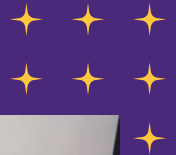


STORIES OF CHANGE

# WOMEN FACING HARMFUL AND BASELESS PARENTAL ALIENATION LAWS

 Guayaquil, Ecuador



Violeta is a 37-year-old mother living in the north of Guayaquil, a city on the Ecuadorian coast. Despite her professional training in beauty and aesthetic services, Violeta doesn't have enough income to become independent from her family and live with her daughter and son due to the economic crisis. Priscilla can only see her 8-year-old son on weekends because the boy's father, and her aggressor, has his custody.

## Violeta was a victim of psychological violence by her ex-partner for almost eight years. The aggressor, and father of her last son, is a member of the Ecuadorian Armed Forces and has a better income than Violeta.

**During their relationship, he attacked Violeta by saying things like “You’re no good as a woman”, among other insults. Violeta adds that while one day he treats her badly, the next day he treats her better, which generates instability and insecurity. Harmful gender norms rooted in her childhood generated in her a feeling that she was forced to be a submissive and obedient person.**

In October 2023, Violeta separated from him. Soon thereafter, she received a complaint for alleged mistreatment of her son, which allowed her aggressor to keep custody of the son temporarily. In many countries in Latin America, there are no efficient mechanisms that protect survivors of SGBV from these forms of institutional violence that benefit aggressors when demanding custody of children solely due to their economic position. Faced with this situation, Violeta denounced him for psychological violence, but after some time she decided to discard the process because she was worried about sending him to prison.

Amid this situation, added to thoughts of ending her life, Violeta decided to go to access SGBV services offered by CEPAM Guayaquil, following the recommendation of her sister. Violeta received support from a social worker in CEPAM Guayaquil, who invited her to visit CEPAM-G’s facilities in the north of the city, the nearest to her home, to receive psychological care.

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Violeta has received psychological support since October 2023 at CEPAM-G. One of the changes identified by her due to this support is feeling strength and peace. She shares that she would feel much more at ease if she had no contact with her abuser. Even though he continues to message and harass her, she does not respond and limits herself to communicating only for the needs of their child. Violeta also has more tools to identify and take action in controlling situations.

For example, when she decided to date someone else and identified jealousy and controlling behaviors on their part, she decided to confront this person and put a stop to this situation.

Violeta, with the support of CEPAM-G, is still fighting to get her son’s custody, continues with her life without her abuser, and looking for a job that allows her to have a better income and continue with her life plan. She now recognizes herself as a strong, confident, and dignified woman. She sees herself as a woman who deserves to be loved, valued, and respected. It is worth mentioning that a group of mothers, lawyers and psychiatrists from different Latin American countries are leading a fight against the use of the false [parental alienation syndrome \(SAP\)](#) as an argument to give custody of children to fathers

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accused of family violence or sexual abuse. They are called crazy, whiny, jealous, and are accused of taking out their frustrations on their children. They are determined to demonstrate the danger of judges using this theory to delegitimize complaints.

Violeta is facing another mechanism of institutional SGBV that has become popular in the region. Fortunately, in countries such as Colombia advocacy has achieved ruling such as [T-526-2023](#) throughout the Constitutional Court ordered the judges of the Republic to proscribe the use of the diagnostic tool known as SAP, for not being accredited by science, harming the prevailing rights of children and adolescents, reproducing gender stereotypes, generating events of discrimination and, therefore, violence against women based on gender.