



Indigenous women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Latin America

Prevention of Gender Violence towards Young Women and Teenagers in Situations of or at High Risk for Violent Relationships in El Alto, Bolivia

Project title	Prevention of Gender Violence towards Young Women and Teenagers in Situations of or at High Risk for Violent Relationships
Thematic area/programme	Violence against women
Project duration	Two years and eight months (June 2002–February 2005)
Location	El Alto, Bolivia
Beneficiaries	Young women and teenagers in El Alto
Executing agency/agencies	UNIFEM Andean region
Implementing agency/agencies	Centro de Promoción de la Mujer Gregoria Apaza (CPMGA)
Source of funds	Trust Fund for the Elimination of Violence against Women, New York

Overview

Since 1995, the Gregoria Apaza Centre has been developing activities to raise awareness and prevent violence against adult women. In 2002, after a process of institutional deliberation and participatory consultation with adolescents and young women, their violent relationships were identified as another manifestation of the problem of violence against women. This type of behaviour sets a negative precedent for the role of women in relationships, naturalizes violence and contributes to the perpetuation of discriminatory stereotypes against women.

Adolescents— young women in particular— recognize sexual violence as part of romantic relationships. It goes unrecognized as a form of violence and is instead learned and experienced as something inherent to a woman's role within a relationship.

In Bolivia, there exist Law 1674 against Violence within the Family and a National Plan for the Eradication of Gender Violence. Both the Law and the Plan refer to relationships between married people or couples living together but there is no legal instrument to denounce and punish violent behaviours that take place during the period prior to marriage. Violent relationships before marriage constitute a topic that has not been identified, discussed or treated, although the number of adolescents that suffer violence in their relationships increases.

What was planned

General objectives

- Decrease the incidence of violence in the relationships among adolescents and teenagers in El Alto through actions of prevention and assistance, thereby contributing to building a society characterized by gender equality
- Provide quality assistance to adolescents and young women in violent relationships
- Contribute to educational processes oriented towards transforming the situation of violence against women
- Generate public opinion on the issue and introduce into the public agenda both the issue and the lack of public policies addressing it

Activities

- Installation of a psychological service
- Institutionalization of workshops (based upon the book *In Love or in Danger?*) with information about the topic in high schools
- Implementation of training courses and education for adolescent and youth leaders
- Training of teachers
- Diffusion activities through radio stations
- Other diffusion activities
- Introduction of the theme through networks in El Alto
- Research carried out on the theme in El Alto

What the strategy was

The strategy had three dimensions:

Prevention

- Developing greater knowledge and greater skills among teenagers and for combating gender violence within schools
- Distributing information about human rights and gender violence with a view to training adolescents in schools and teenagers as leaders in the promotion of gender equity



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- Creating greater public consciousness of gender violence, specifically as directed against adolescents and young women

Assistance

- Offering assistance with adequate methodologies to adolescents and women who are victims of gender violence
- Providing information to adolescents and teenagers on how to transform gender stereotypes within their relationships

Research

- Developing research demonstrating the significance of the phenomenon in El Alto

Who was involved

UNIFEM Andean Region as the executing agency and Centro de Promoción de la Mujer Gregoria Apaza as the implementing organization, with the support of Caritas

Specific changes resulting from the project

- 180 youths attended the consultation service, 70 per cent of whom were women and 30 per cent of whom were men (36 per cent of the planned number).

- 1,508 youths were informed about the service and the results of the research.
- 294 youths participated as activists, approximately half of whom were men (59 per cent of the number hoped for).
- 1 teacher participated (of the 24 teachers hoped for).
- 26 programmes were broadcast.
- There were fairs promoting anti-violence in relationships, three theatre productions and two discussion panels.
- There were 14 meetings, which brought together 19 organizations that worked with youth to create the Inter-institutional Network of Youth in El Alto (RIDJEA).
- Research was presented and used as a basis for debates in workshops in high schools.

Sustainability

The organization maintains its commitment to continuing its support for the problem. This commitment is driven in large part by the statistics generated by legal services for women which report that almost 80 per cent of the cases that come before them mention sexual violence perpetrated by their partner even prior to their marriages, that is to say, starting with their initial courting. In 2005, a family psychologist and an educator were contracted to ensure the quality of the training portion of the project. The Centre has developed the following levels of sustainability for the project:

- *Technical*: creation and maintenance of institutional training facilities
- *Social*: provision of a space for intervention and discussion with the main actors of the project, such as youth, so as to include them in local and national public policy agendas
- *Financial*: allocation of \$10,000 for 2005 until new financing sources are found, with the objective of sustaining the provision of integrated services such as training activities and political participation

Replication/spin-off effects

The organization continues to work on the issue of violent relationships among adolescents and teenagers and it is currently seeking funding correlated with its experience.

What was learned

- Even for organizations that work in the area of violence against women, addressing this theme is relatively recent. It is accepted and almost normalized in a large part of society.



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- In contrast with the difficulties experienced by adult women in relationships, the difficulties experienced by young women in their first romantic relationships, though they do exist, are less dramatic. In respect of the participation of women in the presence of their male partners, we have confirmed that the difficulties for young women are not as great as those for adult women. Effective work with young women entails integrating young men into the process instead of dividing the work groups by gender. This has proved to be less isolating and more productive, as it generates an interchange of experiences and a cooperative effort to address the problem of gendered violence.
- The project plan must be flexible enough to respond to changing situations, since, sometimes, results cannot be achieved owing to circumstances that are impossible for the implementing organization to predict or to control.

Factors contributing to success

- The method of working in focal groups, thereby achieving great impact and obtaining high-quality data
- The spread of information about the Centre and its project thanks to one-to-one communication, reinforced by the Radio Pachamama programme
- The motivation of the beneficiaries who were happy to receive information about sexuality, HIV/AIDS and violence

Obstacles or problems identified during the project

- There was not 100 per cent achievement of the project's objectives owing to the fact that:
 - ♦ Since 2000, there has been an intensification of protests from social and grass-roots organizations regarding access (or the lack thereof) to property and natural resources. These themes are a priority in the policy agendas of these organizations which treat the issue of violence against women differently;
 - ♦ There have been changes in the management of the implementing organization which have interrupted some of the activities.

Documentation/bibliography

Two DVDs documenting the experience

Eight advertisements and three radio programmes broadcasted by Radio Pachamama

Four publications used by the leaders in the training sessions against gender violence

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Indigenous Women: Local Development and Leadership Building, Saraguro, Ecuador

Project title	Indigenous Women: Local Development and Leadership Building (Mujeres Indígenas: Desarrollo Local y Construcción de Liderazgos)
Thematic area/programme	Engendering leadership and governance
Project duration	Two years (2000-2002)
Location	Saraguro, Ecuador
Beneficiaries	Indigenous women of Saraguro, technical staff of Corporación Mujer a Mujer, Council members of Saraguro Municipality and Saraguro municipal staff
Executing agency/agencies	Corporación Mujer a Mujer
Implementing agency/agencies	Corporación Mujer a Mujer
Source of funds	UNIFEM Trust Fund (Project No. ECU-96-WO1)

Overview

The democratic system in Ecuador had been characterized by institutional frailty and weak political participation. Moreover, the State's structure excluded the majority of Ecuadorians, particularly women and indigenous peoples. To overcome this exclusion, the indigenous movement outlined, as a strategy, the acquisition of democratic and participatory power, starting with the conquest of local power spaces (municipalities and territories).

In the wake of democratic consolidation in Ecuador, members of the judiciary branch of government, in particular, sought to establish legitimacy by signalling their autonomy. Judges used gender quota laws to demonstrate their independence. This provided an opportunity for quota law supporters to gain leverage. Thus, in 1997, in Ecuador, a gender quota law was passed as a means of boosting the presence of women in politics. The labour protection law (*Ley de Amparo Laboral*) set the level of the quota at 20 per cent.

In Ecuador, generally, it was expected that women would fill political positions so that the quota could be reached but not that women would make decisions or enter into negotiations. This was especially the case within the indigenous movement. Capabilities associated with being a good leader, such as skill in public speaking, articulateness and the ability to take the initiative, were not cultivated in indigenous women. As a result, on many occasions these women excluded themselves by not acting like leaders.

As a result of the success of the replicas, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Andean Region office) (UNIFEM-AR) expanded

the Saraguro project in an attempt to meet increasing and new demands. The UNIFEM project entitled “Indigenous Women: Local Development and Leadership Building” was designed to address the need for a new generation of capable indigenous women leaders with experience on the local scene who would become models for future generations of women leaders to follow.

What was planned

The project had four components:

- Facilitating the development of gender-sensitive municipal policies and projects through seven workshops, on: municipal law, conflict resolution, citizen participation and alliance building, decision-making and organization, gender and development, gender and public policy, and decentralization
- A study of indigenous peoples’ access to justice in Saraguro
- Institutionalizing the Leadership School for Indigenous Women Leaders of Saraguro through eight workshops, on: self-esteem, gender violence, leadership and participation, gender and ethnicity, economic and social rights, cultural rights, women’s rights, and relationships
- Communication and dissemination (radio programme and bulletin) via eight programmes covering the following topics: migrations, domestic violence, human rights and discrimination, indigenous women’s rights, access to justice, the role of the family in Saraguro, women’s roles, and elections

What the strategy was

In the context of the invisibility of ethnic and gender demands and proposals, this project aimed towards: gaining a better understanding of the conditions that prevent indigenous women from participating in the public sphere, constructing leadership based on ethical, democratic, participatory, and gender- and ethnic-conscious values and increasing the participation levels of indigenous women and indigenous organizations within the decision-making arena.

Furthermore, the project aimed at developing strategies to integrate engendered leadership and governance more fully into the programmes on violence against women, and on economic and social rights. This is in accordance with the belief of UNIFEM that ensuring that women are leaders in all aspects of their lives, both individually and collectively, will engender governance and compel adequate responses to situations of gender inequality and differences.



INDESIC

Who was involved

- Interprovincial Federation of Indigenous People of Saraguro (FIIS)
- Corporación Mujer a Mujer (our counterpart in the project)
- Indigenous councilwoman Angelita Chalan and several municipal departmental heads
- Indigenous Women's Association of Saraguro (ASOMIS)
- Association of Indigenous Communities of Saraguro (ACIS)
- Asociación de Comunidades y Organizaciones de San Lucas (ACOS)
- Casa de la Mujer

Specific changes resulting from the project (outputs and impact)

- The Saraguro Indigenous Women's Agenda for Action was developed.
- A Municipal Commission on Gender was established.
- Twenty-five indigenous women leaders from different communities of the locality became advocates for indigenous and rural women's rights.

Others

Some men expressed interest and their desire to participate in more workshops in order to learn more about gender, ethnicity, human rights etc.



INDESIC

The local radio broadcast programme sensitized their audience on the issue of women's rights and on the means to prevent violence against women.

Sustainability

The 25 indigenous women leaders who were trained (along with the 130 women trained previously) have trained another 930 people, with about 1,300 indirect beneficiaries.

The president of the Interprovincial Federation of Indigenous People of Saraguro and Corporación Mujer a Mujer have institutionalized the Leadership School so as to make it a permanent part of the organization.

Replication/spin-off effects

Participants in the original pilot project were able to observe the replicas and develop a proposal for further replicas, which excited interest and were approved for funding by the German Cooperation Service (DED).

What was learned

Prior to the project, indigenous women had often denied the existence of violence against women within their communities. They feared that bringing about changes in the nature of their relationships with their partners and within their communities would be detrimental to their

efforts to be strong as an ethnic group. As the project progressed, these women came to realize that fighting against the abuses they had endured would not weaken their community, but would actually serve to strengthen it. Thus, throughout the project, it was learned that violence was not a natural part of relationships and that a strong community was one in which no members suffered from any forms of abuse.

Obstacles or problems identified during the project

Despite an encouraging display of openness from the mayor and the Council, indigenous councilwoman Angelita Chalan and several departmental heads were the only ones showing consistent attendance. Part of the problem involved a political split within the Council, and another part was the prevailing conception that “gender” referred only to women. Our counterpart, Corporación Mujer a Mujer, attempted to maintain a dialogue, especially with the mayor, but they were often unable to meet with him.

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