

The Vamos Tejiendo project: We must create safe environments for women

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Women in San Roque, Colombia, who took part in a Vamos Tejiendo activity with the local mayor's office to promote women's rights. Credit: Vamos Tejiendo.

It is critical to talk about gender-based violence as a major barrier to women's autonomy and development. Globally, one out of every three women over 15 years of age has suffered some type of violence by her partner, another aggressor or both, according to WHO data.

In Colombia, as elsewhere in the world, the Covid-19 pandemic has only increased rates of gender-based violence. The situation has been particularly complex for rural women, who already were struggling in the face of structural barriers to their rights. According to records of the Guidance Line for Women Victims of Violence -155, a government emergency number that supports victims of gender-based violence, its call volume during the pandemic increased by 130% compared to 2019. Queries about domestic violence increased by 142%, and calls for sexual crimes increased by 76%. The situation for girls has not been encouraging either; during 2021 there was an increase in the pregnancy rate in girls under 14 years and in adolescents between 14 and 19 years.

This has widened the gap between men and women in terms of guaranteeing their rights. A woman who is constantly under threat of violence is a woman whose physical autonomy is violated, along with her ability to generate her own income, participate in the labor market and build her own life. In this way, violence prevents women from having the capabilities and conditions to freely make decisions that affect their lives.

Gender stereotypes are the genesis of violence against women. The roles that society has imposed on them normalize women being exclusively responsible for housework, childcare and care work in general. Associated with the inherent nature of women, care work is considered "unproductive" under the current economic model and therefore unpaid.

Vamos Tejiendo, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), aims to promote the economic autonomy of women in the cut flower and panela value chains. The project is mindful that there are challenges in addressing economic autonomy if women remain in contexts of violence. For this reason, Vamos Tejiendo works in collaboration with municipal governments, private companies and civil society organizations to create protocols that eliminate violence against women and generate policies that promote gender equality at home, at work and in political participation. Vamos Tejiendo also conducts awareness campaigns and disseminates information on pathways for women who are victims of violence. This governance model weaves a network of safe environments in which public institutions, private companies and civil society work together to protect and guarantee women's rights.

Women and girls deserve to live a life free of violence!

On International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we invite you to **paint the world orange with us, so we can make a single call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women. We can create safe environments for women if we advocate for inclusive strategies, programs and resources; if we amplify stories that demonstrate successful prevention; if we promote the leadership of women and girls; and if we involve all of our partners.**

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