

► Fighting Violence against Women in Latin America



“Women flourish without violence”

Prevention of gender-based violence within the flower industry

► Counterpart

EXPOFLORES is the association of Ecuadorian flower producers and exporters. The flower sector is one of the largest employers in the rural areas of Ecuador and a majority of its workers are women.

In 2008, EXPOFLORES started to implement the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on their flower farms with the support of the German Development Service (DED). Since 2010, EXPOFLORES has placed special focus on the prevention of violence against women within its CSR framework. The strategy is directed not only at employees but also at neighboring communities.

► Cooperation

Cooperation between EXPOFLORES and ComVoMujer began in 2010 with a diagnostic study that indicated that 56 % of all female employees working within the Ecuadorian flower industry had been victims of violence – primarily of domestic violence. These incidents not only gravely affect the women on a personal level, but also lead to economic losses: less productivity, more absenteeism, and more worker turnover. For these reasons the flower farms involved in the study were eager to develop a prevention program for gender-based violence. So far, 1,300 people have participated from 18 farms (north and south of Quito).

The program includes sensitization sessions as well as training on violence prevention for employees, such as human resource managers, technicians, and medical staff. The project is also running a study that seeks to investigate the relationship between violence against women and absenteeism

at work and/or job changes by female workers. The study has developed a number of specially-designed indicators in order to quantitatively gauge the impact of violence against women on these farms.

In parallel, a communications campaign called “Women flourish without violence” (“Mujer FlorEc sin violencia”) was launched on November 25, 2011 on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. White roses from FlorEc have become the symbol of strength for this social movement, which seeks to encourage all members of society to combat violence against women. The different flower farms use this symbol as a sign of their participation in combating gender based violence.

► Lessons Learned and Impact

A program’s success in cooperating with the private sector depends on several factors.

It is of fundamental importance to take into account the context and interests of the companies. Consequently, a prevention program should meet the firms’ specific expectations and demands. It should lead to visible, positive, long term effects.

In the case of the flower farms the cooperation had started long before the campaign FlorEc and a basis of trust had already been





established between the involved partners. Being aware of the consequences and effects of gender-based violence, such as higher costs and lower productivity caused by absenteeism and workplace changes, 18 flower farms decided to join the program.

By strategically employing the factors mentioned above, the project was able to achieve far-reaching results. The staff training included distributing road-maps for victims for local services located outside the companies, as well as developing internal treatment protocols for in-house incidents of gender-based violence on the farms. For this purpose each company's medical and human resource staff, as well as the foremen of different sections, received special trainings. Part of internal capacity trainings was the introduction of a register to document cases of gender-based violence and developing a protocol to coordinate external and internal help services.

Human resource managers also sought to promote the right of women to live a life free of violence under the motto "Together for fair treatment" ("Hagamos una minga por el buen trato"). They distributed informational material (which can also be used for staff trainings) to all employees.

During a working breakfast with the directors of EXPOFLORES in November 2011, the program received major positive feedback which motivated additional five farms to join the prevention program.

At the same time, the campaign „Mujer FlorEc sin violencia“ was launched on a national scale. 50 flower farms donated over 10,000 small bouquets, which were given away throughout the country on November 25, 2011. The event was reported by the media, which also showed two spots and a short documentary which can be watched on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDsinievggc>). Additionally, the Ecuadorian Vice President publicly supported the campaign, providing an important signal for the whole country.

It is no surprise that the efforts of the flower industry and the success of the campaign attracted international attention. The campaign has, for instance, been showcased on different occasions by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Germany.

Moreover, one of the businesswomen involved in the project was honored for her corporate policy and CSR activities. She was awarded a prize by USAID, the World Bank, and GIZ for demonstrating a strong commitment to the advancement of women. During the award ceremony a well-known Ecuadorian TV station, Ecuavisa, committed itself to broadcast more programs on preventing and fighting gender-based violence.



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