

Non-Gubernamental Organizations and Gender Violence: Case Nuevo Leon, Mexico

Organizaciones no gubernamentales y violencia de género: Caso Nuevo León, México

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Abstract

This paper addresses the role of non-governmental organizations, providing solidarity support and disinterested in the problem of violence against women. In Mexico this social problem has been difficult to solve, because it has social and cultural roots. The stage is presented in the national framework and we also see government structuring such as the non-governmental organization through civil society that hosts this social eventuality in Nuevo Leon. A descriptive methodology was used and qualitative representation, reports and documents were accessed, that allowed us to delimit the object of study. Nuevo León's scenario repeats social situation and violence that persists in Mexico. Nuevo Leon has 4.3 % of the country's women, violence persists in 59.3 % of them. First cause was in a communal way, following the one imposed by his partner. Government structure provides legal and care services. However, civil society has organized to address this contingency, and in Nuevo León there are organizations that 4.87 % are related to women's care in these cases. They perform care functions, human rights, self care, education and guidance, mental health services, capacity building and social reintegration.

Keywords

Civil society, non-governmental organizations, care, violence, gender, women

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Resumen

Este artículo plantea el análisis de la actuación de las organizaciones no gubernamentales, que brindan apoyo solidario y desinteresado ante la problemática subsistente de violencia en contra de la mujer. En México, este problema social ha sido difícil de atender, ya que cuenta con arraigo social como cultural. El escenario se presenta en el marco nacional y adicionalmente se observa la estructuración gubernamental y la organización no gubernamental mediante la sociedad civil que acoge esta eventualidad social en Nuevo León. Se empleó una metodología de carácter descriptivo y de representación cualitativa, se accedió a informes y documentos, lo que permitió acotar el objeto de estudio. El escenario de Nuevo León recrea la situación social y de violencia que en México subsiste. Para Nuevo León, que aglomera el 4.3 % de las mujeres del país, la violencia persiste en el 59.3 % de ellas. Principalmente esta fue perpetrada de manera comunitaria, siguiéndole la impuesta por su pareja. La estructura gubernamental cuenta con un tejido administrativo que presta servicios jurídicos y asistenciales. Sin embargo, la sociedad civil se ha organizado para atender esta contingencia, y en Nuevo León existe una red de organizaciones las cuales 4.87 % están relacionadas con la atención de la mujer en estos casos. Las mismas cumplen funciones asistenciales, de derechos humanos, de autocuidado, de educación y orientación, de servicios de salud mental, de formación de capacidades y reinserción social.

Palabras clave

Sociedad civil, organizaciones no gubernamentales, atención, violencia, género, mujeres.

Introduction

At present, there is a large presence of groups, as well as organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have emerged both in the international and national spheres in different countries. In this sense, Gómez-Quintero (2014, p. 360) comments that this event “has been called by some as the global civil society [...] and it emerged as some kind of global associational revolution [...] or a true explosion of society civil”.

The NGOs constitute what some authors such as Pérez et al. (2011) have called the Third Sector, which gives completeness to society since it is structured together with the other two sectors that are recognized as the State and the Productive sectors. In such a way that in the framework of the 21st cen-

ture, these non-governmental entities are now a very active component in the social context.

This flourishing has emerged societally, as Weber (1964) comments, from interpersonal relationships, of an individual or group nature, which concur with a common purpose. And which also seek to transcend through their activities, whose ultimate goal is to influence the socio-environmental context in which they subsist (Escobar, 2010).

Consequently, according to Luciano Tomassini (cited by Pérez, 2010), NGOs allow us to identify how civil society is organized — at the same time it is configured in different groups and/or associations— and that they increasingly take a leading role in matters that concern and interest the community. Consequently, their interventions also have to do with aspects that concern —not only those of local or national order but also incur their actions in matters of the international sphere.

Many are the fields of action of these NGOs, among which we can mention environmental aspects, in relation to human rights, social problems, as well as assistance and health, among others, that is to say, they are dedicated to a constellation of varied activities. But whose particularities that stand out in all NGOs are subsidiarity, solidarity, selfless support, as well as the common good.

Within this aforementioned framework, this research aims to characterize the NGOs that provide social strength and have influence in addressing the problem of gender violence, in the context of the community structure of the State of Nuevo León, Mexico.

Conceptual framework

At present, gender violence has been one of the most relevant and difficult social problems to address, since it has its entrails in the sociocultural elements that have given men the idea of a condition of superiority which, in turn, has conceived an absurd social asymmetry between women and men (Expósito, 2011). This heterosexuality, in the words of Suárez (2010), when it is built through constructs and particular interests, whether of a social or cultural nature, originates violence that can begin figuratively and later be shown through real events.

What is violence? Particularly in the framework of Declaration 48/104 promulgated by the United Nations General Assembly on the Elimination of Violence against Women, is typified as:

Any act of violence based on gender difference that results or may result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering for the woman, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether they are carried out in public and private life. (Rico, 1996, p. 12)

This international stance made it possible, in the last years of the last century, to highlight the violence exercised against women and essentially those violations of their human rights. Thus, the social invisibility of this event was shown and the unfortunate specificity it has, just because of being a woman (Yugueros, 2014).

During this same period of time, particularly in 1993, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) ruled —through the Committee on Women, Health, and Development— that it was extremely relevant and pertinent to develop a work plan to address the issue of violence against women, considering it as a public health problem that afflicted society in general and in turn invited immediate action (Sagot & Carcedo, 2000).

This happened, given the explicit prevalence of violence against women that persisted, essentially because it constituted a fact that, when consummated, resulted in disability or death among young women and wives of reproductive age. This knowledge prompted government authorities, as well as civil society, to take care of training health personnel, and with this, there was an additional strengthening of legal frameworks and public policies, essentially those that had an impact on social development as well as in the protection of women and girls (Velzeboer et al., 2003).

Gender-based violence, according to Osborne (2009), has different factors that range from direct oppression to a scenario of indirect abuse and domination over women. Sagot and Carcedo (2000) mention that regardless of how explicitly physical violence against women is manifested, it should be remembered that the psychological consequences are those with the most serious consequences due to their prolonged effects over time.

The World Health Organization (2017), points out, in its publication on data and figures related to gender violence, some very eloquent particularities in this regard, which indicate that a third of women in the world —at some point in their lives— have suffered violence, the expression of which can be physical and sexual, and this has its genesis in their partner or comes from someone other than her. Likewise, this international organization adds that 38% of homicides perpetrated in the world against women are committed by their male partner.

These internationally documented events against women constitute flagrant actions of exclusion and social submission, due to the fact that they are a woman, thus constantly violating their human rights (Alvarado & Guerra, 2012). However, Vega et al. (2011) cite that even gender-based violence can arise even before birth, when fathers and mothers in search of the birth of a boy, can coercively exert women to selectively perform abortions.

Methodology

The methodology that was developed for this review is within the framework of that classified as descriptive and qualitative in nature, since it focuses on a documentary exploration of both governmental and non-governmental information, to answer the following questions; What is the existing problem of violence against women? As well as, what NGOs are involved in addressing this social setback and what kind of support do they provide in the State of Nuevo León? To answer these questions, we investigated primary and secondary sources that come from the RedALyC Scientific Information System, Biblat-Latin American Bibliography portal of the CLASE and PERIÓDICA databases, Digital Academic Repository of the Autonomous University of Nuevo León, of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in Mexico, from the State Institute of Women in Nuevo León and Secretary of Social Development of the State of Nuevo León; carrying out a search with the following descriptors: gender violence, Mexico, Nuevo León, civil organizations, non-governmental organizations. Subsequently, we proceeded with reading the contents, making a critical analysis that allowed us to take in the object of study to be treated. This paper briefly reviews the national context and the case of the Federative Entity of Nuevo León (Mexico), to account for the organized civil structure that addresses the problem of gender violence.

Findings

Situation in Mexico

According to Casique (2017, p. 8) in Mexico, notable efforts have been made to recognize and prevent this social problem related to violence aga-

inst women, for this, the signatures and adherence to different international agreements such as the following are reported:

The First International Conference on Women held in Mexico in 1975, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, the Fourth International Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 and the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women of Belem do Pará [in 1994].

For this reason, in Mexico, the General Law of Access of Women to a Life Free of Violence was erected in 2007, which in article 5 of section IV establishes that violence against women is legally classified as “any action or omission, based on their gender, that causes them psychological, physical, patrimonial, economic, sexual harm or suffering or death in both the private and public spheres”.

However, the legal framework that accounts for gender violence, in our country according to Ramírez (2015), this legal precept has not transcended sufficiently in the social conscience, despite the fact that within the framework of the norms and Legal tools there are arguments that counteract discrimination based on gender. This prevails due to the social stereotypes that have been configured around the female figure, representing her with a high level of fidelity, abnegation, but particularly obedience and even enduring violence against her person. This means that this situation has become a public order problem that has included death, injuries, and a manifest devaluation of the quality of life just because of being a woman (Díaz, 2009).

In this sense, according to the National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (ENDIREH) carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography-INEGI (2016), 66.1 of Mexican women aged 15 or over have suffered at least one event of violence, where emotional violence stands out in 49% of cases, sexual violence continuing in 41.3 %, later physical violence in 34% and finally that relating to economic discrimination or at work at 29 %.

In addition, it documents that gender violence is not confined only to one area but also occurs in other social spaces. Thus, in Mexico during 2016, according to the ENDIREH, the prevalence of violence against women was perpetrated in 43.9 % of cases by their partner, 38.7 % in a community manner, 26.6 % in the workplace, 25.3 % in the school environment, and 10.3 % by a family member, also reporting that 78.6 % did not request

any support from any institution or filed a complaint after being subject to violence.

On the other hand, Mellissa Galván in 2019, mentions in her journalistic investigation, data that account for violence in Mexico against women, noting that nine women are murdered daily in the country, therefore, in the period from 2015 to 2019 there were 3,200 femicides in the national territory. To the above, she adds that Veracruz is the State where 104 femicides have occurred during the first semester of 2019, for which she places it as the most dangerous for women, followed by the State of Mexico with 42 cases, while the City of Mexico, in this same period of time, had already accumulated 18 femicides.

On the other hand, this same journalistic information reveals that, in the period from January to August 2019, 292 women were sexually assaulted in Mexico City, where 1.4 % of these were rapes of a tumultuous order. This behavior is preceded by a rate of sexual crimes —in 2017— against women that reached the figure of 2,733 victims per 100,000 women.

In addition, Galván (2019) mentions in his analysis that in a period of six years —2013 to 2018— the perception of insecurity by women increased by 7.4 % —from 74.7 % to 82.1 %— regardless of whether it is a public or private place, having mentioned mainly places such as ATMs (87 %), when approaching public transport (74.2%), when traveling on the street (72.9%), among others as dangerous spaces. While intimate partner violence comes mainly from her husband or ex-husband, as well as from the ex-fiancées, classifying these actions as severe to very severe in 64% of the events. Here it is worth mentioning that in Mexico, 19.4 % of women aged 15 years and over report having suffered at least one act of violence by their partners, which constitutes physical aggression, strangulation, sexual abuse, and threats with firearms.

Likewise, this study adds that in the State of Mexico, Mexico City, and the Federative Entity of Aguascalientes violence of an emotional, economic, physical, and sexual nature is practiced against women mainly by their partner, accounting for figures of 53.3 %, 52.6 % and 49.8 % —respectively— of the cases reported by the victims.

Among the consequences that emanate from these acts, it has been documented that, in 2016, 29.7 days of salaried work were lost by each victimized woman. Along with the aforementioned information, Galván (2019) cites that 33 % of women arrested by police have reported having been se-

usually assaulted by members of these police groups and finally asserts that violence is exacerbated when it comes to transgender, lesbian or bisexual women since the physical constitution of their bodies does not adhere to the assumed characteristics of the feminine body.

In accordance with the above, the NGOs that attend to these situations and provide services to women have been established in Mexican society with the aim of exercising an action that influences and makes this social problem visible to government institutions. Although these NGOs do not solve the complication, they do contribute by occupying the voided spaces of social care due to the lack of activities and/or interest by government structures (Olvera, 2015).

Nuevo Leon case

The sociodemographic structure of women in the State of Nuevo León brings together 4.3 % of women in the country, and these represent 50.3 % of the population that this federative entity has, and 37.3 % of these constitute part of the economically active population (EAP). The level of education held by economically active women is 4 % did not complete primary education, 14 % completed primary, 51 % complete secondary, and higher 31 % (INEGI, 2015).

The women of the EAP according to their marital status: 43% are married, 34 % single, 9 % are domestic partners, 7 % are separated, 4 % are widows and 3% are divorced. In particular, women who are in the EAP, 85.8% of them also perform household chores, 7.2 % only work, 5.4 % additionally study, and 1.6% report providing financial support to the home. In relation to the headship of households, 24% are headed by women (INEGI, 2015).

However, the State of Nuevo León, as it happens in the national scenario, has very similar behavior, and according to ENDIREH (INEGI, 2016) violence against women from Nuevo León was reported at 59.3 %. 35.7 % was consummated in a community manner, 32.2 % by their partner, 23 % in the workplace, and 18.4% in the school environment. Along the same discursive line, we can also add the trend regarding the prevalence of violence against women in Nuevo León which has increased; conceiving it as a crime that affects a woman. In 2010 there were 22,899 cases per 100,000 inhabitants and in 2018 there were 24,553 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, that is, it increased by 6.7 % (INEGI, 2019).

For this reason, currently the State of Nuevo León, through its government, has an administrative network that provides both care and guidance without any financial cost to women who are in a context of violence (Gobierno de Nuevo León, 2019). Among the services they provide are legal advice, psychological care, and social assistance, through public ministry agencies, family justice centers, centers for care and prevention of family violence, family care centers through the State Institute of Women.

In this case, we highlight the instance of the State Institute for Women (2019), which has within the framework of its responsibilities to promote public policies that contribute and guarantee actions that are based on non-discrimination and social exclusion of women and also affirm full respect for women's human rights. Another feature of this administrative structure of a governmental nature is that they promote the Alert of Gender Violence against Women (AVGM), which is the device determined in the General Law of Access for Women to a Life Free of Violence, to guarantee the legal security for both women and girls.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, civil society, when observing the current problem, has organized itself in a structured way to support, in a genuine act of governance, the attention to women who have been victims and to contribute to the social support that is required in these cases. It is necessary to emphasize that governance is conceived as that interaction that arises between government entities and civil society to address social problems (Canto, 2008). In this way, there were 595 NGOs inscribed in the registry of civil organizations of the Government of the State of Nuevo León during 2019 that are particularly focused on social development; of which 4.87 % (f = 29) are related to care for women.

We were able to characterize these 29 NGOs after a review of their purposes and according to their purposes in eight routes that they mainly follow. Next, we refer to these lines of action detected in the framework of the NGOs' pronouncements:

- *Attention to women subject to violence*: they promote prevention, protection and provide multidisciplinary services to women who co-exist under the yoke of family violence. They represent 24.1% of the institutions. wthey are: Alternativas Pacíficas, A.C.; Asociación de Salud Integral y Desarrollo Personal, A.C.; Family Research Center, A.C.; Explora-T, A.C.; Instituto de Mujer Restaurada, A.C.; Lea-

ders with a Vision of Ayudar y Transformar, A.C.; Mujeres de Valor, A.B.P.; 7) Viccali, A.C.

- *They attend to the human rights of women:* they carry out an analysis of current legal frameworks and public policies in order to make proposals for solutions, within the framework of human rights, to this social phenomenon. They personify 17.2% of the institutions and we find NGOs such as 1) Agrupación Política Femenina, A.C.; Arthemisas por la Equidad, A.C.; 3) Asociación de Sororidad Tanatológica Ana Sullivan, A.C.; Mariposas de la Felicidad, A.C.; Mujer en Plenitud, A.B.P.
- *They promote self-care among women:* they provide guidance to make women aware of their self-care in medical, legal, and psychological aspects and thus being able to face the difficulties of a violent environment, seeking that they manage to preserve their dignity and thus strengthen their empowerment. They constitute 13.7% of the institutions: Asociación Mujer Saludable, A.C.; Centro de Ayuda para la Mujer Latinoamericana, A.C.; Centro de Orientación Familiar Jahdiel, A.C.; Ellas en Movimiento, A.C.
- *They intervene socially with education and orientation programs for women:* they raise awareness and educate women about the aspects that gender violence interferes with within the framework of making people's dignity flourish again. They make up 13.7% of the institutions and we note: Grupo Interdisciplinario para Asuntos de la Mujer, A.C.; Sendas de Victoria, A.C.; 3) Tranvida A.C.; Tejedoras de Cambio, A.C.
- *They provide mental health services to women victims of violence:* they provide therapeutic care to stop the trauma and cycles of suffering caused by violence against women. They make up 10.3% of the institutions: Asociación Mexicana para Ayuda Mental en Crisis, A.C.; Asociación Psicoanalítica de Orientación Lancaniana, A.C.; Asociación Regiomontana de Psicoanálisis, A.C.
- *They offer training and skill development to women:* they support women subjected to violence through an opportunity for technical and professional improvement so that they can become independent and take up a new life project. They make up 10.3% of the institutions and we noticed Instituto de Educación Preescolar, A.C.; Centro Pedagógico Cumbres; Promesa Femenina, A.C.

- *Social assistance to women who suffer from violence*: they contribute through assistance work to cover the deficiencies in the living conditions in which women and their families also subsist. They represent 6.8% of the institutions: Vida y Familia Monterrey, A.C.; Mujeres Que Saben Creer, A.C.
- *The social reintegration of women who have suffered assault*: they offer a space for lodging and food that allows women who have been subjected to violence to regain control of their lives and gradually integrate into a social and productive life. They represent 3.4% of the institution: Fundación Lamentos Escuchados, A.C.

As evidenced in the NGOs, the social network that allows women subjected to violence to have protection through the framework of human rights is consolidated, where they are educated and oriented towards their self-care. But, in addition, they receive mental health services in order to restore their dignity and social skills, receiving social assistance during these periods and, finally, having a new opportunity to reintegrate into the social nucleus, in order to recover the course of their life.

Discussion

During this analysis, we have been able to notice the relationship that subsists in Nuevo León between the government and society, which favors citizen participation, which strengthens, on the one hand, its intervention in social processes and situations that imply care. It should be added that in this way, civil society in an organized manner affects the administrative structures of governmental order and consequently in the application of public policies (Quintero-Castellanos, 2017).

On the other hand, the NGOs incur, in accordance with their purposes and missions, in a reading of their socio-environmental environment, which allows them to detect collective issues that violate or satisfy the social and governmental order, and their actions are centralized to modify or sustain the prevailing social context, within the framework that assists them as active participants in a democratic society, of recognition and respect for people's rights. In this way, they are inserted into the sphere of public decisions and actions (Canto, 2008).

Thus, the NGOs in Nuevo León have attended to the issue of gender violence and care for women who subsist in an environment of violence is demarcated from the perspective of governance by structured civil organizations and by an understanding of the existing problem, in which they show expressions of an exercise of public power (Aguilar, 2011). Additionally, this highlights a horizontal interaction between public agencies, private institutions, and the community (Brower, 2016).

Although governance explicitly seen through NGOs may arise in an environment characterized by demands and tensions due to their connection with the realities of society, such as in this case the attention to violence in which women subsist, it should be emphasized that the actions that emerge in an organized way in civil society are always linked to the great social agreements that are embodied in public policies and in the performance of governments (De Sousa Santos, 2004).

From our position of analysis, the NGOs in a general way, but in particular to the object of study that we are analyzing, which deals with the groups that help in the care of women who are subjected to violence in Nuevo León, these organizations stand as actors that legitimately articulate the needs of society emanating from this problem and join them to the solution guidelines of governmental order, with the purpose of impacting socially in the cultural sphere as well as in the structural part of society. This is achieved by sensitizing and intervening in the social collective, where violence as a result of social interactions has its genesis, and where it is also experienced and transcribed in the social fabric (Martínez, 2008).

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