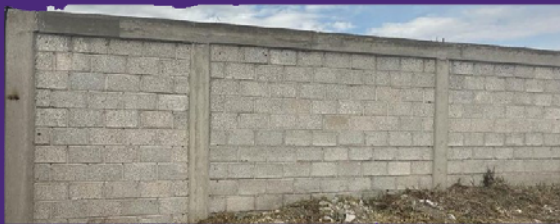


STORIES OF CHANGE

FEMINIST ART-THERAPY TO PROMOTE DESERVING TO LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE

 Ecatepec and Tecamac, Mexico



Within the framework of the project named Feminist Futures Free from Violence (FFFV), the National Network of Shelters (**Red Nacional de Refugios – RNR in Spanish**), uses feminist art-therapy for the creation of collective murals which capture the voices and experiences of the women participating in the counseling and orientation workshops on SGBV.

Alana is a young, enthusiastic and charismatic activist who lives in the State of Mexico, on the border between Ecatepec and Tecamac. She is part of a **local organization called MIAU** which is dedicated to fostering community participation and accompanying neurodiverse people individually and collectively.

She's very active on social media and constantly posts content to promote self-care, self-esteem, and transformative gender approaches. She assures that the battles begin with self-care and that neurodivergent feminism is a struggle of women for their human rights, for a life free of violence and without the stigma of diverse minds.

Alana participated in the feminist art therapy workshops, support circles and in the creation of the mural carried out by the RNR and considers that these types of activities help to improve people's quality of life.

A concept that I heard in the circles of accompaniment of the RNR is "feminist merit" and we have been able to adapt it in a way that the community understands. Not everyone understands the concept of machismo, so talking about deserving a life free of violence is still somewhat complex."

However, translating concepts into images and involving people in the creation of those images and capturing them in murals as a way of expression, has allowed us to change the ways of thinking and relating. *"We even call ourselves feminists in the neighborhood, to transform the concepts."*

"By completing the creation of the mural, we know that we deserve to live free from violence and to be respected. In fact, the mural itself has been respected not only by the school where it is, but by the people of the community who have taken ownership of the mural and are protecting it from scratches or graffiti so that it remains intact."

In addition, Alana explains that the mural has become a meeting place and point of reference *"it serves to identify us and see that our collective is a safe space for women, where information and accompaniment are provided. It is recognition, but also the alternative for women who live in situations of violence."*

The organizational processes have also been strengthened, as they have adopted dynamics and techniques that were learned during the workshops developed by RNR.

"Now we are supporting the community work recognizing how we perceive each other and we are strengthening the relationship among the community."

Alana assures that participating in these processes has been important to generate and maintain relationships of respect, collaboration and without violence among the women of the community. In addition, it refers to the strengthening of relations with educational institutions that were previously perceived as distant or inaccessible to address issues related to living free from violence.

**Name and personal details have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality of the person.*

