

Changing Community Responses to Wife Abuse

A Research and Demonstration Project in Iztacalco, Mexico

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This article describes the process of designing a multifaceted, community-based intervention to change community responses to wife abuse in Iztacalco, a low-income community on the outskirts of Mexico City. The goal of the intervention is to encourage women to recognize and disclose abuse and to encourage more constructive, less victim-blaming attitudes among family members, friends, and the community at large. The intervention is based on the belief that the response that a woman first gets upon disclosing her situation will be critical in setting the course of her future actions. The intervention includes small-scale media (e.g., buttons, posters, events) and a 12-session workshop to train women as community change agents. The design is based on insights derived from formative research and from the transtheoretical model of behavior change as elaborated by J. O. Prochaska and C. C. DiClemente (1982) and adapted to the special case of domestic violence by J. Brown (1997). The article also illustrates the utility of adapting popular education techniques to the research setting in order facilitate more honest disclosure of prevailing norms and attitudes about abuse.

Despite over 20 years of activism against gender-based abuse, violence against women remains a significant threat to women's health and well-being in Mexico (Riquer, Saucedo, & Bedolla, 1996). Until recently, the strategic focus of most women's groups has been on law reform and on providing services for victims. Although significant progress has been made on both these fronts,¹ much remains to be done to challenge the cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs that keep women trapped in abusive relationships.

Indeed, lack of attention to attitudes and community norms has been an overall weakness in the antiviolence movement globally (Heise, 1996; Kelly, 1996). The unmet need for services is so great internationally that most groups have had little energy left over to invest in strategies to address issues at the community level. To the extent that groups have moved beyond crisis management, they have generally concentrated on challenging the treatment that abused women receive at the

hands of public institutions such as the police, courts, and hospitals. Although clearly important, reform at the level of institutions can at best influence the future life course of the small percentage of women who are willing and able to access these formal structures.

Numerous research studies confirm that at any one time, the majority of abused women are not in contact with formal institutions; they are either in denial of their situation, overwhelmed by self-doubt, or unconvinced that the benefits of action outweigh the risks. To the extent that women do reach out, they tend to do so first to trusted family and friends, not to formal agencies or professionals (Kelly, 1996; Shrader, 1998; PAHO, 1998). As a result, the majority of today's interventions are serving the needs of the small minority of abused women who are actively engaged in attempting to change their current situation.

Yet what of the remaining majority? What can be done to assist those women who have not yet taken concrete action on the path to change? What can be done to tip

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¹ In April 1996, the "Federal District Law for Attention and Prevention of Family Violence" came into effect. It stipulates the creation of special units to attend to victims of family violence and procedures for reaching a formal agreement between the parties involved. More recently, in December 1997, a series of reforms to the Civil and Penal Codes were approved by the President of Mexico, in which family violence is considered to be a crime and encompasses even those acts that do not leave visible marks.

the balance in favor of action among those women who remain trapped by indecision, denial, economic dependence, social convention, or fear?

In 1997, we began working in the Iztacalco district of Mexico City to design a multifaceted, community-based intervention to try to address these concerns. This article reports on the results of the program of formative research that preceded the design of the intervention and describes the intervention itself, which is presently underway and will be evaluated as part of the overall project. Although we are unable to report the results of this intervention, the intellectual task of building a domestic violence intervention based on formative research and theory are sufficiently complex to warrant separate consideration.

The Setting

The setting of our research and demonstration project is a peri-urban community in the Iztacalco district of Mexico City. Central to community life in this neighborhood is Centro Felipe Carrillo Puerto (CFCP), a community center that has served low-income women and their families for over 23 years. CFCP trains community promoters, holds workshops on infant development and sexual and reproductive health, and has recently opened a bakery to train women in microenterprise development. Nevertheless, the community is suffering economic hardship and severe social problems, especially among its youth. A needs assessment conducted in 1995 found that members of the community identified alcoholism and violence as priority concerns, with drug abuse and drug dealing as significant threats on the horizon. With little institutional support besides CFCP, the community lacks a formal means of addressing the issue of domestic violence. Therefore, the proposal to develop a community-based response to wife abuse provides not only an ideal opportunity to test a new approach to violence prevention but also a means to address a felt local need.

Although quantitative data on rates of violence are not specifically available for Iztacalco, there is ample evidence that domestic violence is an endemic problem in Mexico. Among a random sample of women in another peri-urban neighborhood in Mexico City, 33 percent report having lived in a violent relationship. Of these, 66 percent had been physically abused, 76 percent psychologically abused, and 21 percent sexually abused (Shrader & Valdez, 1992). In a random household survey among rural and urban women in the Mexican state of Jalisco, 57 percent of women had experienced some sort of interpersonal violence: In more than 60 percent of the cases the principle offender was the husband (Ramírez & Uribe, 1993). Likewise, among women attending an outpatient clinic in San Miguel de Allende, 61 percent had experienced physical abuse in adulthood (Romero & Tolbert, 1995). Justice system statistics confirm that women are the victims of 88 percent of all registered cases of domestic violence in Mexico City (Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal, 1997).

The Formative Research

Whereas thousands of organizations worldwide are engaged in programs to combat violence against women, few interventions have been designed on the basis of formative research. Until recently, the vast majority of work has been undertaken by small-scale women's organizations that have tended not to have the resources to carry out extensive research. As a result, intervention strategies have evolved more by praxis than by a systematic assessment of community attitudes, norms, and beliefs, prior to initiation.

In this project, we intended to design an intervention specifically linked to the dominant beliefs and concerns of community members, incorporating, where appropriate, insights suggested from theory and other research. We therefore undertook an extensive program of formative research that included participant observation, eight focus groups with a total of 45 people recruited from the community in question, and five in-depth interviews with abused women.

Focus Groups

The goal of the focus groups was to explore community norms, attitudes, and beliefs around the following themes: (a) origins of violence against women, (b) responsibility for violence against women, (c) strategies available to women living with a violent partner, and (d) intervention of others in cases of domestic violence.

Prior to developing the focus group guide, we held informal discussions with members of the community to explore different ways of approaching the subject of violence against women. Direct questioning resulted in limited responses from community members, who tried to convince us of their knowledge of how conflicts "should" be resolved nonviolently. They talked of women's rights and were careful not to openly justify a man's violent behavior toward his partner. Nevertheless, our own observations of the community in question, and the aforementioned statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence, point to the continuing existence of underlying norms that perpetuate violence against women in Mexico. In our focus groups we wanted to go beyond this discourse. Therefore we adapted popular education techniques to the focus group setting, in order to encourage spontaneous discussion, while at the same time protecting participants from unwanted personal disclosure. Similar techniques had already been used successfully in Nicaragua in a national study to explore public opinion about the inclusion of sanctions for family violence in the Penal Code (Ellsberg, Liljestrand, Winkvist, 1997).

Two exercises were developed to encourage the open expression of norms, attitudes, and beliefs around the four identified themes. The first part of the focus group session was based on a story-completion exercise, for which we developed a short description of the life of Rosita, a woman who suffered abuse from her partner, Victor. Four scenarios were also created, each with a separate set of questions to elicit participants' responses to the different choices that Rosita could make (see Figure 1). After listening to the description of Rosita's life, members of the focus groups were paired. Each pair was given one of these scenarios to

Figure 1
Choices Available to Rosita

Vignette:

"Rosita lives with her husband Victor and their two children, a three year old son and a five year old daughter. She finished fifth grade primary school and is a housewife, but for some time now she has wanted to leave Victor. He does not give her enough housekeeping money and does not let her work because he gets jealous. When he comes home drunk, he insults her and sometimes forces her to have sex. Rosita has tried talking to him, but it is like talking to a wall. She has put up with the situation for the last four years and hasn't told anybody. She doesn't know what to do..."

Group 1: Rosita decides to ask for help:

1. Where does she go to ask for help?
2. What do they say to her?
3. What does she decide to do?

Group 2: Rosita asks someone to talk to Victor

1. Who would Victor listen to? What should this person say to him?
2. What would Victor's reaction be if other people tried to intervene?
3. What reasons does Victor give for treating Rosita this way?

Group 3: Rosita decides to leave Victor

1. What is going to be the most difficult for her?
2. How will it affect her children?
3. What does Rosita need to succeed on her own with her children?

Group 4: Rosita decides to leave Victor, but two weeks later returns to him

1. What made Rosita return to Victor, even though she thinks he won't change?
2. How do her family/friends react to the news?
3. Do you think this is best for her and her children?

discuss, before sharing their opinion with the rest of the group.

The second part of the session was an exercise adapted from the concept of the Venn Diagram to depict the interaction between abused women and various sources of support (Ellsberg et al., 1997). A circle representing the abused woman (Rosita) was placed on the wall, and participants were asked to think about potential forms of support available for her. They were then asked to place circles representing these sources of support around the original circle to show their accessibility for Rosita (close representing accessible, far representing inaccessible).

Both of these exercises formed the basis of all the focus group discussions. However, difficulty in recruiting male participants for these sessions led us to interview three groups of young men on the street, which made it necessary to adapt the exercises to an outdoor setting. Due

to these circumstances, it was only possible to tape one of these three sessions, and field notes were made for the other two.

In-Depth Interviews

Because the very nature of focus groups limits the depth of information that can be obtained by the researcher, we decided to conduct additional in-depth interviews with women from the community who had revealed that they had lived with or were currently living with a violent partner. Five women were invited to take part in the interview by the person to whom they had revealed their experience of abuse, and all five agreed to be interviewed.

The in-depth interviews took place after the focus group sessions had been analyzed and had the purpose of (a) clarifying some of the findings from the focus groups, (b) exploring the perceptions of abused women about the

violence they experienced and the support available to them, and (c) determining strategies adopted by these women to survive and/or end the abuse.

Results of Formative Research

Both the focus groups and in-depth interviews were taped and transcribed, except in the case of the two focus groups with men that have already been mentioned. The transcripts and field notes were then read separately by two researchers to discover emerging themes. Categories were developed to code the texts, noncoded information was then reviewed, and finally the coded data was analyzed. This analysis led to a vast amount of information regarding the norms, attitudes, and beliefs held by interviewees about violence against women, although for the purpose of this article, we describe only those findings that are relevant to the design of our multifaceted intervention. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that many beliefs and attitudes were shared by men and women, old and young alike, and surprisingly few differences were found between the members of different groups in the community.

Perceived Origins of Violence Against Women

Research participants described violence in general as being related to a lack of education and to economic hardship. They did not identify unequal power relations between men and women as an origin of violence against women. Among focus group members, alcoholism, work pressure, and the threat of unemployment were the most commonly named reasons for Victor's violence toward Rosita. Given the high levels of unemployment and alcoholism in the community in question, it is not surprising that these factors were far more tangible to participants than the concept of gender inequality. Some individuals also observed that violent men have either witnessed violence between their parents during childhood or been victims of violence themselves. Abused women specifically mentioned the following as sources of their partners' aggression: alcohol, money problems, jealousy, unfaithfulness, criticisms about family, their children's education, pregnancy, and the birth of a child of the "wrong" sex.

Perceived Responsibility for Violence Against Women

Some adult and teenage women in the focus groups suggested that violence was an expected consequence of women not having complied with their (gender) roles, thus implying a sense of responsibility on their part. Male participants blamed men's violence on external factors such as being "under pressure" as family breadwinners, being "under the influence" of alcohol, or being "driven to" it by their wives. Male denial of responsibility has been documented in research from other countries (Bograd, 1988; Hydèn, 1994; Ptacek, 1988) and is closely related to the self-blame that many battered women suffer. Our fictitious character, Rosita, was therefore not only considered responsible for provoking violence but also for not setting limits, not being able to communicate with her partner, and

not being able to "make him behave." Three of the abused women described the violence as first occurring while they were dating their partners. In these instances, women noted that they had hoped their partner would change or assumed that they would be able to make this change come about.

Abused Women's Perceptions of Violence and Their Violent Partner

Women in the in-depth interviews who discussed current relationships also tended to minimize the violence they experienced and to emphasize the good points of their partner, as a father or as a responsible provider for the family. Two women who were interviewed and who no longer lived with their violent partners were unable to describe any positive qualities in their ex-partners. It is not clear if this perception helped precipitate the separation or was the result of the separation. However, minimization or neutralization of violent acts has been documented as a strategy used by both men and women for preserving the relationship (Hydèn, 1994; Kelly, 1988).

Separation as a Strategy for Ending the Violence

Focus group participants were aware of the many emotional and practical obstacles that Rosita faced if she wished to leave Victor. Among those mentioned were low self-esteem, insecurity, fear of reprisals or further violence, the hope that her partner would change, lack of support from her family and friends, and lack of income. The children's needs were focused on primarily, because participants were concerned that they would lose a father figure (see Finkler, 1997). These factors have also been documented in extensive research carried out in several Latin American countries to determine what inhibits or facilitates help seeking by women affected by family violence (Shrader, 1998). Despite understanding why a woman might remain with her husband, respondents insisted that she should separate and expressed little support for Rosita in the scenario in which she returns to Victor. Thus, participants were unable to appreciate that temporary separation may be part of a longer process of change (Brown, 1997). Abused women seem to face a catch-22 situation: They are judged if they leave for breaking up their family, and they are judged if they stay for remaining with an abuser.

Factors mentioned as potential catalysts in the abused women's decision to leave their partners were the realization that their partner would not change, not being able to accept his promises and forget the violence, seeing that the situation was affecting their children, starting to work, and having a home of their own. Some women in the focus groups suggested that meeting a more caring man would also enable a woman to leave her violent partner. Nevertheless, separation was clearly problematic for these women due to the obstacles described above.

Protective Strategies Used by Women in the Face of Violence

In order to diffuse potentially violent situations, the abused women described adopting certain strategies such as pa-

tience, tolerance, remaining silent, hiding from their partner, ignoring him, having sex with him, or doing exactly as he asked. None of them had thought of developing an emergency plan in case their own life or those of their children were at risk. One woman described how she used to defend herself both verbally and physically from her partner with some degree of success, although she described always fearing for her life. Although some of the women recognized that they too were aggressive toward their partner, they considered this to be a response to their partners' behavior. The forms of aggression that they acknowledged using were withholding sex, insulting their partner or criticizing his sexual ability and his ability to support the family, not serving him his meals, and locking him out of the family home.

Help Seeking Behavior and Perceived Support

Of the few formal institutions known to women, the CFCC community center was seen as a possible source of support that would enable women to confront their situation. Abused women expressed feeling embarrassment and shame at disclosing their situation, preferring to try to solve their problems on their own, rather than create more problems for their family or friends. Nevertheless, both women in the focus groups and the abused women themselves said they would feel more comfortable turning to other women for help, particularly their mother or a mother figure, rather than formal support services. For example, in the Venn Diagram exercises, individuals tended to place formal institutions, such as the police, very far from the central character representing Rosita, indicating that these sources of support were perceived as inaccessible. By contrast, the family, and particularly mothers, were consistently located close to the center of the diagram, indicating that, in Izta-calco as in many other studies (Hanmer, 1995; McGibbon, Cooper, & Kelly, 1989; Mooney, 1994), women perceived family, close friends, and other informal sources of support as more accessible.

The attitudes of family and friends, however, were not uniformly supportive and in some cases were very judgmental and blaming. It was felt that friends in particular were likely to gossip, whereas mothers frequently responded that daughters should tolerate the situation because "tú te lo buscaste" [you asked for it] or advised them to try to keep the family together. The image of the woman as a self-sacrificing martyr is one that holds considerable emotional currency in Mexican gender ideology (Finkler, 1997). When the abused women were asked how they would like someone to intervene, they responded that they wanted someone to stop their partner while he was hitting them or to talk to him and "make him understand."

Intervention in Domestic Violence Cases

Focus group participants in general felt that violence between partners was a private issue that should be resolved within the family. There was an overall reluctance to get involved in other people's private matters, and participants frequently noted that intervention could backfire, creating

more problems for the woman involved and for themselves. This sentiment was captured in the frequently noted phrase: "El que mete paz, saca más" [Whoever tries to make peace, gets more than (s)he bargained for]. Participants did not have a consistent idea about what levels of violence were unacceptable and therefore required intervention. Some considered that intervention was necessary when the violence affected children in the home, and others when the aggression became physical.

Although some respondents suggested talking to the couple, there was no consensus regarding who would be the most appropriate person for this task. Examples were given of interventions that had helped diffuse violent situations and of interventions that had resulted in increased violence toward the family and the person who intervened. Cases were also described where children intervened, but the women generally did not want this to happen, as they were concerned for their children's safety. It was expected that in the case of Rosita, Victor would resist intervention and was likely to become more violent. Intervention by men was perceived as likely to end in a fight, because men confront violence with violence. However, participants did describe cases in which intervention by a male family member was perceived as producing a positive change in the male partner, at least in the short term.

Linking Research and Theory to Intervention Design

The task of taking these findings and developing them into an effective community campaign is complicated by the lack of well-grounded theory to guide intervention and evaluation. There is neither a widely accepted theory on the etiology of domestic violence (Heise, 1998) nor is it entirely clear how to adapt existing behavior change theories to the special case of domestic abuse.

Consider, for example, some of the behavior change models most commonly applied to issues such as HIV prevention or smoking cessation (e.g., theory of reasoned action, stages of change, etc.). When designing smoking-cessation or HIV-prevention programs, the focus of the desired behavior change is fairly obvious: quit smoking, use a condom. In the case of domestic violence, however, the focus of the intervention is less clear. Who or what should be the target—the woman herself, her partner, community norms, the behavior of family or friends, the behavior of institutional bodies such as the police? What is the behavior one is seeking—an end to the violence, that the woman leaves her partner, that she reports the abuse?

Evaluations of domestic violence interventions have traditionally used one of several outcome measures: the quantity and type of abuse that a woman experiences, whether or not she reports the abuse or seeks help from support services, and whether or not she leaves the abuser (Brown, 1997). Each of these measures presents its own set of problems in the context of designing and evaluating broad-based domestic violence interventions.

Measures of actual rates of abuse such as the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979) or, more recently, the Abusive Behavior Inventory (Shepard & Campbell, 1992) are

problematic because they presuppose the ability to affect profound change in a complex area of human interaction in a relatively short period of time. Even highly focused interventions with batterers have been unable to consistently achieve an impact on reported rates of physical and psychological abuse within partnerships (Tolman & Edleson, 1995). It is therefore unrealistic to assume that a community-based effort would be able to influence abuse rates within the time period of our intervention.

Likewise, "reporting the abuse" or "leaving the abuser," as outcome measures presuppose that "leaving" and "reporting" are realistic and useful behaviors to encourage. Although we believe that women who choose to leave should be fully supported in this decision, we do not feel fully comfortable saying that "leaving" is the behavior we seek to promote. The financial and social options for poor, single women and mothers in Iztacalco are extremely limited. Until such a time that reasonable alternatives and support services are available, we are reluctant to design a campaign whose explicit purpose is to encourage women to leave.

In light of these uncertainties, we chose to focus our intervention on women who have not yet disclosed their abuse and on the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of those family and friends immediately surrounding her. As our formative research revealed, to the extent that women reach out for help, they tend to do so with close family or friends, most notably their mother or a mother figure. How this individual responds to the woman's first efforts to reach beyond herself is often defining of whether the woman continues on the road toward externalizing blame or whether she retreats once again into isolation and self-doubt. As Kelly (1996) notes in her article, "Enhancing Informal Responses to Domestic Violence,"

Each community of which women and men are members can condone or challenge domestic violence, can recognize it as an issue or ignore it, can support women who are abused or exclude them . . . The response women encounter will generally be a contradictory and confusing mixture of solace, support and advocacy alongside skepticism, indifference, and exclusion. The balance contributes to or subtracts from her sense of personal and social power to resist and refuse abuse. (p. 68)

Our research has shown that myths about the origins of violence abound in the Iztacalco community, as does prejudice about responsibility for violence against women and resistance to intervening in cases of wife abuse. Thus, it would appear that the environment in question does indeed limit women's ability to resist and refuse abuse.

It is our belief then that "disclosure" and the response that it evokes represent a critical step along the pathway of change for abused women. In this regard, the transtheoretical ("stages of change") model proposed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1982) and adapted to the case of battered women by Brown (1997) provides a useful framework for conceptualizing the incremental steps toward definitive action on the part of an abused woman.

Research on how people change, on their own or with assistance, indicates that they progress through stages. In-

Figure 2
Behavioral Indicators of the "Stages of Change" in the Context of Wife Abuse

<p><u>Precontemplation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denial or self blame Nonrecognition of behaviors as abusive Culturally reinforced tolerance (That's just the way it is) <p><u>Contemplation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of violence as abuse Ability to name the different types of violence Knowing where to go for help Willingness to disclose abuse to friends or family Fatalism <p><u>Preparation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for help from family or friends Emergency planning Seeking assistance from formal institutions Participation in a support group Threatening to leave Leaving the abuser for short periods of time <p><u>Action:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopting active strategies to "manage" the abuse (fighting back) Leaving for good Seeking a protection order Taking legal action

dividuals begin as *precontemplators*, not aware of a problem or actively in denial; they move on to *contemplation*, where they begin to recognize the need for change; they continue on to *preparation*, where they begin actively planning for change; and then to *action*, where actual change takes place; and finally on to *maintenance*, where they solidify change and actively resist relapse (Figure 2).

In this model, progression through the stages is not linear, and "relapse" is seen as a natural and expected part

of progressing. The process most appropriately is visualized as a spiral, where people advance through the stages and occasionally recycle back, but each round get closer and closer to their goal.

With this in mind, we have decided to focus our intervention on (a) helping women recognize abuse and (b) encouraging those around her to respond to her in a supportive rather than judgmental or victim-blaming way. In this manner, we hope to encourage and sustain movement from precontemplation to contemplation, preparation, and action and forestall women recycling back because their first efforts to disclose were met with indifference or blame.

As Brown (1997) points out in her study of change among battered women in the United States,

The balance between a supportive, understanding environment and a person's readiness to change is a delicate one. Some people will persevere, no matter what. Others will find change daunting even in the most supportive environment. The majority, however, will be encouraged to consider change sooner if their immediate environment and the community at large support their view with understanding and concrete services. (p. 11)

The goal of our intervention then was to create a supportive environment so that once the woman's awareness is raised, she can continue forward along the pathway to change.

The Intervention

In keeping with sound theory on community action (Bracht, 1990; Piotrow, Kincaid, Rimon, & Rinehart, 1997), we designed a multifaceted intervention that involves peer outreach, small-scale media, popular theater, and other special events to reach abused women and members of the community at large.

The intervention has two main parts: (a) a 12-session intensive consciousness-raising and skills-developing workshop for women and (b) a large-scale community campaign.

The Workshop

Early on in the project, it became clear that it would be necessary to shore up the local resources available to abused women before inaugurating a campaign that might mobilize a demand for services that the community was ill-prepared to handle. Therefore, we decided to begin the intervention by developing an intensive workshop that would develop a group of local women with a critical consciousness about violence and concrete skills to assist victims. These women would serve as change agents in the community by modeling new attitudes and behaviors and would become a local resource for women who disclosed abuse throughout the overall period of intervention. At the same time this strategy serves as a means to help abused women in the workshop understand their situation and explore the alternatives available to them.

Specifically, the objectives of the workshop are (a) To create a cadre of nonjudgmental community women (especially mothers) who could provide support and information to abused women, thus encouraging them to move from

precontemplation, to contemplation, preparation, and action; and (b) To help those abused women who participate to recognize abuse, realize that they are not to blame, and identify different sources of support (thus helping them move through stages of change toward preparation and action).

The workshop covered many of the points that arose in the formative research, as well as other issues that have been addressed by theory and research on domestic violence, including

1. Family violence as an important community problem
2. Family violence legislation
3. Forms of violence and their objectives
4. Gender role expectations and violence against women
5. Female socialization and violence against women
6. Male socialization and violence against women
7. The cycle of violence
8. The personal and social consequences of violence against women
9. Alternatives available for abused women
10. Crisis-intervention skills
11. Institutions that support victims of violence
12. Community-intervention

The workshop is the part of the intervention that has the most potential for directly transforming the lives of women in the community, because it includes a broad range of information as well as skills development that would be impossible to achieve in the community campaign. Although it does not aim to be therapeutic in any way, it is highly participatory and demands high levels of self-reflection. Moreover, experiences shared by the women over the course of the workshop create a unique bond that goes beyond the boundaries of the workshop itself. Workshop exercises encourage women to examine their own attitudes and beliefs about relationships, gender roles, and conflict and to explore how certain cultural beliefs and norms serve to perpetuate abuse or allow it to go uncensored.

The Community Campaign

This stage of the intervention involves a small-scale media campaign aimed at reaching the wider community. The campaign, which is presently ongoing, includes posters, leaflets, buttons, "photo-stories," and community events all built around certain themes. Workshop participants helped in the design and pilot testing of the campaign messages, and are the primary agents responsible for distributing and reinforcing these messages. Table 1 summarizes the different elements of the campaign and how they relate back to the overall objectives.

The objectives of this community campaign are (a) To shift the community perception of domestic violence from a private problem that should not be interfered with to a community issue that is the responsibility of all, (b) To reduce victim-blaming of women and encourage more useful, supportive responses on the part of family and friends to women living in violent relationships, and (c) To help individual women in the community to move from precontemplation to contemplation, preparation, and action by

Table 1
Overview of the Community Campaign

Population	Objectives	Campaign messages	Strategies
Abused women	To move women from precontemplation to contemplation, preparation, and action	Violence includes physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse "It's not your fault" Where to go for help	1) Outreach by women from the workshop using the Relationship Assessment Tool 2) Photo-story 3) Leaflets/posters 4) Events
Community members	To shift the perception of abuse from a private problem that should not be interfered with to a community issue that is the responsibility of all	El que mete paz, gana más [The peacemaker gains a lot]	1) Buttons 2) Posters/leaflets 3) Photo-story 4) Events
	To reduce victim blaming and encourage more useful and supportive responses on the part of family and friends to women living in violent situations	La mujer maltratada te necesita Acércate Apóyala Ayúdala Acompáñala a los centros . . . (see Figure 3 for translation)	1) Posters/leaflets 2) Photo-story 3) Events 4) Women model appropriate responses

advertising the types of violence, the elements of the new domestic violence laws, and where to go for help.

In keeping with these goals, the project has adopted key slogans that have been incorporated into posters, buttons, and community events. The campaign slogan aims at attacking the dominant norm that says it is inappropriate to intervene into the private sphere of the family. The slogan transforms the commonly used phrase "El que mete paz, saca más" (Whoever tries to make peace gets more than (s)he bargained for) into "El que mete paz, gana más," in order to emphasize what can be *gained* from getting involved.

The poster message aims at encouraging more constructive, less victim-blaming responses on the part of community members to women living in abusive situations. The phrase "La mujer maltrada te necesita" (The abused woman needs you) precedes a list of four phrases that give step by step guidance about how to help an abused woman (Figure 3). Each phrase begins with the letter "A," to help members of the community remember the four steps. The poster concludes with a list of local services available for family violence.

In addition, the project has produced a photo-story designed to help women identify and name the abuse in their lives and to model for friends and family members how best to respond to her situation. Besides helping women identify different forms of abuse (emotional, physical, sexual, and economic), the photo-story also includes specific information about where they can go to seek help.

The women have also been trained in using a relationship assessment tool, adapted from a screening device developed by the Instituto de la Mujer of Chile in their

project "Rompiendo Silencios" (Breaking the Silence). This 15-question, self-administered questionnaire helps women assess the extent to which their present relationship

Figure 3
Example of Campaign Message

La Mujer Maltratada Te Necesita
(The abused woman needs you)

Acércate - Pregúntale qué pasa
(Approach her and ask her what is wrong)

Apóyala - Escúchala y dale tu confianza
(Support her by listening and establishing trust)

Ayúdala - Ella puede estar en peligro
(Help her, she may be in danger)

Acompáñala a los centros de atención a la
Violencia Intrafamiliar
(Accompany her to victim support centers)

Acude a:
(Contact: [list of local services])

is abusive, based on a 45-point continuum. Women who score 0–11 are in nonabusive relationships; 12–22 indicates a stage of alert, whereas 23–34 points to abuse, and 35–45 indicates dangerous abuse. We have found this tool to be very useful in helping women to begin to confront the violence in their lives.

Evaluation of the impact of this intervention model is an essential element of the project, therefore a brief pretest and posttest questionnaire is currently administered to each workshop participant. This will allow us to measure changes in the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of all the women and to capture any movement through the stages of change of those abused women in the workshop. Moreover, exposure to the different components of the media campaign and recognition of the key slogans will be documented using quantitative methodology, reinforced by individual interviews to understand how these messages are interpreted by the members of community. In this way, we will be able to determine just how close we are to our goal of creating a supportive environment for abused women, so that they may begin to resist abuse and take their first step along the pathway to change.

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