

STORIES OF CHANGE

Transforming the understanding of gender-based violence: Intersectionality and diversity

 México

INFORME IDENTIDADES ENTRELAZADAS: *las capas de la violencia basada en género desde una mirada interseccional*



The Feminist Futures Free from Violence (FFFV) project began within Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD), an organization already addressing violence yet set for a transformation in its understanding of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Initially, the approach viewed SGBV partly through the lens of CDD's established focus on ethical-religious arguments, and the language used, such as the term "LGBT people," did not fully center the interwoven experiences shaped by intersecting identities.

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

A pivotal shift towards a deeper, intersectional understanding occurred, driven significantly by the active involvement of key personnel like Charlotte*, the project's political advocacy liaison.

This evolution acknowledged that SGBV is not uniform but is crucially shaped by intersecting factors like race, ethnicity, disability, and diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The project began explicitly recognizing that the violence experienced by different women varies significantly. As Charlotte noted, a key challenge remains:

(...) at the government level to incorporate intersectionality into [addressing] gender-based violence, right? Understanding that the violence experienced by a racialized, indigenous woman is not the same as that experienced by a woman with a motor disability.

This commitment was profoundly shaped by fieldwork, particularly in Oaxaca. When the team introduced the term "LGBTQ+", they faced crucial feedback from the community, who found the Western-centric concept inadequate for capturing local realities, especially concerning Muxe women. Charlotte explained the community response:

I mean, that concept, besides its implications of being quite Western and all that, doesn't really encompass the diversity... not just the diversity of trans women but the diversity of Muxe women in Oaxaca who don't necessarily identify as LGBTQ+, not even queer... so they told us, we don't fit into those categories.

Responding thoughtfully, the project was adapted through active listening and dialogue. More inclusive language, such as "people of sex-gender diversity or people in their diversity", was collaboratively developed and documented, alongside a co-created glossary.

A glossary was incorporated; the concept was built with them. In Oaxaca, the emphasis was LGBTQ+ people, and we mention it in the project as a particularity due to Oaxaca's own context, right? This demonstrated a nuanced approach, addressing intersectionality broadly while respecting context-specific identities.

Several factors facilitated this transformation, using the project as a platform to give CDD's work a much stronger orientation towards intersectionalities.

Internal training on racialization and collaborations with organizations skilled in community methodologies, like CAFIS and Impacta Cine, further enriched the approach. Crucially, the project centered the lived experiences of activists navigating multiple identities, ensuring their insights shaped the project's understanding and its report on SGBV.

CDD Mexico, together with allied networks, organizations and collectives, has published nationally and internationally the report "[Intertwined Identities: The Layers of Gender-Based Violence from an Intersectional Perspective](#)". Therefore, the FFFV project successfully moved from a more generalized view towards an understanding of SGBV grounded in diversity and intersectionality bringing to CDD/Mexico new partnerships, the incorporation of demands from youth and women groups that work and belong to afromexican, indigenous, gender-diverse communities and people with disabilities; and impacting its methodologies for community-based interventions to questioning and transforming harmful social norms.

