

# Fundación WWB Colombia



## Principle 7



For us as an organisation that has been working for almost 40 years to reduce inequality gaps, especially for women, it is essential to continue promoting this type of process to eliminate gender-based violence in Colombia and across the rest of the continent.

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# About Fundación WWB Colombia

Fundación WWB Colombia is an autonomous and independent organisation that works to close inequality gaps for women and promote their active participation in economic development through three pillars: People, knowledge and investment. It contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 17 through their initiatives.

# What was the challenge?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2020 approximately 66.7% of women between the ages of 13 and 49 were victims of some kind of violence in their lives (physical, psychological, symbolic, economic, patrimonial or sexual), of which 64.1% were victims of psychological violence and 31.9% of physical violence.

The Covid-19 pandemic further accentuated the issues of gender-based violence (GBV). Women experienced greater loss of jobs and the burden of home care work, while lockdown orders also placed many women in confinement with aggressors inside their homes. This increased the exposure of women to domestic violence while also reducing their access to prevention, protection and support mechanisms.

# What was the response?

'Ofelia no está sola' (Ofelia is not alone) is a learning programme created by Fundación WWB Colombia to raise awareness of gender-based violence (GBV), women's rights and support routes for victims. Provided freely as a resource for knowledge and empowerment, the programme addresses the root causes of GBV by changing traditional attitudes and beliefs about gender roles associated with men and women in families and society, as well as the stigma around non-binary and LGBTIQ+ groups. The programme further works to increase the recognition and exercise of women's rights safeguarded by Colombia's Law 1257 of 2008. This law aims to prevent violence against women, protect victims, and promote gender equality through comprehensive measures and legal provisions.

The name of the programme stems from the story of a fictional victim of domestic violence, Ofelia. Delivered through art, theatre, videos and other methods, the story narrates Ofelia's journey and experience in her search for support. The Foundation focuses on a systemic approach, working with a wide range of actors including public entities, private companies, grassroots civil society organisations, and official GBV care route organisations like the police. By building regional, national, and international affiliations, Fundación WWB Colombia has since expanded the programme into other parts of Latin America, including Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and Peru.

When initially creating the programme, the team realised the need to transform reactive interventions into proactive ones. 'Ofelia no está sola' originated under the Fundación Yarú's entrepreneurship programme for vulnerable groups as a short masterclass to create awareness about Colombian Law 1257. This masterclass navigated the intricate web of support organisations such as law enforcement, medical services, and NGOs offering guidance on how to seek assistance or file a complaint. However, many of the programme's participants expressed the desire to learn more about preventing themselves and their loved ones from becoming victims.

This feedback prompted the team to consider how they could address the fundamental causes and systemic issues contributing to gender-based violence (GBV). Through conducting focus groups, the team gained insights from women

in the community regarding ingrained stereotypes related to gender roles. For instance, a lack of financial autonomy can make women feel reliant on their spouses or other individuals, resulting in feelings of helplessness and limited choices in risky situations. These cultural perceptions, deeply ingrained and passed down through generations, were difficult to overcome.

The Foundation took this opportunity to reflect on how its strengths, including its ongoing work in women's entrepreneurship and empowerment, could be leveraged to tackle these issues. Recognising their limited expertise in GBV, they also engaged with other stakeholders such as the government, UN Women reports, and NGOs to better understand foundational issues and how they could contribute to broader solutions. Within their organisation, they asked themselves several important questions:

- ✓ What new and innovative forms of programming could be used to tackle an issue as complex and far-reaching as gender-based violence?
- ✓ Since the Foundation had not historically dealt with GBV issues, which internal stakeholders needed to be convinced that this was the correct programmatic path for the organisation to pursue?
- ✓ In order to tackle GBV at its roots, which other partners, collaborators and key stakeholders needed to be involved in the development and dissemination of the programme?

They then used the insights gained from considering these questions to develop a range of actions:

- ✓ **Use innovative methods to facilitate conversations on a difficult topic.** The Ofelia programme evolved based on this link between GBV and cultural stereotypes related to gender roles. It employs a unique approach to learning through art, games, and collective reflection on this taboo topic. The story of Ofelia is staged as a play without a defined ending, inviting the audience instead to discuss and reflect how they might act in Ofelia's or other characters' position to improve the situation, give new meaning to their behaviour or empathise with those who have experienced GBV. A key principle of the programme fosters awareness and empowers the participants to make their own decisions without 'telling' them what to do. The Foundation found that this artistic, collective learning approach stimulated reflection and encouraged women to explore their possibilities, such as gaining economic independence through employment or entrepreneurship or capitalising on support from their familial, friend, or community networks. With each staging of the play, the Foundation also learned from the community to improve the programme. During early performances, some participants voiced that GBV was "not just a women's issue" and stressed the importance of including men, along with other entities like law enforcement and the judiciary. The Foundation expanded participation to include both men and women as well as other stakeholders. Participants also receive a digital or printed manual and contact list of public and private entities responsible for dealing with GBV cases in each city or country. These resources were created by the Foundation with support from local private and public organisations.
- ✓ **Expand reach through different channels.** When the Covid-19 pandemic made theatre productions impossible, the Foundation adapted by turning the play into a series of short videos where similarly, the participants were invited to choose between multiple endings. They could also propose alternative actions for Ofelia through the Foundation's website, resulting in a wealth of feedback such as new roles, conversations or actions. Since its inception, the programme's reach has significantly broadened. While initially it was aimed at adult participants involved in the Foundation's entrepreneurship programmes, it now encompasses citizens aged 14 and above from both urban and rural communities.
- ✓ **Scale up programmes through partnerships.** The Foundation's work soon gained the interest of other stakeholders. Many entities in the existing GBV support network, such as law enforcement or NGOs, were not equipped to have conversations about root causes such as gender roles and misogyny. The team were initially approached by the government authority in Barranquilla to implement GBV community outreach programmes after they were inspired by the Ofelia programme's simplicity, accessibility, and reflective nature. The Foundation partnered with the authority to develop a training-of-trainers virtual course, which they have since opened to other government authorities and private entities. They developed the Ofelia programme into a replicable model, scaling through networks of partners who help adapt it to local languages, cultures, laws, and support mechanisms in

different regions. The Ofelia programme has been successfully replicated across Colombia, and beyond to Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and Peru. For example, Promujer Bolivia adapted the Ofelia content for indigenous communities to address gender and LGBTBIQ+ prejudices. The Foundation worked with Promujer on mentoring, training programmes, and adaptation to the Bolivian context. In another example, they partnered with the Government of the Atlántico in Colombia to localise Ofelia to context and cultural nuances in the Colombian Caribbean coast. Other partners include the Colombian Council for Women's Equality, the Government and the Mayor's offices of several municipalities in Colombia, Accor Hotels, the National Federation of Coffee Growers, PLAN International, Profamilia, Observatory for Women's Equality, and many foundations under the AFE (Colombian Association of Foundations).

- ✓ **Transform internally as a funder.** The Ofelia programme was bolstered by support from internal stakeholders such as the Foundation's Board. While GBV was not initially part of their activities, they already recognised the importance of a gender perspective in closing inequality gaps and saw the link between GBV, financial empowerment and economic participation for women. These insights are being further embedded across all their other work including supporting entrepreneurship and financial and digital education. For example, the Foundation is working with Banco W, in which it holds a majority stake, to implement gender-based training programmes for commercial teams and contact centres. These programmes are aimed at reducing unconscious biases and sensitising internal teams in GBV support, equipping them with the skills to assist potential victims they may encounter.

## What have they learned?

- ✓ **Conversations about controversial topics such as gender-based violence are challenging** and may require alternative methods. Art humanises concepts, roles, and situations, fostering engagement with the topic and raising awareness with participants regardless of their level of education, profession, or role.
- ✓ **Leverage strengths to drive systems change.** While Fundación WWB Colombia is not directly part of the formal GBV support ecosystem, by reflecting on the link between GBV and their mission of women empowerment, they identified a way they can leverage their strengths to help address root causes.
- ✓ **Understand the needs of the population** you aim to support through research, data analysis and group sessions. Focus groups held with victims provided vital insights into the realities and experiences of violence to help with programme design.
- ✓ **Influence networks to scale up.** Regional and national alliances have been fundamental for the expansion to different locations, especially in adapting the material to fit local contexts and needs. Build long-term relationships to ensure the sustainability of initiatives to reach the greatest number of people.
- ✓ **Generate and share data with decision makers**, which can contribute towards mobilizing actions to generate system change. The wide reach of the Ofelia programme enables the Foundation to learn from and systemise the experiences of a wide range of actors. A recent exercise in systematising experiences involved Colombian grassroots organisations, governmental offices, academics, NGOs, private companies and allies in other countries of Latin America to identify lessons learned and good practices in the prevention of GBV.

# Key outcomes and impact indicators

## 200% per year

Increase in the population trained for the prevention of gender-based violence by around 200% per year since the programme's inception.

## 5,882 people

By 2022, 5,882 people participated in the training, gaining knowledge of gender roles, stereotypes, types of gender-based violence, and relevant laws and support routes.

## Development

Continued development of multi-stakeholder partnerships with government actors, international entities and local organisations to disseminate the Ofelia programme.