

Focus Experience

#10

Educating Cities
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Title

Beauty Salons for Preventing Domestic Violence in Caguas

Basic data

City: Caguas

Country: Puerto Rico

Number of inhabitants: 142,769

Topics: women participation, gender equity, violence prevention, welfare, civics and coexistence, personal development and lifelong learning

Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities: 1, 2, 4, 9, 14, 17, 19, 20

Summary

The Services for Integral Development of Women Programme (SIDWP) is a unit of the Department of Citizen Services of the City Council of Caguas, whose mission is to provide the optimal quality of life to women in Caguas. The SIDWP includes different projects designed with the participation of the citizenry, addressed to promoting the integral development of the female population. One of these projects is the "Beauty Salons for Preventing Domestic Violence", which began in 2009 and aimed at supporting the reduction and eradication of domestic violence, considered one of the main obstacles that women have to face across the country in order to achieve well-being.

The project arose from queries made of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) involved in the beauty care of women.

The consultations made at the beauty salons evidenced:

- between 75% and 80% of the customers are women.
- 95% of the owners are women.
- 98% of the salons queried indicated that they had customers who suffered from domestic violence.
- 70% of the establishments indicated that they had incidents of domestic violence right in their salons.
- 85% of the owners pointed out that they did not know what to do to prevent or handle situations of domestic violence at work.

Based on this information, a socio-educative project intervention was designed in conjunction with the SMEs, which is carried out while the customers of these establishments receive beauty care.

Amongst the achievements of the Project, of special note are:

- a) the staff of the beauty salons show an interest in developing a policy of zero tolerance of domestic violence at their shops,
- b) they have become spokespeople and collaborators since they refer women who are victims of domestic violence to the municipal services which deal with this issue, and
- c) other beauty salons have contacted them because they are interested in the experience.



The Mayor of Caguas, Mr. William Miranda Torres handing over diplomas to the owners of beauty salons which participated in the 1st edition of the Project



Presentation of the Project to some of the beauty salon owners'

Objectives

- To promote the participation of small and medium-sized companies in initiatives for the reduction and eradication of domestic violence in the city.
- To increase the identification of the victims of domestic violence or those at risk of becoming victims, by providing guidance at the beauty salons and their referrals by the owners to the municipal specialised services.
- To promote the implementation of Protocol on management of domestic violence at the workplaces, as per the Act 54 on the Intervention against Domestic Violence of the Free Associated State of Puerto Rico.
- To publicise the specialized services of the municipal government to the victims of domestic violence.
- To foster citizen participation in the action plans for city safety.

Methodology

The “Beauty Salons for Preventing Domestic Violence” Project uses models that promote citizen participation in order to identify solutions and strategies that deal with this social challenge. For several years the City Council of Caguas has used the “democratic governance” model (2008), to roll out all the city’s strategic plans. The SIDWP, as part of the municipal government, uses this focus to promote the participation of all the social sectors in the search for solutions. This is the reason for the inclusion of the business sector of the city in the reduction and eventual eradication of domestic violence.

As part of the process of contacting and identifying the beauty salons, the people in charge of the Project made visits to the salon owners. At a joint meeting a folder with educational support material to be distributed at the salons is given to the owners. Furthermore, the owners participate in a Protocol workshop on domestic violence in the workplace, in which issues such as: basic concepts, victim profile, aggressor profile, effects, danger indicators, and support and protection services offered under law are dealt. The owners can call the people in charge of the Project whenever they have doubts and detect a situation of violence.

At the beauty salons different awareness activities can be carried out. The format of each activity is determined through a visit to the salon by the personnel working for the Project and in concert with the owner or manager. There is also an evaluation made on domestic violence situations at the salon, in order to take into account the areas to strengthen through workshops and educational interventions.

Activities carried out at the beauty salons:

- Forum Theatre: a one-person play is put on to promote the participation of the customers of the beauty salons in this theatre exercise, making the public an active part of the situation recreated.
- Generating Topics: dialogues focus on the transformation of cultural models that are oppressive to women and which constitute a hindrance to seeking help.
- Cine Forum: situational videos are viewed with the customers in order to reflect on the issue and apply strategies to daily life in order to prevent domestic violence.

The recognition of citizen-company-government collaboration has stimulated the interest of other beauty establishments to join the initiative.



Workshop on domestic violence



Dialoguing while getting the hair cut



Cine forum on a beauty salon

Social and urban context

Thanks to these strategies, potential victims of domestic violence have been identified, and safety plans and emotional support interventions have been developed. On the other hand, the Project has generated a lot of collaboration and camaraderie amongst the participating establishments who work towards the same common goal even though they are competitors.

Moreover, the SIDWP has alliances with different social sectors in the city, which are also at the service of this project: shelters for abused women, legal advisory programmes, and a specialized domestic violence unit of the State Police, faith-based organisations, together with residents of other community organisations, and individual citizens who offer volunteer services.

Caguas is an autonomous municipality in the centre-east region of Puerto Rico. It has a surface area of 152 km² and a population of 142,893 inhabitants, 52% of which are women. The city is divided into 11 neighbourhoods, 4 of which are involved in the initiative. 35,383 women reside in them.



Aerial view of Caguas

This initiative is addressed to the prevention of domestic violence and dealing with its consequences for women from the age of 15 and up who live in the city of Caguas.

Assessment

The more relevant assessment indicators of the Project are:

- Increase in the number of beauty salons and customers that are participating in the interventions.
- The identification of customers referred to the specialised services to deal with the situation of domestic violence.
- The implementation at the beauty salons of a business policy of zero tolerance of domestic violence.

Strengths:

- The development of socio-educative interventions to prevent domestic violence in non-traditional situations, such as beauty salons, which facilitate greater scope of possible participants who in other ways would not be possible to receive guidance.
- The inclusion of small and medium-sized companies in social projects as agents of change in relation to a pressing social problem in the country.
- The willingness and wish of the owners of the beauty salons to support projects of interest to the community.
- Although the incidents of domestic violence have not been fully eradicated, this Project together with others of the SIDWP have managed to reduce the murder rate related to domestic violence to zero in our city. This is a very encouraging sign given the daily reality of Puerto Rico.
- To adjust the socio-educative intervention to the dynamics of a non-traditional scenario and meet its goal.

Future projects:

- To obtain financing in order to expand the Project geographically and to increase the team of facilitators in order to reach more women.
- To use the spaces of the beauty salons to deal with other issues that affect the welfare of women.
- To share the Project with other municipalities that can replicate this successful initiative.

Contact

Organization: City Council of Caguas

Contact: Ms Aida Yvette González Santiago
Secretary of Human Development

Email: aida.gonzalez@caguas.gov.pr proyectomujeresadfan@gmail.com

Phone: + 1 787 704 2020

Web : <http://www.caguas.gov.pr>