

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2020 July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

We are a catalyst for healing and transformative change for survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families. Rooted in diverse multi-racial and multi-cultural Latin American heritages, we bring a unique combination of ancestral cultural wisdom and innovative new approaches to address violence within our communities. We are changemakers who uplift the leadership of survivors and uphold practices that preserve the dignity of all who have been harmed by violence.

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## MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR + EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

We are proud to present our Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report, which showcases the life-changing work of VIP and the profound impact that a diverse community of supporters brings to our mission.

It is difficult to find words to describe the events that shook our communities – local and global – over the past year. We went from hearing language that was new to many of us, like "coronavirus," to repeating phrases that had become overly familiar to us, like "these uncertain times." In a moment when communication was key, many felt at a loss for what to say to comfort, support and encourage one another. As is so often the case in times of crisis, it was less about the words we used than the action we took. At Violence Intervention Program, our actions became our primary language.

We didn't pause. We immediately shifted our operations to safeguard the health of families in crisis, as well as the essential staff who answered the call to remain a refuge and lifeline for the 1400+ victims/survivors of domestic and sexual violence who we served in fiscal year 2020. A complete redesign of our programs and service strategies was completed in a matter of days.

We didn't hesitate. When our communities were besieged by the virus, economic devastation and increasing violence within their homes, we quickly pivoted to address the urgent priorities presented by this new reality. We provided emergency cash assistance, food, shelter and personal protective equipment to hundreds of survivors and their children hit hardest by the crisis.

We stayed focused. The majority of our fiscal year took place prior to the pandemic's onset, and included huge achievements towards our vision for a world free of violence. We established our new Sexual Violence Project, an initiative that addresses complex sexual trauma suffered by Spanish-speaking survivors, many with experiences of childhood sexual abuse and sexploitation during their migratory journey. We launched Brightly East Harlem, a worker cooperative business exclusively owned and operated by Latinx survivors of domestic violence – all of whom are immigrants. We hosted our first ever bilingual community symposium, Mujeres Migration and Money, which shared our strategies for supporting immigrant survivors to achieve economic stability, and engaged the audience to envision new strategies. We continued to foster leadership among our team of Promotoras – survivor-activists who lead visibility campaigns and peer outreach to others who may never otherwise connect to much-needed domestic violence intervention services. These services and programs – in addition to ongoing core services such as hotline operations, shelter, housing, economic justice, counseling, case management and advocacy – all continued before, during, and after the height of the COVID-19 crisis in New York City.

The pandemic only highlighted the critical role that culturally specific programs play for the survival, health, and resilience of Latinx and survivors of color in New York City. When crisis hits, we are on the ground and ready to mobilize. That was true before the current public health crisis, and it will remain true until every survivor is free from violence.

We thank our supporters for making this critical work possible. And to our potential supporters, we urge you to join us. Our communities have never needed you more.

In solidarity,



Margarita Guzmán

Executive Director



Betsy Multon

BETSY MALLOW

Chair, Board of Trustees

## OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

#### IN FISCAL YEAR 2020, VIP:

- Directly supported 1,265 clients and their 1,882 children
- Safely housed more than **260 survivors and children** through our Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Programs, totaling over **30,000** nights of care
- Held 1,025 workshops and group counseling sessions addressing a range of topics including domestic violence, sexual assault and emotional well-being – for 159 clients
- Conducted **5,870** individual counseling sessions with **1,010 clients**
- Provided 157 survivors with economic justice services including banking and financial literacy, building educational, vocational, and employment skills, and small business development
- Provided micro grants to 17 survivors, allowing them to invest in and grow their businesses
- Educated **1,200 teens** from NYC public schools in over 40 workshops about healthy relationships
- Engaged 4,400 community members in more than 70 educational workshops on topics related to intimate partner violence
- Distributed over **36,000 awareness-building, educational materials** to New Yorkers



ArteSanando participant brings a creation to life during an essential oil and soapmaking workshop.



Brightly East Harlem Worker-Owners celebrate the launch of their cooperative cleaning business.

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## COVID-19 + OUR RESPONSE

As an "essential business" with 36+ years of experience in providing emergency crisis response to NYC's most vulnerable survivors of domestic and sexual violence, VIP responded nimbly and quickly to meet the moment. We knew that the combination of increased isolation and close proximity to abusive partners would increase violence, that people would lose their jobs, that informal economies would go dark and that our survivor communities' already precarious financial situations would collapse.

We are proud to report that in spite of the risks, challenges, and rapidly shifting realities of the pandemic, VIP's lifesaving services and programs operated continuously throughout the pandemic. We made operational and program changes that allowed us to intake and serve both new and existing clients, and we even launched new initiatives to meet increased community needs during this extraordinarily perilous time.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, large and small, in the first several months of the pandemic, VIP:

Fielded more than **3,400 calls** to our 24/7 bilingual Hotline

Delivered over \$130,000 in emergency cash assistance to 400 survivors and their children in need, prioritizing those ineligible for federal and state assistance

Offered **safe refuge to 220** survivors and children in our Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Programs

Provided **emergency food to 140+** VIP clients and children

Conducted over **5,000 counseling sessions** 

for over **900 clients** and over 30 group counseling sessions remotely, ensuring survivors could safely participate from home

Redesigned our outreach program and coordinated creative online campaigns to raise awareness and share resources with our communities

Supported VIP's frontline crisis responders by providing hazard pay and establishing an emergency fund to cover health care, funeral expenses, and safe transportation alternatives for VIP staff

### DID YOU KNOW?

From March to June 2020, there were 25 domestic violence homicides in New York City.



VIP joined forces with City Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson on Go Purple Day.



#### REACHING SURVIVORS AMID THE PANDEMIC

Above all else, we knew that reaching victims/survivors of domestic and sexual violence trapped at home with abusive partners would be a challenge when COVID-19 hit New York City. We are proud to report that from the onset of the pandemic, VIP deployed several new approaches to community engagement, allowing us to break through the barriers, continue our civic engagement, and most importantly, direct outreach to individuals and communities.

Public Service Announcements ("PSA's") We released several PSA videos featuring VIP staff members –including our Hotline Counselor, Counselor Advocate, Senior Outreach Specialist – letting people know that we are still taking clients and how to access our services.

Online Events VIP staff and leadership accepted invitations to speak at a wide range of virtual town halls, rallies, webinars and workshops to keep our communities informed.

Social Media Launching several digital campaigns, VIP leveraged the power of social media to reach our communities and get the word out about our services, to offer support to survivors, and to raise awareness about the public health crisis.

Printed Materials and Supplies We created new eye-catching bilingual cards containing our Hotline number and widely displayed them in local essential businesses, community bulletin boards, and apartment lobbies. Hand sanitizer and nail files, on which VIP's Hotline number were discreetly printed, were safely distributed by street outreach teams in our communities.

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## OUR MISSION + WORK

Our mission is to lead Latinx victims of domestic violence to safety, empower them to live free of violence and reach and sustain their full potential. We pursue our mission by raising community awareness, engaging in activism and providing culturally competent services.



An ArteSanando business owner selling her wares at a Cinco de Mayo celebration.



Brightly East Harlem worker-owner, joined by her daughter, at the cooperative launch event.



Family in our Transitional Housing Program enjoying the Casa Sandra holiday party.

#### Founded by fierce, feminist women of color,

VIP has always been guided by principles of equity and inclusivity. Following are the core beliefs that have guided our work for nearly four decades.

At VIP, we believe...

- Compassion and empathy have the power to change lives.
- Domestic and sexual violence harms individuals, families and entire communities.
- Community plays a key role in healing and accountability after abuse.
- Trauma is part of us, but it does not define us.
- Women and non-binary people are powerful.
- Brown and Black people are powerful.
- Everyone's cultural identities should be met with dignity and celebrated.
- People are more important than borders.
- When we raise our voices together, we cannot be silenced.
- The language you speak is beautiful.
- Healing is neither linear nor finite.
- Joy and laughter are part of healing.
- Resilience and strength are sometimes overrated.
- Our liberation is bound together.
- We must take action in the face of injustice.
- We carry wisdom and power inherited from our ancestors.
- And we affirm a commitment to pass our wisdom and power to our future generations.



#### **OUR REACH**

With confidential locations in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx, VIP supports survivors and their families throughout all of greater New York.

#### **OUR CLIENTS, IN NUMBERS**

98% of VIP clients were survivors of color

Of thoses, 95% were women

69% identified as Latinx and 16% Black

98% were parents with children in their care

68% were immigrants

100% were low income many earning less than \$15,000 a year

Survivor's countries of origin included Mexico, Dominican Republic, mainland United States, Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Guatemala and more.

#### WHY "LATINX"?

"Latina" is used in place of terms such as "Latina," "Latin@," "Latina/o" in order to ensure the most expansive inclusivity with regards to gender identity. Spanish language requires masculine and feminine usage that limits gender expression to binary identities. By using "Latinx," VIP seeks to include people who do not identify with the gender binary, such as gender non-conforming, two-spirit, gender-queer and some transgender identified people.

### **HOW WE WORK**

#### **Uplifting Survivors**

VIP supports domestic and sexual violence survivors and their children with programs based in heavily-Latinx communities throughout New York City. Our work is grounded in the following principles.

CULTURALLY SPECIFIC Our holistic programs are rooted in practices that optimize language access and are culturally affirming for survivors hailing from Latin America. Services are familiar, relatable and they intentionally lift up cultural heritage as a powerful factor for resilience after trauma.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS We are trusted community members, collaborating with fellow community-based groups, advocacy coalitions, government partners and supporters to deepen our impact.

SURVIVOR-INFORMED We support survivor self-determination and incorporate survivor input in the development and implementation of new initiatives to meet their unique needs.

TRAUMA-INFORMED As survivors ourselves, we know trauma is complex. We are committed to understanding, recognizing and responding compassionately to trauma – and its consequences – in all of its forms.



A sweet family moment captured during a Thanksgiving dinner event at Le Petit Café.

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## SAFETY + SURVIVAL

For over three decades, VIP has offered lifesaving, culturally-specific crises response services to Latinx and other vulnerable victims of domestic and sexual violence.

#### 24/7 Hotline + Live Chat

VIP's experienced, compassionate Hotline team provides confidential 24/7 crisis support, safety planning and referrals in Spanish and English and can access language interpretation services for ~200 languages. We also operate live chat services through our website for victims who may not be able or ready to call. In 2020, when the COVID-19 lockdown in NYC forced families to shelter in place at home, VIP received more than three times as many calls as we did the year before.

#### **Emergency Shelter**

For those fleeing violence, finding safe refuge is just one of the first of many challenges they will face. VIP provides a safe home to victims, and their children, in our Emergency Shelter, Moriviví, for up to six months. Safely housed in confidentially-located, scattered site apartments, VIP offers families a wide range of culturally responsive, trauma-informed supportive services including individual and group counseling, advocacy, and comprehensive case management that is tailored to meet the needs of individual clients.

#### Advocacy

VIP Client Advocates connect survivors to a wide range of publically available benefits, resources and legal assistance.



The powerhouse crew who runs our Moriviví shelter program share a joyous moment in

Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness in women and children.



In FY2020, VIP...

Fielded **7,000** Hotline calls

Provided emergency shelter to **225** survivors and children

Provided **11,636** nights of care to adults and children through our Transitional Housing Program

Distributed food vouchers for **16,750** meals to **670** adults and children

Assisted **1,000** survivors to navigate a wide range of public assistance systems, housing support, immigration issues, and legal advocacy

Provided ongoing assistance to **1,265** low-income survivors in accessing publicly available resources such as food, healthcare, rental assistance, children's services, and social security

## RECOVERY + HEALING

VIP Community Programs, based in the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens, provide a wide range of programs to support and uplift survivors, including ongoing safety planning, expansive case management and advocacy, and psycho-educational counseling to meet the complex needs of survivors and their families. When COVID-19 hit NYC, lifesaving programs – such as our Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter – continued to operate at full force, while other services transitioned to a remote model to safeguard the health of our community.

#### Individual Counseling + Support Groups

During the COVID-19 lockdown, VIP provided thousands of remote counseling sessions to survivors, many of whom were trapped with abusive partners. Our empowerment-based support groups, which build strength and community amongst survivors and foster collective healing, switched to a virtual platform. We saw the full impact of the digital divide for survivors who lacked devices and stable internet to access services, and worked with them to ensure regular safety checks despite the obstacles presented.

#### Transitional Housing Program

VIP's Transitional Housing Program provides safe refuge for up to 2 years to survivors and their children fleeing violence, while empowering families to rebuild their lives and achieve long-term safety and stability. In FY2020, 34 survivors and children were provided a safe home at Casa Sandra and range of supportive services including counseling, critical life skills and education, and a supportive community.



affordable housing is a key factor in achieving stability.

#### Sexual Violence Project

With generous support from the New York Women's Foundation, in 2019, VIP launched the Sexual Violence Project, a trauma-informed, survivor-led initiative that brings survivors together to collectively process complex sexual trauma, explore socio-cultural causes and work towards personal and collective healing. Through individual and group counseling, creative art therapy and a one-of-a-kind digital storytelling project that supports survivors in reclaiming their stories and their voice, we are developing innovative healing strategies that promote individual and community freedom from violence.



Our dedicated and dynamic Casa Sandra team.

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## UPLIFT + REBUILD

#### **Economic Justice Program**

The overwhelming majority of survivors report financial abuse as part of the domestic violence they experience and their economic resources largely shape what is possible in the way of ending the abuse and healing. When survivors' economic conditions improve so too does their ability to stay safe from abuse. For immigrant survivors whose migratory journeys are motivated by both a need to flee violence and seek better economic opportunities, the connection could not be clearer. Our Economic Justice Program addresses these intersecting needs by providing financial education, seed funding, microgrants, peer-support groups to explore the connection between trauma and money management and small business development. In FY2020, 83 survivors reached their goal of decreasing debt, increasing income or savings, and/or completing an educational degree or vocational certification program.

#### ArteSanando

Our *ArteSanando*—or "healing arts"—Program is a skill-building and small business development workshop series inspired by the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of our communities. Through this initiative we support immigrant survivors excluded from the traditional workforce to transform their wealth of creative skills into thriving businesses. Participants receive hands-on training, seed funding to cover the cost of supplies, marketing support and business development coaching. At the close of each cycle, participants showcase their work at marketplace events where the larger community is invited to directly support their small business ventures. In September 2019, our Handmade Jewelry cohort exhibited their work at the Mexican Consulate with each participant selling an average of \$200 of merchandise.

The financial factor is part of the abuse and must be part of the solution.



ArteSanando small business owner selling handmade soaps at an exhibition event.

"Gracias a VIP pude salir adelante."

"Me ayudaron con consejería y terapia para mí y mis hijos. Me facilitaron una beca para obtener mi certificado de CDA para cuidado de niños. Me apoyaron con el GED y me pude graduar. Ahora estoy abriendo mi propio negocio, un daycare, para poder ser independiente."

"Thanks to VIP, I got back on track. After connecting me and my children to therapy and counseling, VIP helped me get a scholarship for a Child Development Associate Program. Now that I've graduated, I'm opening my own business, a daycare, to be totally independent."

– Milka, VIP client



Worker-Owners of Brightly East Harlem Cooperative celebrate the launch of their business.

#### **Brightly East Harlem Coop**

In collaboration with the Center for Family Life, we launched our first 100% Latina survivor-owned and operated cooperative cleaning business in 2019. Brightly East Harlem Coop was the culmination of the many months this group spent developing and designing each aspect of their business. Together they studied the laws and bureaucratic processes for incorporation, completed comprehensive trainings on occupational safety and workplace protections, developed business and marketing plans and established core values anchoring their work in the principles of a solidarity economy.

"¡Ahora somos nuestras propias jefas!"

"Now we are our own bosses!"

#### Mujeres, Migration and Money

In October, just days before the now-defunct Public Charge rule would go into effect, we hosted our first symposium, *Mujeres, Migration and Money*, a one-of-a-kind event that brought together immigrant survivors, advocates and organizers to share and explore economic strategies for survival. Our keynote speaker – acclaimed chef, immigrant entrepreneur and survivor, Cristina Martínez – and a dynamic lineup of powerful panelists including, Rachel Isreeli (Center for Family Life), Adriana Escandón (Worker's Justice Project) and Lorena Kourousias (Mixteca) helped us to imagine a world in which immigrant survivors have what they need to heal and thrive, and everyone has enough. In naming and exploring our collective struggles and strengths, the vision of a more economically just future emerged... one where worker-owned cooperatives return power to the workers, where national and local policies uplift and affirm the dignity of immigrant communities and where creative solutions lead.

Chef Cristina Martínez (third from the right) with event organizers and participants.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

VIP engages a community-driven strategy for ending domestic and sexual violence that centers the leadership of Latinx immigrant survivors. This enables us to reach people who usually fly far under the radar of mainstream interventions and connect them to resources. We prevent future abuse through education for youth, adults and professionals, and create lasting change through activism and awareness-raising that shifts cultural norms. Together, we are transforming and healing our communities.

In FY2020, our Communications & Outreach team participated in 283 community activities and reached over 36,134 members of our communities through our educational, awareness-building materials.

#### Community Partnerships

We believe in the power of partnerships to both deepen and expand our impact. Central to our community-driven strategies are informal partnerships with community businesses, like street vendors, bodegas, pharmacies, restaurants and salons. Formal relationships with local financial institutions, health care providers, schools and other community-based groups (like food banks) help us to reach far beyond the normal reach of a small outreach team. Community networks are powerful.

#### Youth Education // Key to Prevention

Community education is key to interrupting generational cycles of violence and ending abuse. Our interactive bilingual preventive education workshops support adults, youth and youth-serving providers to deepen their understanding of domestic and sexual violence.

Through street-based outreach, public events and tapping into their extensive community networks, the Promotoras reach 10,000+ community members every year.

In FY2020, VIP reached more than 1,200 teens from New York City public schools through more than 40 workshops, utilizing our specialized youth curriculum that addresses the roots of violence, teen dating violence, consent, digital abuse, gender roles, and being an ally.

Promotoras in action with their "La boca tapada nunca callada (mouth covered but never silent)" masks on.



#### **Promotoras**

Drawing from peer-to-peer education models popular in Latin America, VIP uplifts a team of Promotoras, a small but mighty cohort of immigrant, indigenous and Latinx survivor-activists on a mission to bring hope and healing to other survivors. As survivors and former VIP clients, they know transformation and healing is possible with the right support. And just as importantly, they know the barriers (lack of language access and/or cultural awareness, fear of deportation, mistrust of police and other institutional interventions) that survivors in their communities face. The Promotoras lead with the wisdom of their lived experiences and act as a bridge between hard to reach survivors and our lifesaving services.

When the pandemic shutdown the city in March, radically changing what was possible and safe in terms of outreach, the Promotoras knew that the consequences could be deadly for survivors and immediately began strategizing new ways of reaching fellow community members. By early April, equipped with PPE, fueled by love and concern for their communities, they were targeting the few essential businesses (laundromats, bodegas, and grocery stores) that remained open and taking to online social platforms to get the word out.



Promotoras Matide and Estela distributing nail files with VIP's Hotline number discreetly printed on them. Promotoras also distributed facemasks with VIP's Hotline number inside to ensure inconspicuous access to the help and safety of VIP services in the height of the pandemic.

## **IN THEIR WORDS**

"Mi papel en VIP es muy importante porque puedo adentrarme en mi comunidad con gente que comparte mi experiencia." "My role within VIP is very important because I can reach people in my community who share my experience."

- Matilde, Promotora

"La importancia de ser promotora para mi es que puedo llevar la información directamente a las manos de las personas." "The power of being a promotora for me is in being able to put information directly into people's hands."

- Estela, Promotora

"Practico la medicina tradicional Mexicana por lo cual me llaman en las pláticas de mujeres, siempre es el mismo problema, el machismo no cambia, eso fue lo que me motivó a hacer algo más." "As a practitioner of traditional Mexican medicine, I am invited to many conversation groups and spaces with other women and it is always the same problem—machismo. That was what motivated me to do something."

- María Bárbara, Promotora

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Photo: Stephanie Keith/The New York Times.

#### VIP IN THE NEWS

Throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, VIP remained resolute in raising awareness about the impact of domestic and sexual violence, and in making sure our communities knew that we were still open and our services were still available. With our feet on the ground in our local communities and a successful digital media strategy, we kept the volume turned up on the crisis within the crisis.

We are proud to share the sampling of media outlets that featured our work in FY2020.

**New York Times** "Why a Drop in Domestic Violence Reports Might Not Be a Good Sign"

**Rewire NewsGroup** "Why Telehealth Is a Complicated Option for Domestic Violence Survivors"

**The Daily Beast** "Why Are There So Many Empty Beds in Domestic Violence Shelters?"

**Politico** "Domestic Violence Groups, Survivors Say New York's Pandemic Exacerbated Abuse"

**NBC-LX:** VIP's Outreach work during COVID-19 was featured in NBC-LX's "From the Frontlines"

**City Limits** "Mayor de Blasio, Protect Funding for Victims of Domestic Violence" (Opinion pieces co-written by VIP Executive Director, Margarita Guzmán)

**Breaking Distance (Podcast)** Sexual Violence Project Counselor Advocate, Lorraine Correa, joined members of the Denim Day NYC Coalition to discuss VIP's approach to supporting immigrant Latinx survivors of sexual violence.

## ADVOCATING FOR SURVIVORS

VIP leads and participates in crucial conversations with policy makers and the public to ensure the safety of survivors and their families, while prioritizing justice in our communities. Here are some of the ways we advocated for change in FY2020.

#### **KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER**

VIP encouraged our larger community to advocate against a proposed HUD rule that would separate and displace mixed-status families in public housing. The proposed rule—which HUD subsequently withdrew— lacked budgetary sense, further perpetuated the housing crisis and harmed the most vulnerable in our communities. VIP advocated for real investment in the safety and well-being of survivors and their families.

#### RASING AWARENESS ON CAPITOL HILL

VIP leadership and staff joined the 19th Annual Bride's March on DC, sponsored by Rep. Adriano Espaillat to advocate for key legislation expanding protections for survivors and addressing violence against women.

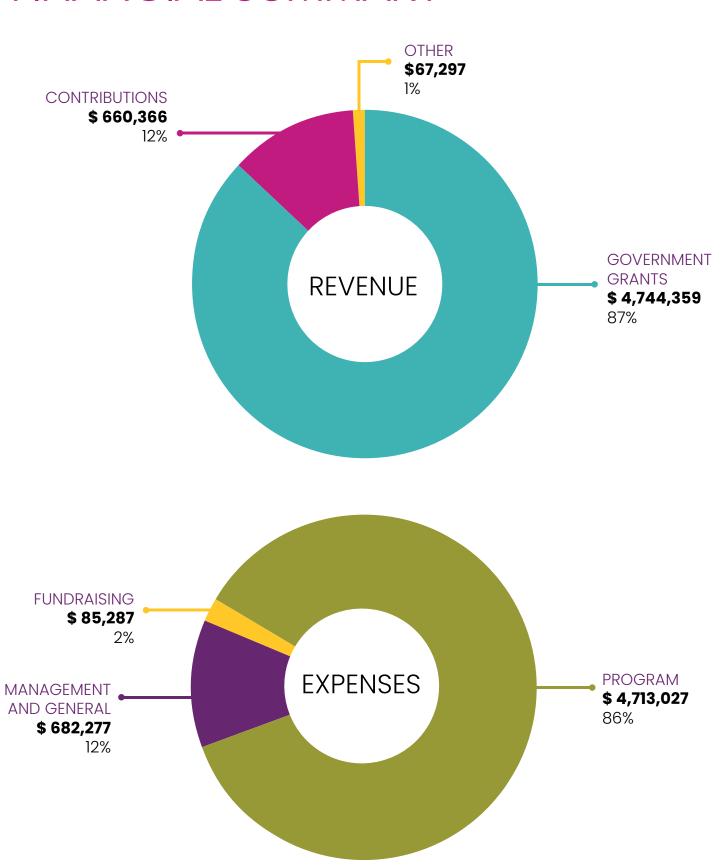
#### CREATING CHANGE LOCALLY

VIP co-wrote an op-ed with five other NYC based culturally-specific organizations that called on the mayor and city council to safeguard and increase resources to survivors, particularly immigrants, during the city budget process. We also provided testimony at a City Council hearing hosted by the Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Public Safety on the impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence.

#### PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY PARTNERSHIPS

VIP is an active member of key advocacy coalitions, including Hispanic Federation, Human Services Council, Homeless Services United, Nonprofit New York, New York Immigrant Coalition, Gender Justice Task Force and others, leveraging these networks to amplify the voices of our survivor community.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY FISCAL YEAR 2020



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## OUR SUPPORTERS

We extend our deepest gratitude to our generous supporters, who help us provide lifesaving support to survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families. The commitment of our donors enables us to respond swiftly to crises, help families recover, and transform our communities. Thank you!

#### \$100.000 +

New York Community Trust New York Women's Foundation Tiger Foundation

#### \$50,000 +

Open Society Foundation
The Seymour Foundation

#### \$20,000 +

Hispanic Federation
MJK Family Foundation
Robin Hood Foundation
Weinstein Family Foundation

#### \$10,000 +

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VIP promotoras conducting outreach in the Bronx.

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Senior Clinical Director of

Community and Specialized Programs

Dan Orti

Senior Director of Residential Programs

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#### WE ARE PART OF THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

All VIP program staff are fully bilingual in English and Spanish from countries throughout Latin America. We bring a wealth of cultural wisdom and practices to our work with survivors in NYC.

Together – as healers, advocates, organizers and leaders – we are transforming our communities.



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# Your support saves lives and transforms communities.

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