemala, are part of the informal economy as a livelihood subsistence. Publications around informality highlight the vulnerability and risks, as well as opportunities, but it is important to first conceptualize the concept of informality and understand what informality looks like in regions like Santiago Atitlan. Research on the informal sector and informal employment started being used in the 1970's by publications from Keith Hart and the International Labor Organization although it's research can be found since the 50's and 60's in various publications from the Global South like Indonesia, Africa and Latin America (Charmes, 2019; p.13). Keith Hart (1971) proposed a typology which classified economic opportunities in formal income opportunities, informal income opportunities legitimate and illegitimate. Legitimate income opportunities included primary and secondary activities (farming, market, building contractors, artisans, etc.), tertiary enterprises (housing, transport, rentier activities), small–scale distribution (market operatives, caterers, etc.), other services (musicians, barbers, middlemanship, etc.) and private transfer payments (gifts, goods transfer, borrowing, begging).

The term informal economy is often associated with poverty and livelihood, as well as discussions about economic drag through tax evasion (OECD/ILO, 2019; p. 15). However, (Chen 2012; p5) highlights that informality is primarily characterized by the absence of any form of state regulation, such as taxes, social security, etc. either through employment or units of production. The International Labor Organization reports on the vulnerabilities of the informal economy arguing that it "characterized by small or undefined workplaces, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, low levels of skills and productivity, low or irregular incomes, long working hours and lack of access to information, markets, finance, training and technology" (n.d.).

Charmes (2019) identifies three approaches to the study of informality: the dualist approach, structuralist approach and legalist approach. The dualist approach was presented by the ILO in 1972 which separates it from the formal sector, a separate economy. The structuralist approach proposed by Castells and Portes in 1989 "treats the informal economy as a segment subordinated to the formal economy"(p.16). And the legalist approach, proposed by De Soto, defines it as a response to overregulation of the economy and bureaucracy. While this paper does not attempt to identify the causes of informality, but its vulnerabilities in the crisis, it is relevant to observe how it is approached in development studies. It is, however, important to highlight the resolution of 1993 adopted by the International Conference of Labor Statisticians as quoted by Charmes (2019; p. 17) "activities

performed by production units of the informal sector are not necessarily performed with the deliberate intention of evading the payment of tases or social security contributions, or infringing labor or other legislations or administrative provisions. Accordingly, the concept of informal sector activities should be distinguished from the concept of activities of the hidden or underground economy". This relates to the initial typology of Hart which separated legal and illegal informal economic activities.

Informality can look different in various communities and systems and is rather heterogeneous. The report from the OECD/ILO (2019; p. 16) portrays some general characteristics or key point, starting with the fact that it affects most of the workers in the world and is the norm is most developing and emerging economies. In developing economies, 70% of employment is in the informal sector, while in developed economies is at 18%. Agriculture represents a sector with most informal workers, however excluding agriculture labor, informal employment still reaches 50% of the workers. Up to 94% of workers in agriculture are in the informal sector. It also reports that the informal sector affects differently to various populations. Rural population are more likely to be in the informal sector, and it is a higher source of employment for men (OECD/ILO, 2019; p.16).

Informality poses risks and vulnerabilities particularly to already vulnerable populations like women, children, rural population and poor. Informal workers are at higher risk of poverty, 42% of workers in informal economy are poor. Additionally, it poses higher risk of dangerous working conditions. Although, more men are working in informal employment, women are higher risks and vulnerabilities (OECD/ILO, 2019; p.20). As such, it is also important to go deeper into the gender dimension of informality and how it affects men and women differently. In low–income countries, 92% of employed women do so in the informal sector, in Latin America it is more common for women to be in informal economy than men. Additionally, women are more often found in the lower parts of the informal employment hierarchy, therefore putting them at a higher vulnerability for low payment, unfair and unsafe conditions.

2.5 Social Cohesion

Traditionally it is understood that where there are high associational activities through trust and reciprocity within a community, there is a higher capacity to take collective action and proper civic engagement. There seem to be multiple definitions and interpretations to the term of social cohesion. Chan et al (2006; 291) defined social cohesion as a "state of affairs concerning both the vertical and horizontal interactions among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help as well as their behavioral manifestations. In this sense, social cohesion is a characteristic of a society, community or group and not of the members individually.

Definitions of Social Cohesion come from two perspectives: first the academic and second on development policy. The academic perspective comes from sociology and social psychology and it focuses on being a part of a whole and having a sense of trust and solidarity. The Development Policy perspective is more focused on the application of the term and how to measure it (Chan, 2006).

According to Noyoo (2013), Durkheim was one of the first sociologists to talk about social cohesion, in relation to solidarity which binds societies together and that it is collective consciousness that allows for group solidarity to exist and for members to feel as part of a collective. Friedkin (2004; 412–413) relates it to the individual participation and intention of being part and remaining in the group. He adds that groups are cohesive when the interpersonal interactions of the members work to maintain the relationships and

conditions that produce positive attitudes and behaviors within the group. These attitudes and behaviors can relate to the willingness to remain in the group, identification, loyalty, and commitment.
Because of the diverse interpretations of the concept, the Expert Workshop on Social Cohesion on 2012, defined it as the "quality of social cooperation and togetherness of a collective, defined in geopolitical terms, that is expressed in the attitudes and behaviors of its members" (Dragolov, 2016; 6). They defined cohesion through three domains: social relations, connectedness and focus on the common good.

Schiefer and Van der Noll (2017; 10) studied diverse literature on social cohesion from academic writing to policy reports and defined six dimensions in common from different authors about social cohesion: social relations, identification, orientation towards the common good, shared values, quality of life, and inequality. Although social cohesion and social capital seem to be a universal component of society, how it is understood, created, maintained and destroyed needs to be understood through context (Cloete, 2014).

In Chan's (2006; 289) definition of social cohesion he considers the main interpretation of cohesion as 'sticking together', for which three criteria are key: (1) the ability to trust and cooperate with other members of the society, (2) sharing of a common identity and belonging and (3) subjective feelings mentioned in criteria 1 and 2 are manifested in objective behaviors. He adds also the importance of repeated interactions, and a single action will not be enough to build trust therefore cohesion.

Easterly, Ritzan and Woolcock (2006) see social cohesion as a way of building stronger institutions and therefore benefiting economic growth through stronger economic institutions. They define social cohesion as "the nature and extent of social and economic divisions within society". The authors quote Judith Maxwell who argued that social cohesion is the process of building shared values and encouraging people to feel as members of the community, being engaged and facing challenges collectively (ibid., p.4). Social Cohesion might also be important in community resilience and how societies respond to crisis to overcome it. How people work together to respond to crisis, will shape economic performance during and afterwards (Easterly, et. al, 2006; p.4).

Chapter 3 Contextualizing the Community of Santiago Atitlan

3.1 Guatemala, a story of Inequality

Guatemala is a multi-ethnic and diverse country with high potential for social and economic development but that is constantly ranking low for all areas of human development in Latin–America. According to the World Bank (2020), it has achieved economic stability and increasing its GDP growth since 2017, but that is not translated to better living conditions for its population which sees high economic and social inequalities. Additionally, it is expected to see a significant decrease in its growth in 2020 due to the COVID–19 Pandemic.

A small country with a population of 15 million, 41.7% is identified as Indigenous Mayan, and 56% as Ladino or mestizo; 2.10% are of a different ethnic background: Xinka, Garifuna or Afro-descendant, 30% of the country's Ladino population is in the department of Guatemala. Poverty is closely linked to ethnicity, where 79.2% of the indigenous population are poor and 46.6% of non–indigenous people are in poverty; similarly, 76.1% of rural populations live in poverty while 42.1 of urban do (INE, 2018).

There seem to be "two Guatemalas" (World Bank, 2020) where one is urban, not indigenous and non-poor and the other is poor, rural, and indigenous. Large gaps of inequality are observed in all areas of living and put one population in more vulnerability for issues like nutrition, access to education, health, food security, violence, and access to technology. In 2014 (INE; 21), the highest-earning quintile owned 57.3% of the nation's total capital, while the lowest quintile owned only 3.3%, the Gini Coefficient was measured ad 0.53. Indigenous peoples are 1.7 more likely to be poor than the rest of the population.

Inequality is also related to land ownership and formal and informal economies. Urban areas are more likely to participate in formal employment than people in rural communities. Only 18% of workers are employed in a formal position and access social protection, compared to 82% that work in the informal economy and don't have social protection services (Sanchez, Kinnon, and Lopez, 2016). Something that seems to be shared by these two diverse contexts is the lack of trust in public institutions and weak institutions (Sanchez, Kinnon, and Lopez, 2016).

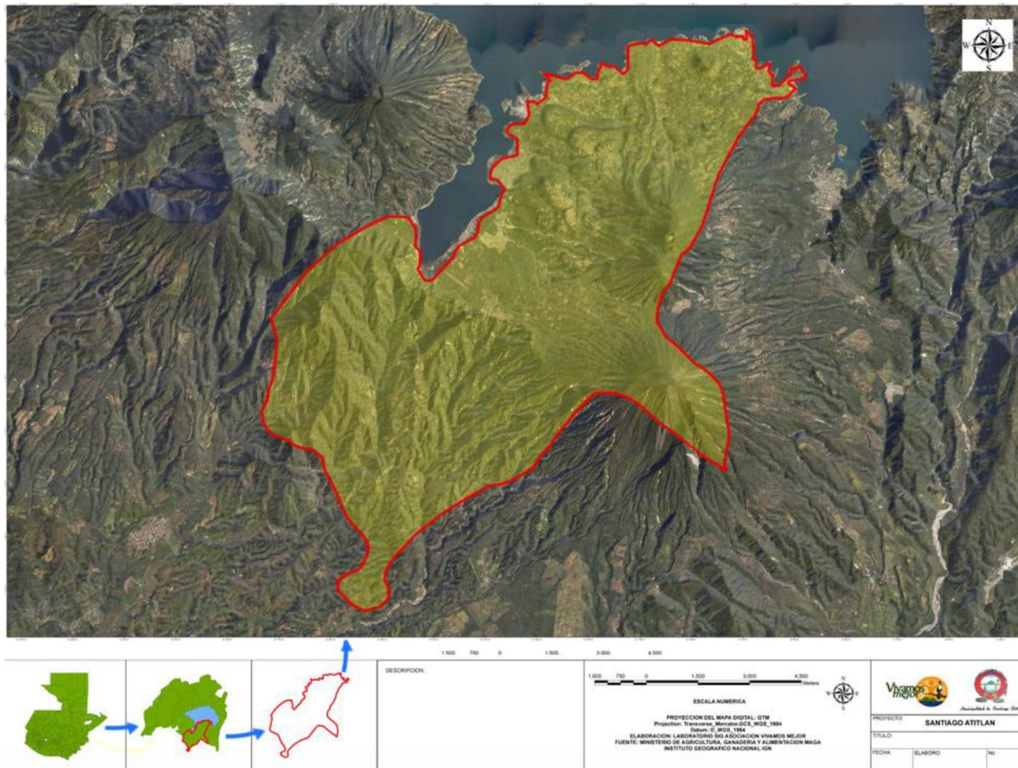
The Human Development Index (HDI) measures progress in three dimensions: health, education, and economic income across time. The HDI for Guatemala in 2014 was 0.49, which increased from 0.42 in 2000, but that it's significant increase was only in the years 2000–2006 (0.48). For income, the HDI was 0.651, 0.461 for education, and 0.397 for health. In terms of ethnicity, the HDI is significantly less for indigenous peoples (0.339) than non–indigenous (0.546). The difference of socioeconomic level is also significant, where people on low economic stratum has an HDI of 0.339 compared to the 0.897 of high economic stratum (Municipality of Santiago Atitlan, 2012, INE, 2014).

In Guatemala, 53.4% of women under the age of 25 had at least one child. 7.9% of the population over 19 reached higher education. The total of the population that had achieved educational level reduced from 32.9 in 2002 to 28.7% in 2018 (INE, 2014).

3.2 Santiago Atitlán, capital of the Tz'utujil Kingdom

The municipality is located within the Department of Sololá in the Southwest region of the country, at 147 km from the country's capital city. With a geographic area is of 136 km² it is

the largest municipality surrounding Lake Atitlan, which is today one of Guatemala's main tourist destinations.



Map 1– Location of Santiago Atitlan (Municipality of Santiago Atitlan, 2012; p.10)

The population of Santiago Atitlan is 41,877 inhabitants according to the 2018 census (INE, 2018), and are mostly (97.41%) indigenous from a Mayan Tz'utujil descent. Its population is mostly young, with 81% estimated to be 39 years old or younger, and 51% female and 49% male. Its population density is estimated at 338 inhabitants per square kilometer (INE. 2018). Its population on an active age (15–64) is 66.74%. Today, Santiago Atitlan is also home to a large number of expatriates living around Lake Atitlan and a tourist destination (Giralt, 2012).

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a measure of its population access to health, education, and income. In Sololá, the HDI in 2014 was 0.455, compared to the national of 0.492. Per each component, the HDI was 0.402 for health, 0.424 for education, and 0.552 for income (PNUD, 2015). The last measure of the HDI per municipality is that of 2006, wherein Santiago the overall HDI was of 0.576, and 0.854 for health, 0.342 for education, and 0.532 for income (UNDP, 2015) 79.8% of its population lives in poverty (Municipality of Santiago Atitlán, 2012).

Access and quality of education continue to be a problem. The average age of studies for a population over 15 years old is of 4.16 years of schooling, and 37.5% of its inhabitants are illiterate compared to the 18.5% at a national level(INE, 2018). In terms of gender, it is a patriarchal community, where men own 67% of the houses, although 55% of families reported making decisions together (male and female) (INE, 2018).

According to the Municipal plan for Development, developed by the municipality and civic organizations (Municipality of Santiago Atitlan, 2012), Santiago follows a model of people and nature exploitation for economic gain, "based on competition and hoarding; instead of cooperation and distribution (p.36)", which reinforces poverty. There are low investment and innovation on productivity and economic activities produce a low financial profit. Its economic activity is based primarily on agriculture and fishing (45%) followed by

commerce (26%), crafts (15%), where commerce and crafts are highly impacted by tourism (ibid, 37).

Access to technology and information is still very limited in Santiago Atitlan. According to the 2018 census (INE, 2018), 45% of the population over 7 years old does not use a cell phone, 85% does not use a computer and 81% does not use the internet. Giralt (2012) reflects on how a traditional community like the Tz'utujil people, now with more access to technology and information, are combining it with traditional measures of healing. Most of the commercial and economic activity is done in the municipal market, which sells anything from agricultural products, processed food, grains, textiles, and industrial materials (Municipalidad de Santiago Atitlán, 2012).

3.2.1 Historical background

Santiago Atitlan was once the capital of the Tz'utujil Kingdom and was referred to as Atitlan, which means "between volcanoes". Today, it is a municipality that has faced challenges collectively and with a strong sense of identity and guided by traditional values and culture (Mendizabal, 2009; p. 25). Atitlan was the capital of the Tz'utujil kingdom previous to the arrival of the Spanish during the colonization of Latin-America. The Franciscan friars renamed the town Santiago Atitlan and named Santiago Apostol as their patron (ibid, p.).

The Tz'utujil Kingdom was one of the three main Mayan kingdoms in the Guatemalan highlands along with the K'iches and Kaqchikel. Being nearby around what is today Lake Atitlán, there were constant territorial battles before colonial times (Christenson, 2001). Although, Carlsen (1996) argues that they were not constituted as kingdoms, but each language region had several separate communities under the chinamit system. Coche (2020) argues that the Tz'utujil people have always been known to be fighters and that they were in constant struggles especially with the Kaqchikel people. The community was moved from its previous location to where it is today so that the friars could have more control and give the catholic teachings (Mendizabal, 2009; p.26). According to Carlsen (1996; p.5), the Spanish allowed the maintenance of the Mayan precolonial structure as it was because it allowed them to facilitate the tribute recollection for the crown. However, the leaders used the structure and position of power to spread rumors about the Spaniards and Catholic doctrine. The community was organized by the Cacique at the head and followed by the elders. With the Spanish domination, the position of the elders remained as a figure of power, unlike the Cacique because the people were no longer allowed to pay tribute (Mendizabal, 2009; p.27).

The Spaniards instated the cofradías system across the indigenous communities to facilitate tribute recollection and integrate the population for the church. The cofradías became not only a social organization structure but also the system for religious syncretism (Carlsen, 1996; p.6). After the Guatemalan independence in 1821, rural areas like Santiago Atitlan remained in the hands of Indian villages; more than 70 percent of the land was in hands of indigenous communities. The newly independent Guatemalan elite was following an enlightenment liberal period, which prioritized rationalization and rejected tradition and cultural beliefs. The key element for the liberal success to put Guatemala as a growing economy was going to be agriculture development in the rural sector but their ideals were rejected by Mayan communities who saw it as land theft. With the growth of coffee as Guatemala's main commodity, liberal land reforms dominated the policy to extract communal owned lands. Decree 170 in 1877 allowed for any communal land to be privatized, which but the Mayan population at risk being that their land was traditionally worked as communal. By 1950, land ownership changed dramatically and 88 of farming units owned

only 14 percent of the land, including in Santiago Atitlan where most of the communal land was privatized in fincas. It also made the population vulnerable to underpaid labor, recruited through “debt peonage” (Carlsen, 1996; 149–151).

The following decades marked by exploitative labor practices, land extraction, and fast population growth led the Santiago Atitlán population to poverty, with little access to economic and social development. The same was happening across the country which led to the emergence of revolutionary guerilla groups who were recruited in rural towns like Santiago Atitlán, who was becoming fractionalized by the inability to sustain itself and diverse religious beliefs (Carlsen, 1996; 151–154).

Santiago Atitlan was gravely affected by the Civil War from 1970–1996, and its harm is still present in its memory. However, the community is filled with pride in belonging to a town that has fought collectively and maintained its historic traditions and culture. It is estimated that over 1700 people from the Tzutujil community were killed between 1980 and 1990 until the well–know massacre of 1990 (Mendizabal, 2009; p. 25). It is one of the biggest examples of resistance against the government and the military by indigenous communities during the civil war. Santiago Atitlan, known to be a self–organized community, had established their warning protocols and when the military approached bells and noise started spreading across the town which caused women and men of all ages to group and protest against the military and the violence caused in the years prior (Memorias del Silencio,). It is well described by Christenson (2001; p.XV):

“The violence culminated in the massacre of December 2, 1990. The day before, the garrison commander and a group of his soldiers had terrorized the community, raping the daughter of a local store owner and committing numerous thefts and acts of vandalism. When several thousand unarmed Atiteco men and women, with their children, gathered the next day to complain about recent abuses, soldiers from the nearby garrison opened fire. Thirteen died instantly and scores of others lay wounded. The incident drew immediate international condemnation, forcing the Guatemalan government to take the unprecedented step of withdrawing its military presence from the community".

The Tz’utujil people were victims of the civil war, but they remember how they stood up to the national army in 1990 and expelled them from the town, achieving a win when they signed an agreement with then-president, Vinicio Cerezo, to never have the military again in the town (Carlsen, 1996). Coche (2020) reflects on the massacre of 1990 as a reinforcer of the people’s resistance against the state, and how it lives in the town's memories. The town uses this agreement as a way to keep the military again every time they come to the town (Carlsen 1996), even in current times and despite any reason, like monitoring the COVID–19 measures (Coche, 2020).

Mendizabal defines it as a "fighter identity that maintains organization as their first front of the fight for their cultural, social and economic revindications" (p.25). Coche (2020) agrees with this statement, reflecting how the community maintains tradition and pride in their language and culture, but also a sense of collectiveness in fighting threats since before the colonial invasion and up to the civil war in the massacre of 1992. Although there is a high sense of identity and cultural preservation, it is wrong to think of the Mayan Tz'utujil community as foreign, isolated, or ancestral.

According to Coché (2020) after the conflict, there is a fragmentation of the social fabric as some people had sided with the military, others with the revolution, and others with neither. However, solidarity and social support stayed. Some fragmentation can also be observed in religious activities and beliefs. Tz’utujil culture combines modern practices, religious ideals, and economic trade, with traditional practices. There is high respect for hierarchy through aging, where the 'abuelos' or elders carry the lead, guided by the 'main elder'. The council of elders maintains a strong influence in municipal matters, next to the municipal government. Additionally, there is a structure of the municipal administration

that includes the mayor, the municipal council, community committees, and social organizations (Mendizabal, 2009; p. 25).

Chapter 4 Development of the COVID–19 Pandemic

The ongoing COVID–19 pandemic quickly became a global public health challenge as it has affected populations across the world, however, its impact is not only on health but largely on economic and social life with multidimensional implications for communities across the world. It is believed to have been originated in Wuhan, China in 2019, when it was first reported to the World Health Organization on December 31st. Its rapid diffusion and transmission caused alarm as it was quickly spreading to nearby countries (Chaplin, 2020). It is the fifth documented pandemic since the 1918 Spanish Flu (H1N1), assessed as such by the WHO in March 2020 (Liu, Kuo, and Shih, 2020). The impact of the Pandemic will be seen in health, the economy, social life, and politics.

The global response to COVID–19 Pandemic was based on slowing its rapid spread and focused on social distancing which is largely affecting social and economic life. According to the Global Economic Monitor (GEM), the world's economy will contract by 5.2%, with Developed Economies seeing a –7.0% GDP projected growth, –8.7% for the Eurozone, –6.5% for the United States, 0.5% for East Asia and the Pacific and –3.2 for Sub–Saharan Africa (ECLAC, 2020a; p.2).

COVID–19 is a disease highly influenced by geography and space. Medical geographers use the disease ecology approach to study it in the interaction of population, habitat, and behaviors (Finn, Pope, and Sarduy, 2020; p.169). Guidelines to address the contagion of the disease have been based on social and physical distancing which is also affecting social life. Human interaction has decreased significantly, and it can have a large impact on communities and social cohesion. However, it can also bring positive effects through trust and solidarity. Some countries are slowly starting to reopen their economic and social activity, but it will likely be changing as the virus continues to spread and the vaccine is still in development. Social resilience will be challenged by COVID–19 pandemic, not only in health but in "technological, demographic, economic, geopolitical and environmental changes" (Bardsley, 2020).

The impact of the Pandemic will be seen in social life, mental health, and political life and while it will affect all societies and economies, it will mark an abyss between advanced economies and the developing world. (Proaño, 2020). Its consequences will disproportionally affect disadvantaged populations both in advance and developing economies, being indigenous populations one of the most affected groups. According to Allen (2020), situations like the pandemic will also bring light to other social issues and the weak safety nets in society to be healthy.

McNeely, Schintler, and Stabile (2020; p2) use the term 'health equity' to refer the fairness and social justice when people have equal opportunity and identify social determinants that affect health inequity for vulnerable populations. Some of such determinants include health disparities, preexisting comorbidities, economic insecurity, and living conditions that put them at higher risk of contracting COVID–19. There will also be an impact on how we use technology and move to life online. However, there are different conditions in different countries and communities concerning access to technology and the internet.

4.1 COVID–19 in Latin America

Currently, Latin America is the region most affected by the COVID–19 Pandemic with the highest numbers of absolute and per capita cases (UNSDG, 2020). The economic limitation by the low fiscal balance, poor health systems to address the disease, high levels of inequality, and population density put the region in an unfavorable position to address the crisis in comparison to advanced economies (Proaño, 2020).

Lustig and Tomassi (2020) analyzed UNDP's countries reports for Latin America and found six areas where there was more impact reported concerning the measures taken to address the pandemic: income, health, domestic violence, food supplies, discrimination, overcrowding, and education. Loss of income was the most reported outcome as a source of concern and health issues like access to services and medication for vulnerable populations. Social impact issues include access to education with difficulty accessing virtual classes, an increase of domestic violence exacerbated by the long lockdowns, and higher consumption of drug and alcohol, and discrimination of minorities. Food supply was also a source of concern in many countries and it is related to loss of income, lack of local supplies, an increase in prices, and difficulty of social organizations to continue their operations.

Marked by high levels of ethnic inequality, indigenous people are the most affected population in the region with lower access to health services, high level of malnutrition, lower access to technology and information, poor access to water and sanitation, among others. Additionally, most information is published in major languages, building a barrier for linguistic minorities (UNSDG, 2020).

4.2 Economic Impact of COVID–19

Initially, it was estimated that the economic impact of the pandemic would be similar to that of the Great Recession of 2008 but is now estimated to be comparable to the Great Depression of 1930 (Proaño, 2020). In Guatemala, 19.8% of the population was living in extreme poverty in 2019, and 48.6 in poverty; this is expected to rise to 21.4 in extreme poverty and 50.5 in poverty in a medium scenario projection for 2020 (ECLAC, 2020b)

The economic growth in Latin America has been stalled in recent years, with the lowest (0.4%) recorded from 2014 to 2019 since 1951. The ECLAC estimated that the GDP for Latin America and the Caribbean could fall by 9.1% in 2020 mainly affected by the “fall in exports, decline in remittances and lower demand in the tourism sector (UNSDG, 2020 p.9)”, followed by an internal shock by the sudden stop in economic activities by lockdowns and social distancing measures affecting primarily the service sector and the informal workers.

Informal workers represent the highest sector of economic life in countries like Guatemala. They have a low saving capacity and a high risk of losing their jobs or sources of income and a lack of access to support systems. Women are more likely to be represented in the informal sector and pose a higher vulnerability to the economic shock as well as a health risk for not being able to follow social distancing measures (UNSDG, 2020; p. 10).

4.3 Social Impact of COVID–19

The pandemic will have a major impact in all areas of social life as a result of the disease and the prevention measures taken to slow contagion.

Latin America is a region with high levels of inequality and poverty, which are expected to rise during and after the Pandemic. The poverty rate is expected to rise from 30. % to 37.2% in 2020, and extreme poverty from 11.0% to 15.5% in the region; by the end of 2020 almost 34.7% of the population in Latin America will be living in poverty. The unemployment rate will rise by 5.4 percentage points, putting at higher risk people living in vulnerable settings and lower positions (UNSDG, 2020; p.12). Inequality, measured by the

Gini coefficient is also expected to rise in all of Latin America between 0.5% and 0.6%, putting the largest economies at a higher risk. (ECLAC, 2020b).

Social cohesion will likely be weakened, marked by a lack of trust in institutions and social discomfort (ECLAC, 2020b). The large levels of inequality in the region mean that groups are disproportionally affected by the health, social, and economic impact of the crisis. Some of the groups at a higher risk are: women, low–and lower-middle-income strata, informal workers, female paid domestic workers, children and adolescents, young people, older persons, rural population, indigenous peoples, afro descendants, persons with disabilities, migrants and homeless persons".

Unemployment rate: Unemployment has seen a rise in most countries due to the pandemic. Low–income and some middle–income countries do not have the safety–net to provide support for people who are losing their job in a formal or informal economy. The International Labor Organization (2020a) estimates that the equivalent of 400 million full–tie jobs was lost in the second quarter of 2020, which represents a 14% drop. Domestic workers are disproportionally affected, a sector dominated by women, which by June 2020 72.3% of domestic workers were significantly impacted (ILO, 2020b).

Food insecurity: Latin America is at risk of increasing food insecurity for vulnerable populations like the poor, rural, and indigenous.

Inequality: The pandemic will likely increase the inequality gap across various dimensions. More middle-income people are expected to go into poverty and people living in poverty will likely move to extreme poverty. There could be a rise in the gender equality gap in at-risk regions with the loss of jobs and income as well as racial inequality. Lack of access to technology also increases the gap in access to education for low–income families, which will have a long–term impact on equality levels (UNSDG, 2020).

Poverty rate: The poverty rate is expected to rise significantly across the world, but Latin America is one of the regions at a higher risk due to their levels of inequality and limited economic growth. Guatemala already has one of the worst poverty rates in the region and will increase it by 2020.

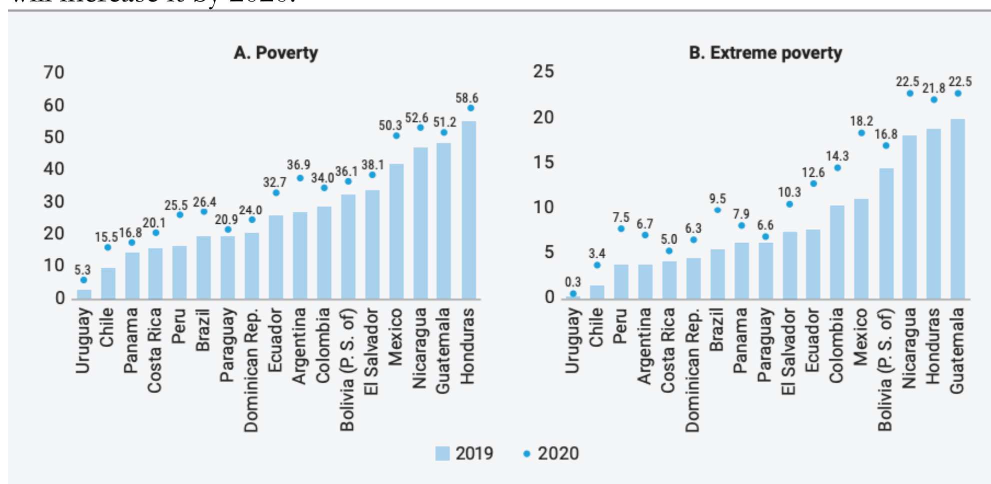


Figure 1– Population living in poverty and extreme poverty, 2019, and 2020 (%). (Estimations from ECLAC on UNSDG, 2020; p.12)

Mental Health: The COVID–19 crisis poses a threat to mental health across communities, especially due to the breakdown of social relationships, the psychological impact of fear, and an increase in fatalities (Osofsky, Osofsky, Mamon, and Kendall–Tackett; 2020).

Domestic violence: Isolation and social distancing measures there has been an increase in the call for help concerning domestic violence for women and children due to the increase of time spent at home with family members and increased emotional pressure (Anurduran, et al. 2020).

Child labor: Chid labor is likely to increase during the Pandemic due to the economic difficulties and loss of income. The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2020) indicates that the pandemic puts children at risk of being forced to work or participate in hazardous economic activities, due to the loss of income and food security. Girls are at risk of higher demands of domestic activity. The risk is also exacerbated by the fact that children are not attending school and spending more time at home.

4.4 COVID–19 in Guatemala and Santiago Atitlan

Guatemala saw its first case of COVID–19 in March of 2020 and by August 2020 has diagnosed 64,881 accumulated cases and 9052 actives, out of those 2,467 deaths have been registered according to the official government data at the Ministry of Health and Social Provision (MSPAS, 2020). The incidence in Santiago Atitlan in August 2020 is 145.4 per 100,000 inhabitants compared to the 384.9 at the national level, and the second highest in the region of Sololá. Sololá also represents one of the departments with a higher mortality rate due to COVID–19 (Solano, 2020). This may be caused by the lack of access and poor health services, as well as characteristics of the population like diabetes and malnutrition. The first confirmed cases in Santiago were on May 10th, 2020 and increased to 60 cases by the end of June which represented an incidence of 136.3 per 100000 habitants, compared to an incidence of 43.9 in the rest of Sololá. The strict measures established at the municipal level, by the local government and community organization helped slow the spread, with implied and intense lockdown and without the possibility of going in or outside of the municipality. This caused the spread to slow and barely any growth was observed from June to August 2020; unfortunately, in late August, the national institutions observed a rise in the department of Sololá which implies a risk for Santiago.

Social distancing measures were taken since March, which has caused economic difficulties in a region highly dependent on the informal and everyday economy. Civil organizations and volunteers developed campaigns to support people with food during the quarantine. The government social assistance was given through online registration and their electricity contract; however, the most needed families could not reach it because they don't have access to any of those means (Giron, 2020).

The measures taken by the president were adopted or reinforced by the mayor at the municipal level. They started in mid–March when the first cases were reported in Guatemala, and it was informed as a set of recommendations for people to wash their hands, limit their social interaction, eat more vegetables and wash their food. At the end of March, they were limiting the opening times of the municipal market, measuring the temperature at the entrance, and organizing the municipality by shifts for days they could go to the market. This was done by 'cantons' (small communities) and remained this way for weeks, where every week they posted a calendar of which canton could come on what days. People from each canton would receive a colored ticket that would allow them into the market, and it was done at limited times per day. According to Mendoza (personal communication, 2020), vendors were not happy and protesting because they were not selling enough, and the food was being wasted. However, the measures stayed the same and they had to adapt to fewer sales per day.

In May Santiago had their first cases and it was rapidly increasing. The hospital was not prepared, and they campaigned for donations of protective gear for the nurses and doctors. That was when the municipality went into full lockdown. It was not allowed to go in or out of the town, the market was closed completely, people were asked to go out only on the necessity and use a mask, and there was no movement allowed from 6:00 pm to 5:00 am. Food vendors from the market were allowed to sell in their house but not use the

street. The parks and public spaces were also closed to the public (Municipality of Santiago Atitlan, 2020). Coche (2020) comments that it was neighbor solidarity that helped people that were not able to go to work, and volunteers who organized food donations. Mendoza (2020) points to the role of churches and non–profits to organize donations to families. In June, the market reopened again with turns and tickets as well as small businesses. Mobilization was allowed during the day, but people were not allowed to move on Sunday, which was a national policy. It was not until July that mobilization was allowed in and outside town, so people were allowed to come back or go to other towns for work or visit. Churches reopened, each being in charge of their own measures. According to Mendoza (2020) since July, people seem more relaxed with measures including the use of facemasks and seem to be going back to normal activities. Since the informal economy is the major form of subsistence, people are back to their daily activities but continue with limited restriction time. Most events are still canceled.

Chapter 5 Experiences of living through the Pandemic

Wisner refers to vulnerability as the capacity or ability of a group to cope, resist, and recover from a hazard, in this case the pandemic. It is argued that poor and indigenous people are one of the vulnerable groups towards the disease due to the poor of access to health, malnutrition, overwcrowding and inability to avoid work (CITA). De Leon–Martínez, et. al. (2020) identified vulnerabilities of indigenous populations in Mexico, like migration, language barriers, ability to stay at home, digital breach, environment issues, and preexistent health conditions. However, indigenous communities are also vulnerable to social and economic consequences resulting of government guidelines and measures taken to slow the disease contagion.

5.1 Economic Impact of COVID–19

The economic impact of the COVID–19 Pandemic will affect communities all across the world, in developed and underdeveloped economies. Guatemala, a country with high levels of poverty and inequality will be gravely affected, especially for indigenous communities who represent a large percentage of people in poverty. In Guatemala, 19.8% of the population was living in extreme poverty in 2019, and 48.6 in poverty; this is expected to rise to 21.4 in extreme poverty and 50.5 in poverty in a medium scenario projection for 2020 (ECLAC, 2020b). 79.2% of indigenous people in the country live in poverty.

Economic difficulties were the aspect that was most relevant for the interviewed women is how their income and economy was affected by the sudden measures of the pandemic. Some of them point this as their bigger struggle, rather than health or social issues. Almost all of the women, except for one, reported significant economic struggles during the pandemic related to loss of a job, difficulty selling their crafts and products, or inability to perform their work. These first statements illustrate the economic vulnerability experienced by women who are hardly able to sustain the crisis. The vulnerability refers to the degree to which a group or community are able to cope with the hazard (Wisner, 2004), however, these stories show that their economic condition does not allow them to follow the guidelines while ensuring their livelihood.

“When the pandemic started, we didn’t have more opportunity to find jobs to subsist, there were no opportunities like for the merchants or farmers, and the ones who used to employ people for a day could not hire anymore because of their economic situation” (#10, female, 25 years old).

“My husband’s boss asked him to take the COVID test each week and he didn’t have money to pay for the consult and after two or three weeks he lost his job”. (#1, female, 41 years old, female, 41 years old)

Most of them, as is common in indigenous communities, work in the informal economy which puts them at a higher risk of economic struggles and more vulnerable to food insecurity. Their stories show that very few of them had labor protection and their work either stopped completely or they weren't able to do it and sell it which caused significant difficulties. Informal workers represent the highest sector of economic life in countries like Guatemala. They have a low saving capacity and a high risk of losing their jobs or sources of income and a lack of access to support systems.

> “I lost my job and then my husband, for a while it was hard because we had not lived something like this before. When there was no pandemic, I had a boss where

I worked but now that she is not selling she doesn't hire me for embroidery… my husband is a merchant ... and they wouldn't let him into the town to sell… People do not have money and they do not want to buy, the same is happening here" (entrevista11).

"I am a student but sometimes I make textiles to earn some money for my family, but no one was buying anything because there were no tourists so I couldn't sell" (female, 20)

"My dad …had no income. My mom makes textiles, but people are not buying them" (female, 24).

Vulnerabilities in the informal sector can range from lack of protective services and low income to dangerous working conditions (ILO, n.d.), but the experience of the interviewed women show irregular incomes, lack of access to market nd finance, and undefined workplaces which put them at an economic risk. Women are more likely to be represented in the informal sector and pose a higher vulnerability to the economic shock as well as a health risk for not being able to follow social distancing measures (UNSDG, 2020; p. 10).

5.1.1. Food security

People living in poverty are at a higher risk of not having the necessary resources to buy or even grow their food. The issues related to food security according to the interview women are (1) loss of income for buying food, (2) rise in prices of basic products, and (3) inability to grow their food. Cannon (1994) discussed livelihood resilience to refer to how a system copes with a hazard and is able to resist in terms of their livelihoods, where food security plays a significant role. In their stories, women tell about the risk to their food security withing the first weeks of the lockdown and social distancing measures, which highlights the poor livelihood resilience experienced by the community.

Corn is one of the most consumed produces in the community, one of the women tells that the price of this basic food was rising while their income was going down: "I didn't know the crisis my family was going to face, and the price for the corn was going up. There were some days when we would not have anything to eat… my dad has grown some beans and that helped us. My mom would try to sell that to the neighbors" (#6, female, 34 years old). A mother of five young children describes a fear for food bigger than the fear of the disease: "I was worried about the food for my daughters, and I thought that it would kill us (#1, female, 41 years old)

Other women use saved food or homegrown products to feed their families, while this shows a higher livelihood resilience it is not enough to sustain large periods of absence of work or income. A woman who lost her job as an embroider artisan tells that she received help from her former boss in food as a way to sustain her family; corn and beans continue to be important meals. "Thanks to God I had things saved in my house, like beans… and corn, and that is what we ate… the boss of where I used to work gave me products of daily consumption, like beans and I was happy because I was able to overcome it" (#11 female, 50 years old)

Another family was able to use some of their homegrown produce to sell and receive some income. Here it is the mother who ventures as a saleswoman. "In my family, I'm the only one who brings an income, and when work was suspended, my dad who is a farmer had grown vegetables. My mom was able to sell some of it and the rest we would eat" (#7, female, 27 years old)

5.1.2. Market

The market came out as a relevant topic concerning social interactions and economic exchange which was affected by the measures. As it is in most towns in Guatemala, the market takes a central position within the municipality, usually next to the Municipal Government office and the main Church. In Latin America, the town marketplace becomes a centre of commerce, trade and social interaction (Seligman, 2000).
The weekly changes to government guidelines published by the municipality always mentioned the market, which points out to the importance it has for the community. The guidelines associated with the marketplace, changed from publishing weekly schedules according to localities and completely closing down for weeks. The measures started by dividing the municipality into cantons and giving them entrance cards or tickets for a specific day in the market, which would limit the number of people inside. This was already causing difficulties to the merchants who had few clients each day. "When the market shut closed down we had our cards in order and following directions, I was going to the market because I had to sell and they gave me a card that said I was a saleswoman. I had lemons and they were not selling at home so I had to go to the market to sell them"(#8, female, 47 years old)

As the cases grew, the market shut down completely which caused vendors to stop earning an income. "When the market closed it was hard because I didn't have anywhere to sell, but my husband encouraged me saying it was for our own good so we wouldn't get sick". (#4, female, 35 years old) The mayor authorized the sales to happen at each vendor's house but most of them say this didn't happen because of fear from the rest of the people. “You couldn’t sell in the market because it was closed, and people were afraid to shop a people’s houses” (#2, female, 57 years old)

However, even when most of them report following the guidelines to avoid getting sick, they also say that if a second wave was coming they would not follow it in the same way: “Now people say it is better without the cards because the sales are better and that they would not do it that way again if the mayor asked”(#1, female, 41 years old)

According to the Municipality of Santiago Atitlán (2012), the region's economic activity is based on agriculture and fishery (45%), commerce (26%), and crafts (15%), the last two being largely influenced by tourism. The interviews reflected these areas as the most affected as well, either through the woman's work or their husbands or fathers. While initially the measures were allowing for different forms of sales, it wasn’t enough to guarantee an income to usual vendors and merchants. Some examples show one of the elements of resilience described by Alexander (2016; p.196) which is the ability of a system to self–organize and the capacity to adapt. The market itself attempts to adapt to the measures but the people are the ones who organize to sell at their own houses or in some cases door–to–door. While this increases their resilience, it is not able to completely cope with the economic burden.

5.1.3. Agriculture and Fishery

Agriculture and fishing were affected by some of the policies, especially related to the curfew. The curfew for months didn't allow people to be outside of their home between 9 pm and 6 am, which directly affected fishermen who say they find fish only between 3 am and 7 am. They didn't have permission to be outside. This is told by one of the women who saw their family’s income disappear:

> “My dad is a fisherman and he goes fishing at 3 am, but he couldn't go because the curfew stops at 5 am and fishing from 5 to 7 am is not enough. If he set his

> nets at night, by the time he went to the lake the fish would be dead. He had no income. My mom makes textiles, but people are not buying them" (#13, female, 24 years old).

Another said they went directly to the Mayor for permission and found a positive answer but still didn't help find fish. "My dad is a fisherman, and that work wasn't forbidden, we asked the mayor and he said they could still work, but there were no fish and it was hard to sell" (#2, female, 57 years old) Other family's problem was not related to finding fish but to selling it: "My sister had problems because her husband is a fisherman and they couldn't sell their fish, the market was closed and no one was buying at home" (#1, female, 41 years old). In Latin America, 94% of workers in agriculture work in the informal sector, either employed by large farmers or working on their own field; with rural population being at a higher risk of informal economy vulnerabilities (OECD/ILO; 2019).
However, agriculture was also a means of substance for other families who were able to grow food to sell and consume. It increased the livelihood resilience for some families who were able to use agriculture as a secondary income source when their main source was lacking. Since transportation was not allowed between the town, many of the product was consumed locally.

> "In my family, I'm the only one who brings an income, and when work was suspended, my dad who is a farmer had grown vegetables. My mom was able to sell some of it and the rest we would eat" (#7, female, 27 years old)

Resilience refers not only to the ability to resist the hazard but also to adapt to the new conditions (Tucker and Nelson, 2017). Such resilience is demonstrated by families that were able to grow their own food when they were having difficulties earning an income.

5.1.4. Textiles and Crafts

Mayan textiles are a cornerstone of every indigenous community in Guatemala, but this is especially important for Tzutuhil Mayan women. Coche (2020, personal communication) recalls how important it is for her to use her garment inside and outside of Santiago Atitlan, however, if in Santiago she uses non–traditional clothing it can be frowned upon by her family and other women. It is part of the ethnic and cultural identity, and it is an art that is passed from generations. Most women learn different techniques for either weaving or embroidery from their mothers or grandmothers, and it is common for families to specialize in different parts of the process. Figure 2 is of a Tzutuhil *güipil* (traditional blouse), and the process includes de dying of the threads, the weaving, and finally the embroidery which in Santiago usually includes birds. They can be custom made, and take up to a month to finish. The price is high compared to non–traditional clothing, but it's high quality allows it to be used for even decades. It is common to order special *güipiles* for special occasions, and many women specialize in that part. Others are sold to tourists who come to Santiago for the crafts.

Figure 2– Tzutuhil *güipil* with weaving and hand made embroidery.

Almost all women described a loss of income due to the decay of sales of textiles either because of tourism or because other town women canceled their orders for personal economic difficulties. This talks to the vulnerability of the informal economy within the artisans, who were hardy able to endure the crisis as they have no employment or social protection. The textiles would be classified in the legitimate income opportunities from Hart's (1971) typology that include artisans. While textiles and crafts are not characterized by unsafe or unhealthy working conditions, it does put them at a vulnerable position irregular and low incomes, lack of access to markets and finance, and low levels of productivity which are some of the characteristics defined by the ILO (n.d.) as it refers to informality.

> "I sell traditional clothing, but I especially sell shawls, the people know me. When the pandemic started in the town it affected the economy of many people, since that started I couldn't sell anything. Some people had asked me for shawls for a special occasion, but when the pandemic started they came to cancel it because they had lost their job, and all the capital that I had invested was lost". (#4, female, 35 years old)

The increase in tourism opened a global market for traditional crafts from communities like Santiago Atitlan which created the role of retail intermediaries for craft production who buy from local artisans to sell at a national or global level. In Guatemala, this role is often filled by ladinos (non–indigenous) Guatemalan's or expatriates, who resell the textiles or create other products like bags and accessories with the crafts created mostly by women (Moreno and Littrell, 2001; p. 659). In Santiago Atitlan, the most popular craft include textiles, like *güipiles,* or that are made into various products and beadwork. A few of the interviewed women are given work by retailers who later sell them in regional markets or as export. They are paid for the work that they complete, and although it is considered a job it has not formal benefits and securities. "I do embroidery… depending on how the people

that sell the [product] is doing they give us more job, but we couldn't do güipiles anymore. It affected me a lot financially"(#10, female, 25 years old)

The lack of sales for the buyer caused them to lose their income completely. "It was hard because I was working with a woman that would buy embroidery from me but since she was not selling anything then she stops buy from us, and up to today I haven't been given any work" (#11 female, 50 years old).

Others continued to work but had to sell their product at a poor price to get some of the income and invested capital. "My work is doing textiles for güipil, when there was no pandemic I had a good income working with other women doing traditional Mayan clothing of Santiago Atitlán, and we always had orders, but when the pandemic started everything changed. Thanks to God I didn't lose my job, but the price went down and they wouldn't pay me the same. I have been working but at a low price and I accepted doing it to have some income because my dad lost his job… I was the only one generating any income for my family which has worrying". (#6, female, 34 years old) An average *guipil* embroidery work can be sold for Q650 or approximately 70 euro, directly with the artisan, and it can take about a month to do. However, during the pandemic, it went down to less than Q400 or 43 euro.

Blum Schevill (1998) describes the commodification of Mayan textiles and crafts since the 80's organized primarily as cooperatives, but that fall many times in cases of corruption or abuse of power. She proposes other models but that continue to put at center expatriates or international organizations as directors and organizers of the crafts and sales. However, even when supported financially by the organization, it failed to protect some of the weavers during the pandemic. This is told by one of the women hired by an NGO. Local organizations tend to hire local women to sell crafts to their donors and visits through local sales or exports but this sector was affected as well. "I work for an NGO doing beadwork, but when the pandemic started there were no more orders for bead crafts. They told us they would call us when there was work again and it affected me because I am the only one who has an income in my family"(#7, female, 27 years old)

All activities supported by the tourism were affected, "What I do needs a lot of tourism… I do embroidery and since tourists were not coming they wouldn't buy güipiles, fabric or crafts that us Atitecos do, and our work depends on that"(#10, female, 25 years old). The ECLAC (2020) reports that tourism will be one of the main industries that will impact Latin America's economy due to the Pandemic. However, some of the interviewed still show hope that it will improve towards the end of the year. "In these months there are many tourists that visit the town, and at the end of the year there are many sales, but with the situation as it is now, we don't know if we will be able to sell"(#4, female, 35 years old).

5.2 Impact on Emotional and Mental Health

All of the interviewed women mentioned shock and fear concerning health risk but mainly concerning food security and economic difficulties. Preliminary studies, like Osofsky, et al.'s (2020) indicate that mental health will have a significant impact as a result of the pandemic due to the break of social relationships, intense psychological fear of the disease and economic shock. This is shown by the experiences of the women who describe intense shock, as well as the economic strains and grief. One of them says "It came to turn our whole world" (female, 24), another one tells "It makes me think of terror, people were scared. I didn't know if I was going to be able to go home… my dad works outside of Santiago and he couldn't come home for three months." (#15, female, 20 years old)

The oldest interviewed woman describes her fear as it is something that she has never seen and compares it to other situations like cholera. "In my life, I haven't seen a disease like this. I am 77 years old… I lived when cholera happened and many got sick and died, but this was bigger because we also had economic problems" (#12, female, 77 years old)

One of the young interviewees, a student of psychology, sees mental health as one of the areas that will have a big impact on their community. "Mental Health, the fear, and uncertainty of what will happen, when it will be over, the terror that we or publications about COVID were alarming. There was panic, so I think that mental health was affected and will continue after the pandemic because in Santiago Atitlan mental health is a taboo and it is not talked about, so that will affect adolescents, children and adults because many die because of worry, or have stress for economic situations. So I think I will be affected as well as other health issues" (#14, female, 20 years old).

The fear of not being able to feed was strong with one of the women who has five young children, but also mentions how the strong feeling of fear could kill her. "And I think if it is not because of lack of food, it will be for anguish and fear that we will die. … If someone could tell me when it will be over but we do not know when this will be over" (#1, female, 41 years old) Two more women, some of the older ones, mention 'susto' in their descriptions. While literally, susto means a scare or fear, it Mayan culture it is considered a disease that can be mortal: "Many people were scared and would not go to the street because of fear. Then they would say it was nerves and diseases that they contracted" (#11 female, 50 years old) and "At the beginning, many people died, but it was because of fear and nerves for the disease"(#2, female, 57 years old) *Susto* is recognized by the American Psychological Association (n.d.) and describes it as a "culture-bound syndrome occurring among Latinos in the United States and populations in Mexico, Central America, and South America. After experiencing a frightening event, individuals fear that their soul has left their body" with symptoms like fatigue, unhappiness, headache, lack of motivation among others.

5.3 Social and Community Impact of COVID–19

Women reported changes to their family life more than other areas, not used to spending so much time together, although it tended to be more positive than negative. One of them mentions that it changed the time spent with her children: "Now we eat and spend time together, we cheer each other up. I didn't use to work like that, I only came to eat lunch and go back to work but now I spend more time with them, and it makes me happy" (#2, female, 57 years old)

Comments related to the relationship with their neighbors were fairly neutral for most of them: "Here with my neighbors, we have made a consensus that we all use masks and take care of each other" (#2, female, 57 years old). Some of the negative cases tended to be related to suspicion on some of them not following the guidelines and avoiding contact: "We had some conflicts because people are not cooperative. Some people follow the rules and others don't".

One of the women relates how there was a conflict with their neighbors, who were also close friends because she didn't attend their friend relative's funeral because she was worried it was COVID.

> "When everything was bad my neighbor got sick and died, the police, municipality and health center came, and we couldn't visit, he was close, but we didn't want to go in because we were scared. Their family thought it was because we were mad, but it

> wasn't… then we found out it wasn't COVID–19… the relationship is getting better, but we couldn't be there for them when they lost their family member" (#11 female, 50 years old).

Some of them argue that people do not want to get tested or go to health services for any reason because they fear discrimination or rejection from community members. "If we had understood each other and follow directions maybe we wouldn't have any problems because we would protect each other. But our reality is that many people do not believe in the disease and do not protect each other" (#2, female, 57 years old). Another woman regrets that she wasn't able to help other people buying their products:

> "Also, not being able to help other people when they came to offer their product. I tried to help but it wasn't in my possibilities to help everyone" (#4, female, 35 years old)

The church as a place of socializing, praying and as leaders also came out in multiple interviews: "When there was no pandemic, I would go freely to Church to hear the service, but now I can't… we can't be close to people" (#11 female, 50 years old). Although they regret not being able to attend, they say they respected the measures, however, many of them tell the story of a religious leader who encouraged people to not use masks and follow directions from the government arguing that if they do that would be because of lack of faith in God. More than half of the women referred to this incident as something negative because it put at risk the people in the community:

> "Sadly, a person that leads a group of people said that the disease does not exist, that it was all made up, and since then you could see all the disorder that affected our town"(#6, female, 34 years old). Another continues: "For example, if that church does not follow directions, they go out without using their mask but it is not only them that get sick, you can find them in the market or their money, they give it to the vendors"(#1, female, 41 years old).

Social cohesion can be an element to build community resilience, but issues like the one told by the interviewees can result in the breaking of social relations and distrust. Chan (2006) points to trust as one of the main elements of social cohesion. But while ll of them agreed that to overcome the pandemic they would have to work together with the community; there is also distrust to what other members are doing in practice. One of them tells it in a positive tone:

> "Everything will be recovered little by little… slowly we will go back to normal, many say that maybe until next year we will be able to work like before…. Recovery will be slow and will depend on the attitude of the people if we obey, we will go out faster, but if we do not obey it will be slow (#8, female, 47 years old).

Chapter 6 Coping with the Pandemic

Indigenous women are one of the most vulnerable populations in Guatemala and are disproportionally affected by a crisis like the pandemic, but the stories shared for this paper reflect also resilience, entrepreneurship, leadership, and solidarity shown by women to cope with the effects of the pandemic. Many of the women had to search for alternative ways of generating income to provide food and care for their families and themselves. Maguire and Cartwright (on Duffy, et al., 2016) use the concept of resilience to explain the capacity of the system, or in this case community, not only to cope with the stress, but to overcome and recuperate by adapting to change. The following paragraphs describe some of the coping strategies the women used to overcome and adapt to the crisis.

The coping mechanisms that foster resilience according to the participants experience can be, as mentioned by Kim and Kim (2016; p. 227), external and internal factors. This can also be observed as an individual or single household adaptation strategies like entrepreneurship, faith and employment. Others can be observed as a community or group, such as solidarity, connectedness and social cohesion. One of the most common ways of coping with the Pandemic is through spirituality or religion, although as described before it also caused controversy within the community. Kim and Kim (2016; p. 227) highlighted community factors like religion as a source of community organization and faith as hope and resilience. This is discussed by some of the participants who felt the absence of their attendance to church but highlighted their faith as a source of hope to cope with the crisis. God is seen as having allowed the pandemic to happen "God allowed it to happen because we are disobedient to him… many people will come back to God's feet to repent for their sins" (#12, female, 77 years old). The same woman who suspects of having had COVID–19 but didn't have a test to confirm it said "I was very sick and I told God, thank you lord and if you decide to take me thank you and if not also thank you… I was not scared about COVID–19 or death" (#12, female, 77 years old).

Nevertheless, most of the references to God talk about a way to overcome the difficulties, as well as acceptance for what is coming: "I know it was hard everything I went through, but I trusted God and I knew he would give me a way out, all my family and husband are here healthy" (#11 female, 50 years old). "Since I am protestant Christian, we focus on that, more family unit, and spending time together (#9, female, 20 years old)."If we have food to eat it is thanks to God, if not thanks to God anyway" (#2, female, 57 years old)

Formal employment was a factor that increased the household resilience to the economic strains put by the crisis. One of the young women interviewed tells the story of how she was able to support her family during the crises when they lost all sources of income; it was her job security that allowed her to do so. Linda, a 24 year–old woman is one of the highest educated nurses in Santiago Atitlan. She graduated recently with a scholarship from a local NGO for the university for the technical degree and now continues to study. In January she obtained a job at an NGO as a technical nurse :

"If I wouldn't have had that job, I don't know what we would have done". The curfew didn't allow her father to fish as usual. "We didn't have an income from my dad. And my mom was doing textiles but since the pandemic started people were not buying clothes, so my parents didn't have income. But since I was being paid it helped, I was saving for emergencies because we didn't know how long the situation was going to be and I was able to pay for basic things like food" (#14, female, 24 yeras old). Although the organization was closed, she was still being paid while she received online training. Additionally, she also mentions that she was able to support neighbors that needed medical help but wouldn't

want to go to the community health center for fear of COVID–19 and that would seek her help instead. Linda regrets not having materials from her job, as she works as a community reproductive health promoter. She says: "Many women have asked me because the community center and other clinics for reproductive health are closed, and they want contraceptives. I wish I had asked my office to give me to have here in my town. Many services for women's health have stopped or closed, and the women need it"

Other women prefer entrepreneurship and innovation to cope with the economic problems. For example, one of the artisans tells "The shawls I make have decorations, and before the pandemic, someone else did that part and I would pay them to do it. I can do it but I didn't have time because I sell at the market, so during the pandemic, I taught my daughter and my husband and we did a lot of them during the quarantine. So now we can all do it within the family and I'm happy that I don't have to pay someone else to do it"(#4, female, 35 years old).

Another woman whose father lost his job started selling underwear and raising chicken and was able to do it through a community-saving group: "I formed a group of women, we are 26, and we organize to save some of our money. Every other week we get together and save some of the money we earn… if someone needs a credit they can take from there… I loaned capital to start my business selling intimate clothing to other women and that helped. I also started raising chicken, I made my own corral and it is working well because they are growing and I have more than 100 so I will be able to sell them soon"(#7, female, 27 years old) While this does not show a strong economic stability, it those portray community characteristics that foster adaptability and capability to overcome the crisis.

Collective mechanisms that strengthen resilience include solidarity and social cohesion. While Santiago seems to be a fairly heterogenous community, being 97% indigenous, it still sees a number of social differences. For example, older people within the same family have very low access to education, while the younger representatives are more likely to have gone to school. A number of participants also refer to solidarity as a way to deal with the crisis from volunteer work to neighbor solidarity. Many authors refer to social cohesion and connectedness as a way to strengthen community resilience (Lyon, 2018; Duffy, et. al., 2016; Osborne, et. al., 2016), this can be observed in the community through the women's own experience or stories from other people in the community. According to Alexander (2016; p.203)

> "People were joining projects to help others, or they had contact with people that had the capacity or resources to help, and to people that have economic problems. Here there are kind people, with a spirit to help the ones in need, that is a strength of Santiago Atitlán" (#9, female, 20 years old)

Another young woman, who lives in the outskirts of the town tells how people close to her were not informed of the measures taken because they don't have much access to media and technology. Most of the other women mentioned they have been informed by radios o social media or even neighbors about what was happening. She relates:

> "The authorities were not informing us of the dispositions for each week, they never came to the village to inform people, because most of them do not have the technology to be informed, they never verified who was needed of food, because some of them did not have anything to eat. I am a sociable person so I started to manage how to help these people, I was talking with some NGOs that helped with the delivery of food for families in need and I was able to get 200 bags of groceries. I also joined an NGO as a volunteer so I could help the most vulnerable families in my village. I was very happy to work in that project"(#7, female, 27 years old)

The student of psychology sees the community as resilient that will allow them to cope and overcome all the effects. "The town of Santiago Atitlan is very resilient because even with

the pandemic, you could see people going out to find what to eat. It is also a community with solidarity because when people didn't have food others would find something to give them. In my area, people were collecting corn or other foods to give to the ones that didn't have more food to eat" (#15, female, 20 years old). This statement by the young woman relates to Chan's (2006) definition of social cohesion where on top of the ability to trust and cooperate on other members of the society he also points out to the community identity, which is highlighted in the perception of the community as a collaboration and as resilience.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

The objective of this research was not to assess the effects and results of the policies and measures taken but rather to understand how indigenous communities are experiencing it. Angeli and Montefusco (2020) argue that policy decision making around the pandemic cannot be linear and should be understood as a complex phenomenon. The unforeseen consequences of the pandemic and of the measures taken to address it need to be understood to redesign and adopt policies during the pandemic and for the recovery processes.

The experience of the participants talks to collective and individual vulnerability and resilience. The stories reflect the high levels of vulnerability that women are exposed to in times of crisis, in terms of health, social and economic areas, it also reflects the resilience and adaptability of indigenous women in Santiago Atitlán. These findings reflect the importance of policies that support vulnerable populations in dealing with COVID–19 and other future crises.

It is important to analyze how particular community characteristics affect its population differently and therefore highlights the importance of locally designed guidelines that support national measures. In this case, unique conditions of the community increased their vulnerabilities and local measures could have increased the resilience and capability of the community to resist the COVID–19 pandemic. Hilhorst and Bankoff (2013) referred to the two levels of vulnerability where one relates to poverty and marginalization and the second, more complex level, to the "interplay between local and global processes". These two levels are observed in the community. On the first level, underlying characteristics of the community like the fact that 97% of its population is indigenous and 79.8% lives in poverty (Municipality of Santiago Atitlán, 2012). On the second level, the disconnect between the national policies and processes to combat the pandemic and the local needs to cope and overcome it put the population in a more vulnerable position. Guatemala is a country with a highly diverse population in terms of ethnic background, languages, culture, and socioeconomic differences. Such differences also relate to high levels of inequality and access to health, education, and basic services, as well as employment opportunities. It is hard to assume that fit–all policies and guidelines will support diverse communities in the same way, and decentralized interventions to combat COVID can be key to strengthen community resilience. This case reflects the importance of bottom-up policies and local government agency to make decisions that allow them to respond to the crisis.

More significant for the participants is the risk of women in the informal economy, especially for artisans. The OECD/ILO (2019) report on informality points out to vulnerability of the informal economy, who are at higher risk of poverty. While men are more represented in the informal economy, women present higher risks and vulnerabilities like being on the bottom of the hierarchy. With a lack of access to markets, low saving capacities, and irregular income, women working in textiles pose a higher threat to their livelihood and food security. They also lack social protection services and lack of representation in policies. While formal employment does not ensure livelihood resilience, in this case, it helped women sustain the crisis and support their families for a longer time than those in the informal economy. This can be observed more in younger women and women with higher access to education, like nursing. Other younger women with at least a high school education were able to develop coping strategies like entrepreneurship, but some pointed to lack of financial services to be able to start something new; the ones had done had either private savings or participated in social saving groups. On the other hand, older women who depended only on income from textiles showed lower levels of education and lack of skills for other types of jobs.

Social cohesion was observed as a factor that contributes to how the community of Santiago Atitlan is able to cope with the crisis. Many of the women point to the relationship with their neighbors as a way to cope, even when they were not able to interact in the same way. Trust varied within some of the members, while some women said that they trusted the mayor's measures and the community following them, some other talked about distrust of fellow community members for not following the measures of social distancing and wearing the mask. This was specially mentioned for members of a local church, whose pastor preached against the mayor's measures. Some of them received help from their neighbors or other people in the community with food; other women organized the community through volunteer work to support people with needs. Chen (2006) also points out an identity as an element of social cohesion, which can be observed in how women refer to the community as close, resilient, and strong.

Finally, this research points out areas of vulnerability for indigenous women that include vulnerabilities of informality, low saving capacity, and risk to their livelihoods as well as access to health and mental health services. It also shows, however, a path to build resilience through local governance and strengthening of social cohesion. It will be important to reduce vulnerabilities associated with informality either through access to financial services or strategies to reduce the variable incomes of professions like crafts and textiles. Elements of social cohesion like solidarity and trust can be a way to address the disease while strengthening community resilience to endure and recover from socioeconomic difficulties. While Santiago Atitlan has particular characteristics of community identity and struggle, we can learn from these experiences as to how to design more efficient policies and measures for the vulnerable population in Latin America. This will be relevant not only for future crises but as how to design better inform continued measures and recovery programs as we continue to deal with the COVID–19 Pandemic.

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