

### **A centre called “Tierra de Vida”**

A child is welcomed at the Tierra de Vida care centre (Tierra de Vida is the name of Sentinelles in Colombia) when he/she is under severe threat within his/her family. He/she only comes back home if the family environment is considered favourable. For the mothers, who often are alone to raise their children, Sentinelles proposes specific support, the “Family Meetings”. Through these awareness sessions on violence within the family, on reproductive health or on nutrition - notably through cooking workshops -, Sentinelles provides them with a specific framework. This place for monthly meetings enables them to exchange with one another about their daily difficulties and to learn through each other’s experiences. These women learn how to value their own experiences and to develop new skills to grow to autonomy.

### **The story of Maria and her children**

Maria contacted Sentinelles by herself. Her daughters, Camila (alias) 7 years old and Laura (alias) 4 years old were allegedly sexually assaulted by her partner’s father. The inquiry will never tell: the alleged abuser died suddenly. Sentinelles has committed itself to offering comprehensive support to Camila, Laura and Maria including therapy. Maria shows no interest in it but the social worker steps in and makes sure the girls attend the treatment.



At home, Maria doesn’t always understand her older daughter Camila’s behaviour and responds with violence, as do the grandmother and the aunts. Abused, the girls and their older brother Augusto (alias), 8 years old, fight for each other. During the Family Meetings, Maria learns how to confide herself and to confess her own helplessness and fears. From then on, this mother does her best to apply the recommendations of the Tierra de Vida workers and to change her behaviour. This accompaniment eventually bears fruit. From this point forward, Maria accompanies Camila in her medical and therapy treatment and prefers listening over using violence. This mother admits her difficulties and finally commits to the psychological follow up she is being offered.