

► Fighting Violence against Women in Latin America



Unique Stories. Tell us yours.

"...you are always nervous, and when you go out with friends and say something he doesn't like, his looks could kill, no one notices, but you already know that a beating awaits when you get home" (Anonymous)

► Counterparts

"Cartas de Mujeres" – "Letters from women", a joint campaign with UN Women, the City of Quito and GIZ Ecuador, was developed as part of the UN Secretary-General's global campaign "UNETE para poner fin a la violencia contra la mujer" – "UNITE to end violence against women". Additional support came from UNHCR and other UN organizations, the Ecuadorian post, the daily papers "El Comercio" and "El Telégrafo" as well as the company Yanbal and the most viewed Ecuadorian television channel ECUAVISA. Of course, given the topic, the participation of numerous local and provincial women's organizations was also essential.

► Cooperation

The campaign has an innovative approach. It breaks through the silence surrounding gender violence, pushing the topic into public awareness and making it possible to hold politicians accountable. "Cartas de Mujeres" has a simple strategy: mostly women and children, but also men, tell their stories by writing letters in workshops and in public spaces created to give them the opportunity to write about their experiences, fears and hopes concerning gender-based violence. ComVoMujer worked in cooperation with other GIZ programs and

a variety of local counterparts to hold several workshops and collect letters.

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25th, 2011 the campaign was presented to the public. During "La Noche de Mujeres", an event launched to honor this day, all women were invited to participate in the activities offered in public spaces whereas men were allowed to join only after signing a pledge committing to violence-free and respectful behavior towards women.

Finally, from November 25th 2011 to March 8th 2012 (International Women's Day) letters were collected in 148 workshops as well as through the campaign's homepage and from more than 500 campaign mailboxes located throughout the country. The Ecuadorian postal service delivered all letters free of charge.

► Lessons Learned and Outcomes

In this manner, more than 10,000 letters, or rather stories, were written and submitted. But the campaign was not limited to written letters: drawings and "spoken letters" were also encouraged to illicit participation of those not familiar with writing and of those who simply felt





more comfortable expressing themselves drawing or speaking. The letters were digitized and catalogued, and some were published with the authors' permission.

The project's benefits are twofold. First, the letters contribute to a change in socio-cultural behavior patterns based on gender violence. Moreover, the publicity these letters received has also led to a broad condemnation of violence against women. Publicity was created by broad media campaigns in television and radio as well as an exhibition in the Center of Contemporary Art in Quito. In addition, 2000 "street signs" with statistics on gender violence were placed around the city to reach a broader audience. Second, thanks to their authenticity, the letters made an important political statement. Consequently, they were delivered to local and national politicians in an official act on March 8th, 2012.

The campaign is already bearing fruit, as the city of Quito issued a new municipal ordinance to

eliminate domestic and gender violence. This regulation is much better than the earlier version due to the more precise definition and the stronger focus on the security of women in public spaces.

Overall, the campaign has been a great success – a success made possible through the cooperation of a variety of players and the implementation of different types of activities: local information sessions, cultural events and empowerment activities, combined with an international media campaign (with more than 1500 mentions in different media) and political lobbying.

Inspired by "Cartas de Mujeres" Ecuador, the region of Guayaquil decided to implement a similar campaign on the local level, and both Peru and Bolivia have launched the initiative nation-wide.

Passing reference: The child relief organization Plan International has been inspired by the success of the campaign and will promote an analogue campaign for girls, "Cartas de niñas".



Regional Program ComVoMujer

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