



MWIA CASE STUDIES

VIOLENCE CAUSING PERMANENT INJURY OR DISFIGUREMENT

Case 2: Domestic Violence in Rural Ecuador

Objective

- To show that domestic violence in rural areas in Ecuador is influenced by a lack of education and men's distrust of women.

Narrative Case

* At the end of the case study you can find "Learning points" related to information presented in the narrative case, denoted by numbers in square brackets.

Jessica is a 28 year women from Canton Daule, a province of Guayas, Ecuador. She had a quiet childhood and lived with her parents and her brothers in a rural area. She is the fifth of her siblings and like her parents and siblings did not finish secondary education. Only one sister just reached high school, the others started to work at an early age and had to help with the housework. [1]

At 20 years of age, she moved in with her partner; a 23 years old man who studied up to the fourth year of college. At first they lived in Quito for 6 months because of his work as a carpenter and she undertook the housework. When she became pregnant, they moved to Guayaquil where they lived for a few more months and where her oldest son was born. They later returned to Daule and Jessica became pregnant again.

At some point she noticed that her partner cheated on her. She realized that he was a alcoholic and a womanizer and decided to leave him. [2], [3] After six months he came to her house, apologized and she forgave him, but since then it was not the same. They began fighting. He lost his job because of being an

alcoholic. [4] She decided to separate again and finally left him. Shortly afterwards, her former partner came to her apartment, chopped off her hands in a jealous rage attack in an attempt to kill her. [5] She vividly remembers when he pulled out the machete and cut off her hands with a single blow:

"He wanted to hit my head but I put up my hands and he cut them; my oldest son was with me and saw everything and fainted."

Jessica described how difficult it has been getting used to her new life. She is however a strong woman and she says that God let her survive to tell her story and to fight against domestic violence. According to statistics the level of domestic violence in Latin America is very high and practiced daily at home.

"They took my hands but not my life, not my dreams and now I want to go ahead with my example to come to families with a message to stop family violence."

Today Jessica works in the Community Development Department of the Municipality of Daule in Guayas. The pictures show her stumps and with a prosthesis.



Learning Points

- [1] Most rural women in Ecuador are engaged in household and childcare and have no opportunity to receive higher education, which makes it impossible to become independent from a) their families or b) their husbands. In Ecuador finishing secondary education (until 15 years of age) is mandatory.¹ However in rural regions, where poverty is more common, this law is not observed. Better monitoring of the law might help but will not change the basic problem of poverty. Most families can only afford to have one child in higher education.
- [2] When a woman decides to separate from her husband, he does not always take the separation as permanent. In Ecuador, society is traditional and the man must be strong, macho and “man-like” and in order to do so he must prove his authority. When a woman leaves a man his proudness is violated and some men cannot come over this.² There have been various campaigns aiming to eliminate machismo in Ecuador and Latin America, for example the 2012 ‘*El machismo es violencia*’ campaign.³
- [3] The woman does not have either training or opportunity to work outside the home (see first learning point) or autonomy to do what she wants. Without education, she is unable to earn enough money for herself and her two children.
- [4] This story shows the typical pattern: alcohol abuse leads to fights but when the man asks for forgiveness and promises to change, the woman will accept this because she has more or less no other choice (see learning points one and three). In the end, this will occur over and over again.
- [5] The physical and psychological abuse of the husband towards his wife and/or her children is based on being macho (machismo). This behaviour becomes engrained during childhood by the family.²

Background information

Prevalence:

- 60.6% of women surveyed by INEC in 2011 said they had experienced some form of domestic violence.⁴
- 70% of women surveyed who faced domestic violence have had no type of educational instruction.⁴
- 90% of married or cohabiting women who have experienced violence are not separated from their partner.⁴
- The INEC 2011 study shows that domestic violence is a very common problem and neither social status nor urban or rural origins make a difference in the prevalence. According to INEC’s studies, Ecuadorians’ conduct regarding alcohol has changed over the years.⁴ Currently, an increase in consumption is recorded in the juvenile stage. This is a worrying statistic when you consider that the World Health Organization report that Ecuador is the Latin American country with the highest consumption of alcoholic beverages.⁵

Psychologist Tatiana Centeno from the hospital in Daule said in a newspaper interview related to Jessica’s story:

“[T]his case has the typical characteristics of the seducer considering a girl his property and taking her away from her support networks. The perpetrators have usually a problem of self-esteem and victims become codependent. Unfortunately, we are still our cultures’ daughters, we accept a bad compromise because we want to have a husband and still believe that when your husband abuses you, you have to solve it somehow and all by yourself.”

References

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