

▶ Fighting Violence against Women in Latin America



Ending violence against women in rural areas

▶ Counterpart

The Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas (CONAMURI; the National Coordinator of Rural and Indigenous Women's Organizations) is the only national umbrella organization which unites several indigenous and rural women workers organizations from different provinces across Paraguay. CONAMURI advocates equal rights between men and women within the family and in society, using an approach rooted not only in gender but also in ethnicity and class. More broadly, CONAMURI works to empower rural and indigenous women in all facets of life.

CONAMURI conducts its campaign "Stop Violence against Women in Rural Areas" together with the Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (CLOC; the Latin American Coordinator of Rural Organizations) and Vía Campesina (LVC; The International Peasant's Movement). CONAMURI partners with CLOC and LVC and is a member of both organizations. The campaign is a comprehensive, long-term intervention that launched in 2010 in front of a broad audience. Through the campaign, violence against women in rural areas has not only been made a strategic priority for CONAMURI, CLOC and LVC, but the issue has also been placed on the agendas of various government agencies in Paraguay. Toward that end, CONAMURI built alliances between various actors and sectors of society.

▶ Cooperation

In the end of 2010 CONAMURI started working with ComVoMujer on the issue of preventing gender-based violence directed at rural and indigenous women. The collaboration involved

conducting sensitization trainings within both organizations and running an advocacy campaign under the campaign "Basta de Violencia Hacia las Mujeres del Campo" – "Stop violence against rural and indigenous women". In this effort, both organizations were actively supported by various actors including the Spanish Instituto de la Mujer (Institute for Women's Affairs), the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC), the NGO "Mujeres en Zonas de Conflicto" (Women in Conflict Zones) and many other national and international members of CLOC and LVC.

The campaign and its sponsors aim to offer guidance and tools to the farmers' movement to begin a dialogue. Their goal is to effect a change in attitudes and values which goes beyond mere discourse but rather leads to the systematic inclusion of the prevention of gender-based violence in the agenda of farmer's organizations.

The goal is to sensitize women and men from rural regions towards the issue of violence against women while strengthening their capacity to protect their right to lead a life free of violence. Towards this end, international days of remembrance, such as International Women's Day (March 8) and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25) are very helpful and are used by CONAMURI to conduct relevant activities.



So far, the project has organized five seminars and national activity days on preventing violence against rural and indigenous women. Events have included intercultural seminars, open radio discussions and advocacy work to summon rural and indigenous women from different places throughout the country. Approximately 200 people from different Paraguayan provinces participated in each activity day.

Furthermore, the project has implemented a capacity plan at the grass-roots level. An array of supporting materials was produced, including a documentary and discussion guidelines, to facilitate open dialogue. Additionally, several groups of CONAMURI women were trained to become moderators (Guaraní: Pytyvohara) to introduce preventive measures within grassroots organizations.

► Lessons Learned and Impact

In the context of the campaign, CONAMURI and ComVoMujer successfully convinced several male leaders to act as spokespersons for the initiatives and motivated them to participate in activities that raise the visibility of the effort to reduce violence against women and girls and make it a socially relevant topic.

Linking local, regional and global strategies and organizational structures was highly effective. The coordination created synergies and fostered the message that gender-based violence is neither a “women’s issue” nor a “private matter,” but rather a global political problem of the highest order. Hence, the support of regionally and internationally well respected organizations like LVC and CLOC was extremely helpful.

As a result of this work, the 6th National Congress of CONAMURI announced that one of its strategic priorities would be the development of a Plan of Sensitization on national level under the motto: “Ñañangareko tekovére, teko sã’yre opa haguã ñemboharái kuñáre” – “Defend life and self-determination, eliminate violence”.

At the same time, it was important to promote the campaign on a local level in order to reach rural and remote areas as well. This was accomplished through strategic partnerships with non-commercial broadcasting stations that conducted capacity building activities and events, as well as providing general information on the topic of violence against women.

The broadcasting programs were only part of a broader media campaign that aimed at giving voice to rural and indigenous women. Women who were usually not able to make themselves heard jumped at this opportunity, especially on special days of remembrance like November 25 and March 8.

Last but not least, the annual nature of the campaign opened spaces for creative expression, since participants were able to prepare themselves well in advance. They were able to undertake innovative projects involving documentaries, community and street theater, radio ads and murals against violence – all of which helped to sensitize society about this critical issue.

Finally, the campaign was successful in that it gained the support of male leaders, who participated as speakers and activists to promote a topic that they often neglect. Their involvement helped raise the issue of gender-based violence as a critical social problem relevant to all members of society – and one that requires an immediate solution.



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