



WE SEE





**Photo by Jekaterina Saveljeva**  
Photo from "Code word" project





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femLENS workshops 2021, Donegal, Ireland

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# BEYOND VIOLENCE: MEDIA, COLLABORATION, AND TOOLS FOR CHANGE

by Jekaterina Saveljeva

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global crisis, deeply rooted in power imbalances and systemic discrimination that transcend borders, cultures, and economies. Yet, despite its pervasive presence, it remains shrouded in silence, often reduced to individual cases of crime, sensationalism, or fleeting news cycles. While the media has a vital role to play in exposing the underlying causes of GBV, it frequently fails to do so. Instead, it remains fixated on the surface symptoms, driven by economic interests that prioritise profit over meaningful engagement with the issues at hand.

This failure to interrogate the systemic roots of violence stems from the commercial nature of mainstream media. News outlets, reliant on advertising revenue and audience engagement metrics, are often incentivised to produce content that attracts viewership, not necessarily what educates or informs. As a result, stories that delve into the uncomfortable realities of inequality and structural violence are considered less profitable than those focusing on sensational crime stories or individual acts of violence. In doing so, the media inadvertently reinforces the misconception that these acts are isolated, driven by individual pathology rather than systemic injustice.

Moreover, media conglomerates are often entwined with corporate and political interests, which further undermines comprehensive coverage of GBV. Investigative journalism that seeks to explore the links between violence and systemic inequalities—such as economic exploitation, workplace discrimination, or the complicity of political institutions in maintaining patriarchal structures—may be seen as too controversial or threatening to powerful stakeholders. As a result, narratives that challenge entrenched power structures are often avoided or diluted, leaving the audience with an incomplete understanding of the roots of violence.

One of the most damaging ways the media perpetuates gender-based violence is through its complicity in rape culture. Rape culture refers to the societal normalisation of sexual violence, where actions such as harassment, assault, and rape are trivialised or accepted as inevitable. It is best defined by Emilie Buchwald, Pamela R. Fletcher, and Martha Roth in *Transforming a Rape Culture*: *[Rape culture] is a complex set of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women and presents it as the norm.* Media representations often contribute to this culture by using sexual violence as a form of entertainment, desensitising the public to the severity of the issue. Whether through lurid headlines, graphic depictions of sexual violence in film and television, or the objectification of women in advertising, the media commodifies trauma for profit, trivialising the experiences of survivors.





“Newscasts regularly report on incidents of men’s violence against women without mentioning any larger social context. One effect of the ongoing backlash against feminism is that in mainstream media, knowledgeable women and men are rarely interviewed for their insight into the broader social factors that contribute to crimes against women. It is much easier-and less risky for ratings-to offer apolitical analyses of “the criminal mind” by FBI profilers and other law enforcement types,” writes anti-violence activist and educator Jackson Katz. “Consider, by comparison, how the news media would cover a series of attacks by white people on people of colour. Would they regard them as “unrelated” and not bother to consult experts on racism?”

Rape culture also manifests in the framing of sexual violence cases in the news. Stories often shift the focus to the victim’s behaviour or choices, subtly blaming them for the violence inflicted upon them. This victim-blaming narrative reinforces harmful gender stereotypes, perpetuating the idea that women are responsible for their own victimisation, while perpetrators and the societal structures that support them remain largely unchallenged.

The economic drivers behind media production exacerbate this issue. Sensationalised stories about sexual violence generate higher ratings and greater engagement, creating an incentive for media outlets to focus on the most lurid aspects of these cases, rather than investigating the underlying systemic factors. In the process, the media reduces sexual violence to a product for consumption, feeding into broader societal dynamics that normalise such abuse.

“In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women, and presents it as the norm,” writes Kate Harding in “Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture and What We Can Do about It”.

However, the modern media landscape is evolving, offering opportunities for more independent and critical narratives to emerge. Thanks to the democratisation of media tools, grassroots movements, independent journalists, and activist organisations now have the means to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, creating platforms that prioritise justice over profit. These alternative media spaces are increasingly amplifying the voices of survivors, challenging rape culture, and exposing the interdependencies that sustain GBV.

In this context, the focus of this special issue of We See magazine on gender-based violence and sexual exploitation is particularly timely. This edition is part of the broader Welens project, a multi-partner initiative aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the global and interdependent nature of GBV. The project seeks to raise awareness and provide educational tools that address the systemic factors behind sexual exploitation and gender-based violence.

The Welens project sets out several key objectives:

- *Designing educational modules and tools on GBV and sexual exploitation.*
- *Strengthening the capacities of EU and third-country organisations to develop strategies that address GBV.*
- *Promoting networking between EU member states and third countries to combat violence against women.*
- *Encouraging women’s engagement in gender-sensitive communication.*
- *Facilitating greater public awareness of the global interdependencies that underpin GBV and sexual exploitation.*

When we speak of sexual exploitation, we refer to a violation of human rights that is often normalised within everyday economic and social structures. In a globalised world, there are no borders when it comes to the exploitation of vulnerable women. According to the UNODC’s Global Trafficking in Persons report (2020), over 534 different trafficking flows were identified worldwide, with more than 120 countries reporting victims from over 140 different countries of origin. Sexual exploitation is an insidious industry: the average annual profit generated by each woman in forced sexual servitude



is approximately \$100,000. As a result, tackling GBV, sexual exploitation, and prostitution requires a holistic approach that addresses the intersection of issues such as economic inequality, migration, digital technologies, and environmental crises, which disproportionately affect vulnerable women.

To that end, the Welens project aims to support educators and guidance staff by providing them with tools for a global understanding of these issues. Through interdisciplinary and inter-global educational modules, the project enables educators to craft tailored strategies for prevention and response, equipping them to better motivate and guide women in vulnerable situations. This approach acknowledges the complex interconnections between countries and sectors that sustain sexual exploitation, helping educators and professionals understand the broader contexts that drive these forms of violence.

Storytelling is at the heart of this endeavour. As highlighted in this special issue of We See magazine, stories create connections across time and space, fostering empathy and understanding. By providing a platform for women to share their experiences—both written and oral—Welens empowers survivors, raises awareness, and engages the broader public in the fight against GBV. Storytelling, as research shows, is not only an expressive or therapeutic tool but a crucial means of making sense of trauma, filtering grief, depression, and anxiety (Pennebaker and Seagal, 1243). Through sharing stories, women are not only reclaiming their narratives but also contributing to a broader dialogue about gender equality and the systemic roots of violence.

The following issues We See will also build on the recommendations of the ACT! project, which called for more meaningful and accessible information on the global and intra-interdependencies behind sexual exploitation. By centring the voices of experts and survivors, Welens stimulates emotional memories and experiences, helping readers and viewers connect with the profound emotional impact of gender-based violence.

Partners of the Welens project include a diverse range of organisations committed to addressing various facets of GBV and sexual exploitation. These include:

**D'Antilles et D'Ailleurs (Martinique - France)** – *lead partner, focusing on prostitution*

**ELAN INTERCULTUREL (France)** – *resilience approach, PTSD, and trauma-related memory*

**NoGap (Italy)** – *violence, trauma, and addictions*

**Cesie (Italy)** – *gender-based violence, including domestic and obstetric violence*

**Madres Víctimas de Trata (Argentina)** – *human trafficking*

**Comisión Unidos Vs Trata AC (Mexico)** – *human trafficking*

**Women Across Differences (Guyana)** – *violence and its link to mining*

**femLENS (Estonia)** – *gender-sensitive communication*

**Beecom (Italy)** – *communication and media strategies*

**KEMEA (Greece)** – *GBV in the Cyber Space*

In today's rapidly changing media landscape, the tools to produce independent, justice-driven narratives are more available than ever. Projects like Welens demonstrate the potential for collaborative, cross-border efforts that bypass the profit-driven limitations of mainstream media. By fostering interdisciplinary and international approaches to GBV, the project contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the interdependencies behind gender-based violence, offering strategies and stories that inspire real change.

Ultimately, the media has a critical role to play in dismantling the systems that perpetuate gender-based violence. By amplifying survivor voices, challenging rape culture, and engaging with the structural causes of violence, we can move towards a future where sexual exploitation and gender-based violence are no longer trivialised or commodified, but actively confronted through collective action and systemic reform.

# D'ANTILLES ET D'AILLEURS: EDUCATING AND RAISING PEOPLE'S AWARENESS FOR A GENDER-EQUAL WORLD

Founded in 2016, the Martinican feminist association D'Antilles et D'Ailleurs is dedicated to promoting gender equality. Upholding values such as eco-citizenship, sisterhood, interculturality, and equality, it undertakes actions to inform and raise awareness about gender equality through the creation and dissemination of communication materials, training for members, professionals, and volunteers, as well as the development and implementation of international cooperation projects and training leading to socio-professional integration.

Integrated within a third space known as Le Trois Lieu, it collaborates closely with the Martinican branch of Mouvement du Nid, a public utility organisation which actively campaigns against the prostitution system and all forms of violence against women. It is fully committed to helping vulnerable women and those in prostitution. D'Antilles et d'Ailleurs integrates

women beneficiaries of the Mouvement du Nid association into its projects and initiatives, with a view to raising awareness and informing vulnerable populations about gender equality issues.

Here are some of the projects that best illustrate the association's actions in promoting gender equality.

## **Made in Women sewing Workshop: Providing economic and social empowerment to vulnerable women**

The association has launched the Made in Women sewing workshop to provide these women with sewing training for better social and professional integration. During the training, they create ethical and eco-friendly pieces for anyone interested in engaging in an eco-responsible approach. All pieces are locally made by these women, under the supervision of a workshop leader sensitised to



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their situation. By offering a space where women can acquire valuable skills, the Made in Women brand contributes to their economic and social empowerment, helping them overcome the obstacles linked to gender discrimination. These workshops also foster solidarity and sisterhood, allowing participants to support each other and become aware of their rights and value in society. The initiative also provides them with the necessary tools to become active participants in all aspects of their lives.

#### **Takep ART! project: Educating young people on gender equality issues through activism**

Since 2023, D'Antilles et D'Ailleurs has been coordinating the TakepArt! project, financed by the Erasmus+ program, to promote active citizenship and develop a sense of initiative regarding gender equality among young people. The project has provided the young people involved with an artistic means of expression to share, through their words, expressions, and art, their vision of the world and, more specifically, their vision of gender equality. This creativity has

led to the creation of a zine, posters, and a mural depicting the ambivalent concept of the “poto mitan” woman, a local concept that views women as pillars of the family and society. By cultivating an environment where young people can freely exchange ideas and learn from each other, Take pART! not only enhances their understanding of gender equality but also strengthens their commitment to promoting this cause within their respective circles. By using art to promote gender equality, the Take pART! project demonstrates how creativity can be an effective tool for raising awareness and educating young people, while also enabling them to become ambassadors of equality in their own environments.

#### **Change Nickerie: Providing vulnerable women with assistance and support to combat gender inequalities**

Change Nickerie is another project by D'Antilles et D'Ailleurs that emphasises gender equality as it aims at providing essential resources and holistic support to vulnerable women. Launched in Suriname, the goal of the project is to establish an



integrated system of prevention and assistance for female victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and sexual exploitation, including prostitution and human trafficking. By promoting women's empowerment and safety, Change Nickerie plays a crucial role in combating gender inequalities and gender-based violence in Suriname. In addition, the actions carried out as part of the project also aim to create lasting change by raising community awareness of gender issues and fostering a supportive and respectful environment. The project contributes to creating a future where women can live free from violence and oppression, and fully participate in the social, economic, and political life of their community. Through these innovative and impactful projects, D'Antilles et D'Ailleurs exemplifies the power of education, community engagement, and creativity in the fight for gender equality. By empowering vulnerable women, educating young people, and fostering an environment of support and respect, the association is creating lasting change and paving the way for a more just and equal world.





# NOGAP: SEEING BEYOND THE STIGMA



NoGap is an Italian association based in Orvieto, a small town in the heart of Umbria, dedicated to addressing issues of psychological suffering, violence, and exploitation.

**“... We started as a group of women who want to bring about change and social inclusion”**

NoGap was founded on January 17, 2020, to meet the needs of a group of young people who are often invisible in society: young men and women with a dual diagnosis. When we talk about dual diagnosis, we refer to the simultaneous presence of substance addiction and other mental disorders. This dual vulnerability, and therefore dual stigma, often leads to these young people being seen and considered only for their illness and not for their strengths.

The team that founded the association is composed of psychologists, social workers, and experts in international cooperation. Since its inception, they have been working

with the Lahuèn Psychotherapy and Work Community, which hosts 40 young men and women with dual diagnoses. The biggest challenge faced by the Community was to create a bridge to the outside world, and so we took up the challenge of building that bridge ourselves through the promotion of projects aimed at social and work reintegration, highlighting the resources and abilities of this group of young people, seeing them for who they are and not just as “sick people.”

**“... Because mental health and addiction tell stories of violence”**

From the beginning, a third factor of vulnerability became evident beyond substance addiction and mental illness: gender-based violence. Almost all the girls had a history of violence and sexual exploitation. The link between gender-based violence and mental illness is very close: survivors of the traumatic experience of violence can develop various disorders such



TRANQUILITÀ



as depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Conversely, pre-existing mental disorders can increase vulnerability to violence and complicate recovery.

However, substance addiction and exposure to violence are also closely related. Sometimes, girls may turn to substances as a form of self-medication.

At the same time, we have observed the inadequacy of the Italian system in responding to this multiple vulnerability. Mental health services lack trained personnel to deal with gender-based violence, and often it is the psychiatrists themselves who label reports of violence as “erotomaniac delirium,” viewing them as fabrications of the girl’s mind. On the other hand, gender-based violence centres exclude individuals from receiving help if they have mental illnesses and addictions. Therefore, no one takes a comprehensive approach to the situation. As an organisation, we are trying to raise awareness within the community

and institutions through European projects that can help us achieve greater impact and visibility, in addition to implementing empowerment workshops with the girls we work with daily.

**“I am a person... If I can see what unites us and find a solution to what divides us”**

Our future ambition is to create a space in the historic centre of the city. The theme we have chosen is the recovery of people, objects, and human dignity. A space where a feminist and intersectional approach gains value in the creation of safe spaces to address gender-based violence. A space where professionalisation and care come together in an interdependence where one is necessary for the other. A space open to the citizens who feel the need to work towards a “cultural emancipation” of the concept of normality and that challenges the perception of disadvantage as abnormal and marginal within a community.

**“This dual vulnerability, and therefore dual stigma, often leads to these young people being seen and considered only for their illness and not for their strengths”**









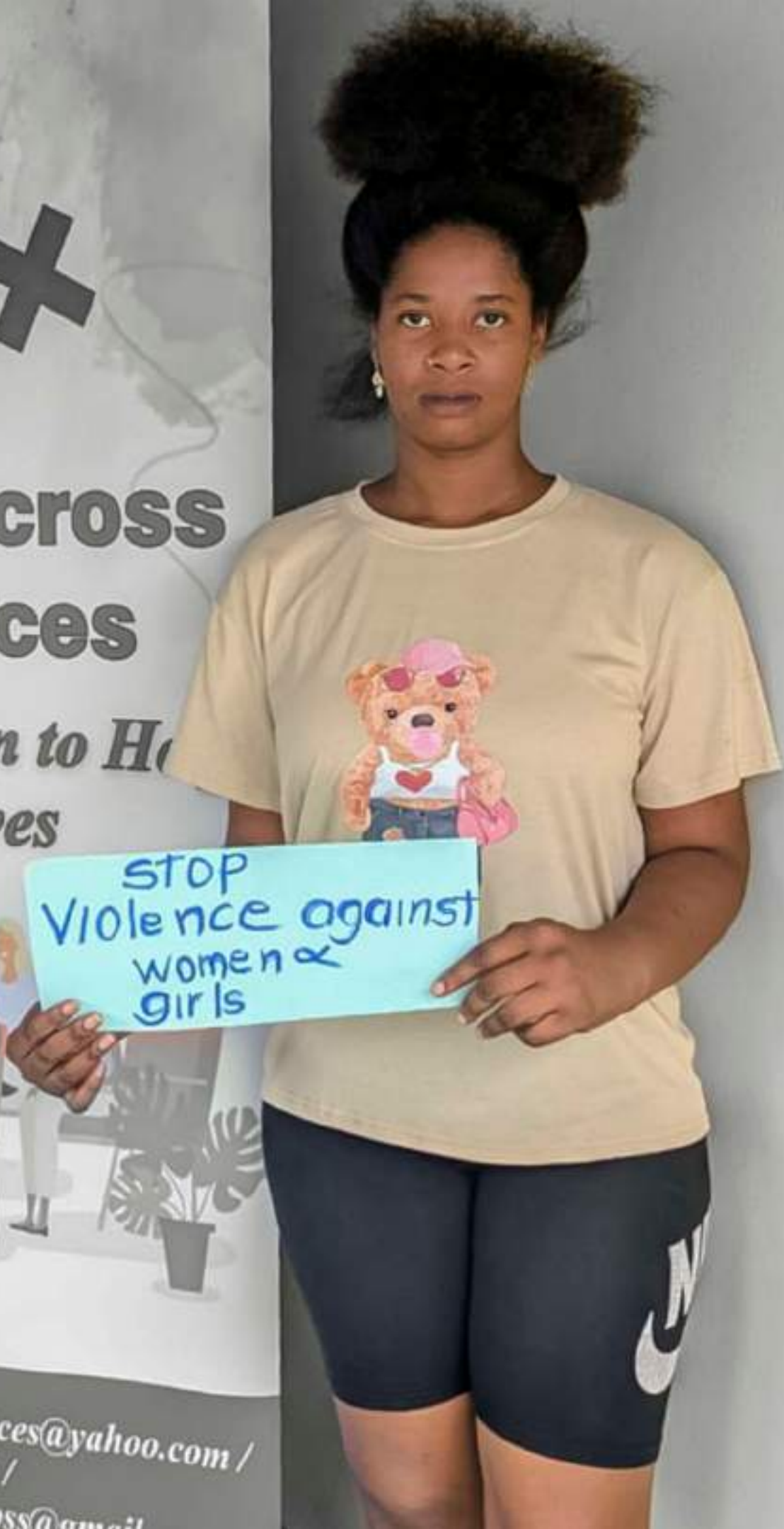


# Women Across Differences

*Helping Women to Help  
Themselves*



mail: [womenacrossdifferences@yahoo.com](mailto:womenacrossdifferences@yahoo.com) /  
[clonel24@yahoo.com](mailto:clonel24@yahoo.com) /  
[differenceswomenacross@gmail.com](mailto:differenceswomenacross@gmail.com)



# WOMEN ACROSS DIFFERENCES (WAD): EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS TO HELP THEMSELVES

Women Across Differences (WAD) was established in 1996 and was launched in March 1999. The organisation was registered under the Companies Act in the same year (1999). It is a national network of women who are committed to serve individuals and vulnerable groups through education, empowerment, and advocacy in order to promote social change. This organisation enables women and girls to meet to empower themselves through access to social and economic resources. It also provides a forum to engage and encourage women and girls to make their collective voices heard in Public Policy. WAD is a national network of women and women's organisations committed to individual and social transformation in Guyana. We aim to develop and sustain a national network of informed and empowered women and girls willing to and capable of bringing about change in their lives and lives of others in their communities through sustained dialogue and ready action. Additionally, WAD strives to increase women's participation and influence on public policy in Guyana.

The organisation works to facilitate collective efforts across the usual dividing lines such as age, ethnicity, class, political partisanship, and location. It engages in sustained public discussion and advocacy on critical community and national issues, lobbies and protests against rights violations of women and vulnerable groups, and fosters self-development among its network members.

## **Programs and Activities**

Since its inception, WAD has offered numerous programs to facilitate the self-development of its members and target groups. These programs include personal development training, positive parenting skills, entrepreneurial development training, family enrichment training, community mobilisation and organisation training, leadership development training, and initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of children, with a specific focus on the

girl child. Additionally, the organisation conducts women truth encounters, gender development training, disaster preparedness and climate change training, a gender and diversity in emergencies program, project management, a gender-based violence program, and monthly public educational awareness sessions on social and economic issues. WAD, also collaborates with other organisations to provide additional training opportunities for its members and target groups.

## **Community Impact and Interventions**

WAD's commitment extends beyond training and empowerment to community intervention programs and activities, impacting both rural and urban communities in Guyana.

WAD has empowered numerous women in leadership, decision-making, mobilising, organising, and addressing gender-based violence. These women have become leaders in their communities, churches, NGOs, and trade unions, significantly contributing to their organisations and making a difference in their lives and communities. The organisation's programs and activities have positively impacted several communities, enhancing the social and economic functioning of individuals and fostering a sense of belonging and ownership at the community level.

One of WAD's notable achievements since its establishment is the strong partnerships it has established with international, national, and community organisations. These partnerships include collaborations with UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF), the CIDA Gender Equality Project, the Canada Fund for Local Initiative, the Commonwealth Foundation, the U.S. Embassy, the European Union, OXFAM, the Caribbean Association of Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), and Help Age International. These collaborations have been instrumental in reducing poverty, empowering women and

girls, and improving the quality of life for families through access to information, skills, and services.

### **Signature Program - Adolescent Mother Empowerment**

The “Comprehensive Empowerment Programme for Adolescent Mothers” ages (11-19) began in 2008. This programme was sponsored by the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Republic Bank Guyana Inc. Throughout the programme WAD remained committed to reduce unplanned pregnancies among adolescent/teenage mothers and girls. The intention is to provide the girls with a second chance given their socio-economic circumstances which intertwine with sexual abuse, poverty, lack of parental support/guidance and a societal culture which discriminates against this group. WAD is also committed to achieving greater gender equality by empowering young mothers and girls to make educated choices, moving from one level to the next, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, by building income-generating capacity. As part of its efforts, WAD ensured that young mothers continued to use family planning techniques. We have exposed them to opportunities which saw them becoming nurses, teachers, graduates of University of Guyana, graduates of the Cyril Potter College of Education, successful entrepreneurs and more importantly, we have given them a safe place to share their stories and advocate for their own rights.

Ninety (90%) percent of the girls are from

single parent families; suffer from some form of poverty and are often engaged in risky sexual behaviours. Many of them were sexually abused, sexually exploited, trafficked and were involved in abusive intimate relationships and suffer from low self-esteem. The objective of the programme is to provide a safe and enabling friendly learning environment for pregnant adolescent girls and adolescent mothers to acquire adolescent sexual and reproductive health information and services so as to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and to acquire life and other skills to create a better life for themselves and children.

The program’s success has been recognised regionally and internationally, with accolades from the UNFPA regional office in Barbados, ACP Women Actors of Development in Brussels, and the European Union.

### **Commitment to Social and Economic Development**

WAD remains steadfast in its mission to invest in the lives of adolescent mothers and girls, recognising that empowering vulnerable women and girls is pivotal to their growth and development. By providing accurate information and skills, WAD continues to make a significant impact on the social and economic development of the Guyanese society.

Women Across Differences (WAD) stands as a testament to the power of collective action and the transformative impact of empowering women and girls to help themselves and their communities.







# KAALI: ▲ FEMALE WHO IS OF DARKER SKIN

by Sushila Bishwakarma

In Nepal, where a societal preference for fair skin often dominates beauty standards, women with darker complexions can face significant challenges. This bias can lead to both physical and mental distress, as many women feel pressured to conform to unrealistic beauty ideals.

Despite their abilities and talents, women with darker skin often experience feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. The societal expectation to be fair can erode self-esteem, leading some to seek harmful and expensive skin-lightening products. These practices can have negative health consequences, yet the desire to fit in can be overwhelming.

Terms like “Kaali” (Dark Girl ) are used to describe women with darker skin tones. While this term is often masked as endearing, it also carries negative connotations reflecting societal prejudice. This dual nature of the term highlights the complexities of race and beauty standards in Nepal.

I have personally experienced the impact of these societal pressures. As a woman with darker skin, I have faced challenges and stereotypes. However, it is important to remember that beauty is subjective and that our worth is not defined by our skin colour. By embracing our unique qualities and challenging societal norms, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

Sushila Bishwakarma is a visual artist based in Nepal. She wants to tell the stories of the voiceless. She works on visual narratives that focus on social issues, gender inequality, psychological perspectives, personal narratives, and environmental protection.

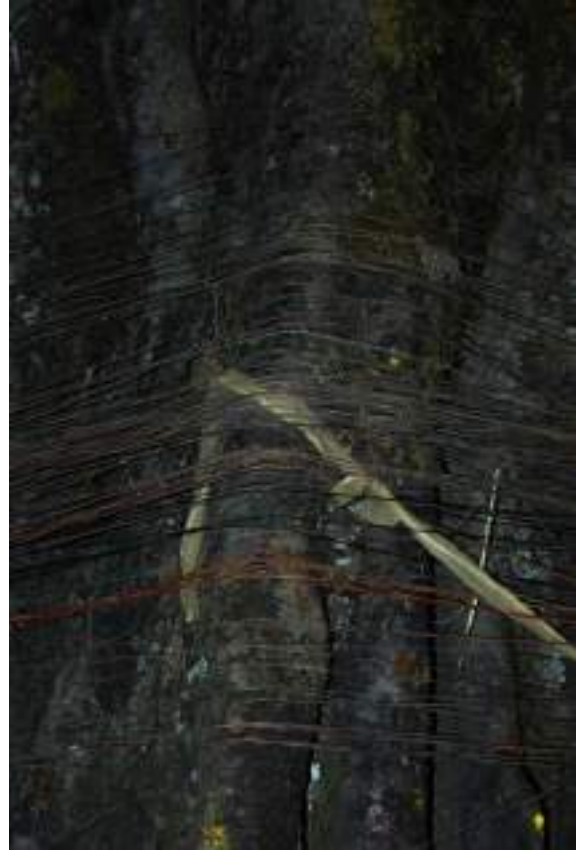
She is an alumna of the International Storytelling Exchange Workshop, jointly organised by Oslo Metropolitan University Norway, Pathshala South Asian Media Institute Bangladesh, and Photo Circle.

Her project “Kaali” has been published in a photo book called ‘It’s in Our Nature’. This year, she was selected for the 50th-year friendship photography competition of the European Union in Nepal, and her “Longing” photo story was exhibited.













# INTERCULTURALITY: EMBRACING DIVERSITY AND DIALOGUE

Imagine a vibrant tapestry woven from countless threads of different colours and textures. This tapestry represents the dynamic interaction between individuals and groups from diverse cultural backgrounds, where ideas and influences collide, fostering mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. At the heart of this exchange lies an open and respectful dialogue. Effective communication helps dismantle stereotypes and prejudices, nurturing empathy and understanding. By recognising and valuing both the differences and similarities between cultures, we can build harmonious relationships and avoid cultural dominance.

Understanding culture is like exploring an iceberg. Visible elements like attire and cuisine are just the tip, while deeper aspects like communication styles and values lie beneath the surface. To fully

appreciate cultural nuances, we must dive deeper. This deeper engagement allows us to see beyond superficial differences and appreciate the richness of each culture.

## **Thriving Through Cultural Exchange**

By delving deeper into cultural nuances, we not only understand each other better but also create opportunities for cultural synergy. When we share practices, traditions, and ideas, our experiences and perspectives are enriched. This exchange not only contributes to cultural diversity but also sparks innovation. Creating inclusive environments where everyone can coexist peacefully and participate fully in society is crucial for addressing barriers to inclusion and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Embracing diverse cultural contexts means being willing to learn and adapt. This learning process helps us develop







competence in navigating cultural differences effectively. It also empowers individuals and communities to express their identities and collaborate on shared goals, promoting social cohesion and solutions to global challenges.

While multiculturalism acknowledges the coexistence of multiple groups, interculturality goes further by fostering meaningful relationships through dialogue and exchange. It prioritises equity and transformation, moving beyond tolerance towards active engagement and collaboration. Professional development in this field emphasises relational and reflective approaches over mere competency acquisition, supporting ongoing learning and growth.

#### **Élan Interculturel: Living Diversity**

Founded in 2008 in Paris by five immigrant women with backgrounds in intercultural psychology, Élan Interculturel epitomises the commitment to cultural relations. The association translates theoretical knowledge into actionable initiatives, exploring and creating innovative educational tools and strategies. Élan Interculturel's mission is to enhance understanding of cultural diversity on both individual and collective levels. By facilitating communication through dialogue and exchanges, promoting societal harmony, and educating about cultural differences, Élan Interculturel champions diversity as a wellspring of creativity and enrichment.

Through collaboration with national and international partners, Élan Interculturel develops and implements intercultural projects, conducts training sessions and workshops, and undertakes research to inform evidence-based interventions. These efforts enrich intercultural relations, enhance cultural appreciation, and create environments where everyone feels valued and understood, irrespective of cultural background.

By embracing diverse cultures, we can cultivate mutual respect, celebrate our differences, and collectively address global challenges.

**“By recognising and valuing both the differences and similarities between cultures, we can build harmonious relationships and avoid cultural dominance”**









# THE WORLD THROUGH WOMEN'S EYES

Documentary photography acknowledges people's lived experiences, which provides crucial knowledge for structural change. It empowers women to challenge injustices and marginalisation through their words, eyes, and actions. Through documentary photography, women exercise their rights to bring social and structural change to their communities.

Founded by Jekaterina Saveljeva, femLENS breaks barriers in documentary photography by empowering women to capture and share their own narratives. Utilising accessible technology like mobile phones, femLENS offers tools for women worldwide to express their views and stories. femLENS was founded to address the underrepresentation of women in documentary photography and to challenge the narratives typically shaped by male perspectives. Through its initiatives, femLENS provides women with the tools and platforms to tell their stories, empowering them and promoting gender equality and diversity in the fields of visual arts and media. The organisation is committed to using simple, accessible technology like mobile phones, ensuring that more women can participate regardless of their economic background.

femLENS conducts documentary photography workshops worldwide, focusing on equipping women with the necessary skills to capture and narrate their experiences visually. These workshops are designed to teach photography and foster a sense of community and self-expression among participants.

"What I appreciated and enjoyed most about the series of workshops was our trainer

Kate's explanation style. She used examples that made it easy for me to understand how to improve my photography skills. I also enjoyed the interactive nature of the workshops, and it was impressive to see how femLENS could transform our amateur photos into better images through online editing tools, providing us with valuable insights." - Workshop Participant.

The organisation collaborates with local community centres, NGOs, and activist groups to reach a diverse audience. femLENS's impact extends through various projects and campaigns that raise awareness on issues like women's rights, gender-based violence, and social inclusion. These projects have helped amplify women's voices and fostered a global network of female photographers who continue to influence and reshape the cultural landscape.

"femLENS is a platform that is viewed as a networking tool, a community showcasing diversity and the female point of view. It is seen as a support system for women photographers that offers empathy, work, and opportunities. [Survey] Respondents consider femLENS a reference for women's photography, where one can learn about different photographic styles, tips, and interesting female photographers. The platform is also regarded as vital, essential, and needed for its role in highlighting the work of women photographers worldwide."

- Community Member.

femLENS also organises photo exhibitions and publishes works in books and zines and an online magazine, "We See" magazine. These platforms showcase the powerful stories captured by workshop participants, offering them a professional space to gain

visibility and recognition. The exhibitions and publications are crucial in challenging public perceptions and promoting a more inclusive narrative within the arts and media.

Through these efforts, femLENS strives to create a more balanced and equitable environment within the arts, allowing more women to share their unique perspectives and experiences. The organisation teaches

photography and instils confidence and empowerment among women, helping them see and portray the world through their lens.

Documentary photography, not manipulated and honest through women's eyes, is the most sensitive and thoughtful way of telling a story today. Sharing these stories is a powerful and brave act that a woman can do.









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—chirurga

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# WOMEN, WORDS, AND REPRESENTATION: REFLECTING ON THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

The truth is that, due to a bit of fatigue and a lot of distraction, a couple of weeks ago I inadvertently deleted this article.

In its first version, the text began with an anecdote, a real event that made me reflect on how deeply rooted sexism and discrimination are in Italian society. Long before it becomes violence, these issues are persistent signs of inequality in daily life.

This topic, particularly evident in the media, on social platforms, and in mass communication, is of great concern to our association, Beecom, which since 2009 has been promoting equality with a feminist approach in the field of communication.

When I had to rewrite the piece, I looked around for a more recent anecdote to illustrate the theme of communication/language/discrimination. The problem is that I found too many examples.

A couple of days ago, the far-right party Lega Nord presented a bill in Parliament to ban the feminine adaptation of some professional titles in public documents. The proposal was later withdrawn, but the central issue linking language and power remains open.

Language, as linguists like Vera Gheno teach us, is a form of representation: “Linguistic issues are never frivolous, because through language we express our thoughts, our very essence as human beings, who we are and who we want to be. Language is not an accessory of humanity, but its center.” (Gheno, Vera. *Femminili singolari*. Einaudi, 2019).

In Italian (which is a masculine-feminine gender language, meaning that all nouns, including those describing people, must be either masculine or feminine grammatically, presenting unique challenges for gender inclusivity), we see a world where professions like “waitress” or “housemaid” are referred to in the feminine, while “engineer” or “rector” are not. This discrepancy reflects an underlying power structure.

Proposing to legally freeze this status quo is patriarchy. As activists, we believe it is necessary to act on two fronts: the socio-economic one, through actions of female empowerment to break the “glass ceiling” that prevents women from reaching leadership roles, and the communication front, renewing models, proposing new



narratives, and destroying gender biases and stereotypes.

A few years ago, with Beecom, we carried out a project titled “Leader per la pelle” – an untranslatable pun playing on the fact that “pelle” in Italian means both “leather” and “skin.” The project focused, on one hand, on one of Tuscany’s most important manufacturing sectors, leather goods, with leadership and empowerment training courses for young women to help them break the “glass ceiling” toward top positions in companies.

On the other hand, the project included a communication campaign on the web and in the streets (with posters) based on the claim “talent has no gender,” showing photos of young women who had chosen careers still stereotypically considered male in Italy, such as astrophysicist, orchestra conductor, war photographer and surgeon. The campaign targeted the young women of Tuscany, encouraging them to pursue their ambitions, knowing that success is possible regardless of gender. The goal was to propose female role models who, while smiling, could deconstruct gender stereotypes that associate power and competence with men.

At Beecom, we believe that the way we speak, the images, and the models that the media propose shape our imagination and reflect how we think; therefore, acting on the narrative (written and spoken, visual and textual) is not a whim but an initiative of substance. News shows us that this issue, unfortunately, is more relevant than ever.

Beecom Association, based in Florence, Italy, was founded in 2009 by video-making and journalism professionals. Since then, it has developed projects in media education, intercultural dialogue, inclusion, democracy, and gender equality in collaboration with local, national, and international partners. Beecom is also strongly committed to enhancing social rights and values through communication campaigns and video documentaries. From 2021 to 2023, Beecom was part of the project “ACT! Against Violence and Sexual Exploitation,” for which, thanks to the collaboration with all partners, it created an online awareness campaign visible at [www.actiproject.online](http://www.actiproject.online). Currently, it is a partner of the Welens project.







# KEMEA: PIONEERING SECURITY STUDIES AND SAFEGUARDING SOCIETY

In the heart of Greece, the KEMEA Centre for Security Studies stands as a beacon of excellence and innovation in security research and training. Established in 2005 under the auspices of the Ministry for Citizen Protection to provide further, up-to-date expertise after the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, which was a major, multifaceted event vis-à-vis security considerations, it has rapidly evolved into a pivotal institution that not only shapes the nation's security policies but also contributes significantly to European Union projects and initiatives. Its history is highlighted by its multifaceted contributions to security studies, educational role, EU project involvement, police training, and commitment to societal safety, including protecting women and the fight against emerging forms of violence.

At its core, KEMEA is dedicated to the advancement of security knowledge through rigorous educational programs. It has established itself as a vocal advocate for continuous learning and professional development, particularly in the field of Law Enforcement Agents' training. By coordinating and participating in numerous EU security projects, it also ensures that law

enforcement officers are equipped with the latest strategies and technologies to tackle modern-day challenges in border management, organised crime and terrorism, natural disasters, and cybersecurity breaches. The Centre's influence extends beyond national borders, as it actively participates in numerous EU-funded research projects. These projects are instrumental in developing cutting-edge solutions for all types of security threats. In recent years, it has expanded its scope to address pressing societal issues such as the safety of women and the fight against gender-based violence. Recognising the changing landscape of threats, the centre has developed specialised training programs and research aimed at combating cyberbullying and new forms of violence. Through these efforts, KEMEA is protecting individuals and promoting a safer and more equitable society.

KEMEA's approach to security is holistic, acknowledging that citizens' safety is intertwined with social well-being, equality, and justice. By integrating research and practical application into training modules for LEAs, KEMEA is at the forefront of shaping







a secure future. Its proactive stance on security issues, through the creation of said educational modules, further exemplifies its comprehensive strategy.

The Centre's commitment to security extends to the vital issue of human trafficking, a modern-day scourge that affects vulnerable populations across the globe. The centre has undertaken significant projects to enhance the prevention of human trafficking and bolster mechanisms for the prevention and early identification of victims of human trafficking and exploitation. Further, KEMEA has been organising events and simulation exercises to train and empower participants in identifying and investigating cases of human trafficking, mainly targeting forced labour and sexual exploitation. These initiatives are part of KEMEA's broader strategy to foster a victim-centred approach

and cultivate a culture of awareness and prevention while ensuring that the protection of human rights remains at the forefront of security studies and practices. This has been made possible by participating in increasingly more projects pertinent to upholding fundamental rights, thanks to its researchers' relevant expertise, experience, and interests.

As KEMEA continues to grow, its impact on security studies and practices becomes ever more significant. With each passing year, the centre cements its role as a leader in security research, a trusted partner in EU collaborations, and a guardian of societal safety. KEMEA's journey is one of relentless pursuit of knowledge, innovation, and dedication to the greater good, making it an exemplary model for security studies worldwide.





# ONE IN THREE WOMEN

by Nieves Mingueza

The United Nations (UN) defines violence against women as any act that causes physical, sexual, or mental harm, whether in public or private. The UN estimates that one in three women will face gender-based violence, yet its often private nature makes it difficult to quantify or even recognise. Many stories of domestic violence remain undocumented.

Nieves Mingueza was shocked to discover how many of her friends and family had experienced or witnessed such violence. These stories are now becoming more visible, thanks to feminist movements like #MeToo, better data, and increased media interest.

'One in Three Women' is a fragmented visual and textual project that explores gender violence. Using collages created from found photography and UN statistics, it reflects the tension between the growing visibility of violence against women and its persistent

invisibility in daily life. The project also touches on broader gender issues such as the male gaze and societal power dynamics.

In the opening collage, Mingueza reworks a 1950s female group portrait, replacing a third of the women's faces with red fragments to symbolise the one-in-three statistic. She also transforms domestic interiors into crime scenes, turning everyday objects into symbols of violence. By overlaying images, Mingueza highlights the patriarchal landscapes that strip women of their identities and the unjust structures that perpetuate this. Turning the photographs over and handwriting UN statistics on the back, she speaks to the violence that's left out of family photos. The final collage connects with the audience, raising awareness that gender-based violence affects women globally and could be happening to someone close to you—even yourself.

Spanish-British artist, researcher, educator, and curator, Nieves Mingueza, blends documentary photography, archival material, collage, text, film, and installation in her practice-based research. Her work bridges the conceptual, personal, and political, reactivating visual archives to explore themes such as violence against women, mental health, and memory.

She holds an MA in Documentary Photography and is currently pursuing a PhD at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.

Mingueza's work has been widely exhibited, with installations featured at Les Rencontres de la Photographie Arles (FR), Peckham 24, the Royal Academy of Arts, Saatchi Gallery, Tate Modern, Tate Britain (UK), Fondazione Giorgio Cini (IT), and PhotoEspaña (SP), among others.

In 2019, her first monograph was published by IIKKI Books. Her work has been reviewed in numerous publications, including the British Journal of Photography, Fisheye, Babelia (El País), Der Greif, Lenscratch, Blind, L'Oeil de la Photographie, Metal, All About Photo, Analog, Yogurt, Witty and LensCulture, among others.



one in three women globally are subjected to violence







Most violence against women is  
perpetrated by current or former  
husbands or intimate partners.  
680









933

globally, violence against women  
disproportionately affects low-  
and lower-middle-income countries  
and regions.





# CESIE, A EUROPEAN CENTRE OF STUDIES AND INITIATIVES

Founded in 2001 and inspired by the sociologist Danilo Dolci, CESIE's mission is to foster educational innovation, participation, and growth. Symbolised by a pomegranate, it represents the 'fruitful' unity of people, growing together under the same peel.

CESIE employs nonviolent methods and collaborative grassroots approaches in education. Central to these innovative learning methodologies is Dolci's reciprocal maieutic approach, a dialectic method of inquiry and "popular self-analysis" aimed at empowering communities and individuals, which can be defined as a "process of collective exploration that takes, as a departure point, the experience and the intuition of individuals" Dolci, 1996.

The organisation addresses social needs by connecting research with action, promoting individual well-being and economic development.

CESIE operates at local, European, and international levels, engaging in various impactful initiatives. It is organised into 6 specialised units, each dedicated to different but complementary objectives; promote sustainable academic innovation, advocate for equality and combat discrimination, enhance lifelong learning for adults, support asylum seekers and migrants, improve the quality of school education, and empower young people through education and mobility initiatives.



On March 6, 1967, a march for peace and socio-economic development in Western Sicily began from Partanna. Leaders included Danilo Dolci, Bruno Zevi, Ernesto Treccani, Antonio Uccello, Lorenzo Barbera, and Vietnamese resistance hero Vo Van Ai. Peppino Impastato also participated, holding a sign.



HEAL and WINGS are two EU-funded projects coordinated by CESIE dedicated to supporting and integrating migrant women, victims of trafficking (VoT) and survivors, using cross-cutting methodologies.

### **HEAL, empowering women through art therapy**

The HEAL project made significant strides in supporting third-country national women survivors of trafficking by providing essential psychological support through innovative art therapy techniques.

#### **Art as a healing tool**

Central to HEAL's success was the development of the toolkit "Fanzines and Coping with Trauma." This guide facilitated psychological support sessions where participants created fanzines—small, handmade publications—that allowed them to express their identities and aspirations creatively. This artistic process provided a therapeutic outlet, enabling women to define who they are and who they want to become.

#### **Culturally sensitive therapy**



The project's approach was grounded in gender and culture-sensitive methods, such as ethnopsychology and ethnopsychiatry. According to Maria Chiara, the project's psychologist, "Ethnopsychology considers the culture and language of origin, enabling women to share their suffering in their native language and express themselves through their cultural values without fear of judgement."

This methodology created a supportive environment where participants felt safe and understood.

#### **Creative expression and empowerment**

The fanzines served as powerful tools for personal expression. Marianna, an art expert of HEAL, highlighted, "Fanzines, like art in general, give form to emotions and experiences. They act as a bridge of communication, using artistic techniques like collage and painting to transcend verbal language."

This creative process empowered the women, helping them to communicate their emotions and experiences in new ways.



### **RI-TRATTI Festival; celebrating rebirth**

The culmination of the HEAL project was the RI-TRATTI festival, which showcased a fanzine exhibition in Palermo and Rome. The name “RI-TRATTI” combines “rebirth” and “tratta” (trafficking), symbolising the active reclamation of identity and the creation of new life paths. Marianna elaborates, “RI-TRATTI is not just an artistic representation but a catalyst for discussion, focusing on the full realisation of human potential, courage, and the challenges these women face.”

HEAL’s sessions helped participants discover inner resources, rebuild self-esteem, and foster well-being. The creative process broke language barriers and facilitated growth. One participant shared, “Creating fanzines helped me realise there are different languages of communication, making me feel freer to express myself.”

### **WINGS, comprehensive support & safe spaces for trafficking survivors**

WINGS provided a concrete answer to this important and topical question: offering them linguistic, psychological, and professional support.

#### **Multifaceted approach**

Language courses were crafted for women with low educational levels, focusing on practical knowledge of local culture to favour integration into host societies. These courses, supplemented by ethno-psychological support, aimed to build foundational skills. Individual employment counselling sessions worked alongside the language training to develop personalised career paths and internship opportunities. During these internships, psychologists and language experts provided ongoing support to both women and employers, ensuring effective integration.

The experience of the language course was used to produce storybooks containing the participants’ artistic creations developed during the sessions, which encouraged them to reflect on their skills and talents, as well as their hopes and dreams for the future.

#### **Safe spaces method**

The creation of safe spaces, following the IRC model, managed by a multidisciplinary

staff, was a key component of the project. This model included psychologists, intercultural mediators, educators, and social workers who conducted activities focused on cognitive development, labour integration, and psychological counselling. They were designed to provide a supportive environment where women could feel secure and understood, allowing them to focus on their personal and professional development.

#### **Social Hut Festival**

The project culminated in the Social Hut Festival in Brussels in December 2023. This event brought together employers, anti-trafficking experts, and policymakers to discuss best practices for creating inclusive workplaces. The festival highlighted the importance of intersectional approaches and shared insights from the WINGS program, emphasising the need for continuous support and empowerment of migrant women.

Last but not least, several key strategies were highlighted: First, ensure TCN women obtain stay permits to facilitate labour inclusion and decent work; adopt a multidisciplinary approach with professionals such as cultural mediators, psychologists, and language teachers to address challenges; facilitate the recognition and assessment of migrant’s skills, and encourage employers to use qualification equivalence procedures; and finally, train all involved parties in inclusivity and safe environment practices to create supportive work conditions.

The aforementioned initiatives are just a small example of CESIE’s ongoing efforts to support the local community in Palermo, Sicily, a region marked by complex socio-economic and political challenges. As a primary entry point for refugees and migrants via the Lampedusa pathway, this territory faces a significant influx of individuals requiring support and integration. This situation is exacerbated by widespread poverty, unemployment, and insufficient social programs. By stepping in where institutional support is lacking, organisations like CESIE play a crucial role in addressing the needs of people in situations of vulnerability.





# ADDRESSING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN MEXICO WITH UNITY AND ACTION

Human trafficking is a serious and long-standing issue in Mexico, particularly in states like Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Tlaxcala. For generations, practices such as the sale of daughters, sexual exploitation, child marriages, and forced servitude have been part of the social fabric in some communities, reflecting deep-rooted cultural challenges. These practices fall under the crime of human trafficking, as defined by the General Law to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Crimes related to Human Trafficking. While legal frameworks exist to combat this issue, the fight against human trafficking requires a collective effort across all levels of society.

## **A Unified Effort: The Role of CUVT**

A significant step in this fight was taken in 2012 with the founding of the United Commission Against Human Trafficking (CUVT) by Rosi Orozco, a leading advocate who was instrumental in the development of

legislation to protect victims and prosecute offenders. Since its inception, CUVT has focused on mobilising change agents from various sectors— government, businesses, civil society organisations, the media, faith communities, and beyond—aiming to foster a broad, unified approach to addressing human trafficking. The organisation's slogan, "United We Make a Difference," captures the essence of this collaborative effort.

Given the vulnerability of large segments of Mexico's population to human trafficking, especially due to socio-economic factors, the need for both rescue operations and preventative measures is critical. CUVT has made strides in this area by spearheading initiatives that have raised public awareness and strengthened prevention efforts. The creation of the National Anti-Trafficking Line, the launch of the Amber Alert system, and the UN Blue Heart campaign in partnership with the government are just a few examples





of CUVT's impact. To further solidify these efforts, the organisation has also organised training for law enforcement, public officials, and the judiciary, while educating young people in vulnerable areas on how to protect themselves and recognise signs of trafficking.

### **Raising Awareness and Supporting Survivors**

An equally important aspect of CUVT's work is shedding light on the harsh realities of sexual exploitation and supporting those who have been affected. The organisation has conducted investigations in areas where sexual exploitation occurs openly and in communities where cultural practices contribute to trafficking. By listening to the stories of victims—some as young as six years old—CUVT gains a deeper understanding of the problem's magnitude and uses these insights to drive action and advocacy.

Moreover, supporting survivors is central to CUVT's mission. Recovery from trafficking is a long and complex process that requires comprehensive care, including psychological support, education, and reintegration into

society. Survivors who share their experiences become powerful advocates, using their voices to educate others and propose solutions based on their lived experiences. This survivor-centred approach not only aids in healing but also serves as a deterrent by raising awareness about the realities and consequences of trafficking.

### **Adapting to New Challenges in Combating Trafficking**

Despite the progress made, the challenge of human trafficking continues to evolve, with criminal networks constantly adapting their strategies, often using new technologies to avoid detection. This ongoing threat underscores the need for continuous training, adaptation, and innovation in the fight against human trafficking.

CUVT's work demonstrates that unity, awareness, and proactive action are essential in addressing human trafficking. This responsibility extends to all sectors of society, and only through collaboration can we hope to create a safer and more just environment for everyone in Mexico.

# NEW EXPLOITATION MODALITIES, STATE FAILURES, AND THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF NGOS

Human trafficking in Argentina is a complex crime that is provided for in the Penal Law and international human rights treaties ratified by Argentina. Sixteen years ago (in 2008) the first law about the crime of human trafficking came into force, Law 26364, which attempted to reflect the provisions of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children ('Palermo Protocol'), which complements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

This law established for the State the duty to create public policies for the prevention, prosecution and punishment of human trafficking in Argentina. It also recognised a set of rights of the victims, including the right to receive appropriate housing, sufficient food and personal hygiene, to free psychological, medical and legal assistance, to the protection of their identity and privacy, to give testimony under special conditions of protection and care, to be informed of their rights and the progress of the process, and to be heard at all stages of the judicial process.

The law against the crime of human trafficking established an important aspect that must be considered by judges: "vulnerability" as the situation in which the victim finds herself, and that means that a victim of trafficking could never give consent to be sexually or labor exploited by no one.

Although the emergence of that first law was a very important advance in the fight against human trafficking, it evidenced some deficiencies. That is why in 2012 Law 26842 was approved, which eliminated the age difference of the victim and definitively established that no victim can have the will to allow his or her own exploitation, modified the purposes of exploitation, among other modifications.

As a result of this law, two public agencies were created: the Federal Council for the Fight against Human Trafficking and Exploitation

and for the Protection and Assistance to Victims, and the Committee for the Fight against Human Trafficking and Exploitation.

Despite the fact that Argentina is a country with important legal and human rights regulations against the crime of human trafficking, sexual exploitation continues to be one of the major complex crimes that year after year causes the disappearance and death of thousands of children, young girls and adult women.

The statistical report for the year 2023, published by the Public Prosecutor's Office for Human Trafficking and Exploitation - a public agency - indicates that the highest percentage of sentences with convictions in judicial proceedings for the crime of human trafficking are for sexual exploitation. Of that percentage of victims of sexual trafficking, 98.7% are women, and of this percentage, 9.8% are children and young girls. It is also important to note that the percentage of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation is made up of a large number of native and foreign victims, which indicates that Argentina is a country that attracts, transfers and receives victims from other countries in the Americas and the world, but mainly from Latin America, especially from neighbouring countries, taking into account that many women arrive in Argentina or are transferred from countries such as Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia alone or with their children, deceived by false job offers through which they are recruited to be sexually exploited in different places such as the street, bars, hotels or private apartments.

A new modality of sexual exploitation has emerged in recent years and has increased since the pandemic situation in 2020: sexual exploitation through the webcam system or web sites and platforms on sexual content. This modality of sexual exploitation is not contemplated in the statistics and there are many problems for the victims to be recognised as such. The victims who are sexually exploited through the web are increasingly young,





many of them girls, who are recruited through the use of instant messaging services, video games or photo and video websites.

In 2020, Madres Víctimas de Trata rescued a victim of webcam sexual exploitation. The victim had been captured when she was 17 years old and was being sexually exploited in an apartment located in the Federal Capital of Argentina, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires. This victim, like so many others, never received any support or assistance from the State, despite the fact that the law created public agencies to provide such assistance to victims. The NGO Madres Víctimas de Trata provided food, clothing, housing and psychological and legal assistance to the victim from the very beginning. In October 2024, the NGO's legal team will participate in the first oral trial on behalf of a victim of webcam sexual exploitation in Argentina and that means a challenge to show that there are many victims who are not foreseen by the statistics and who are not assisted by the State, and that for that reason they should be assisted by an NGO like Madres Víctimas de Trata, because the State agencies do not fulfil their duty of prevention or real assistance for the large number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The NGO, which has been working for more than 20 years, does not receive any government subsidy or funding. Its work is carried out by volunteers and by professional lawyers and psychologists who do their work free of charge. They are very much alone in this fight against

the crime of trafficking, a crime so complex and terrible that it completely destroys the lives of thousands of children, young girls and adult women in Argentina.

During the year 2023, Madres Víctimas de Trata assisted approximately 35 people who were victims of human trafficking, and who were mostly afraid to report it. Victims do not trust or believe in state agencies and institutions, because many victims report but do not get help, and unfortunately their lives and the lives of their families are in danger.

Madres Víctimas de Trata travels through different provinces of Argentina to provide assistance to children, young girls and adult women victims. There are many victims belonging to indigenous communities who do not speak Spanish and cannot denounce these crimes because the State does not have translators who understand their language and are able to provide them with assistance. There is a very terrible practice of rape and sexual exploitation whose victims are girls from indigenous communities, this terrible practice of rape is known as "chineo" and is committed by men with power and money. "Chineo" is a term used in northern Argentina to refer to the racist colonial practice of raping Indigenous women and girls by non-Indigenous (often white) men.

Thousands of people contact the NGO Madres Víctimas de Trata every day by phone, email or through social networks, usually Instagram, requesting assistance.

**“CHINEO” REFERS TO THE RACIALLY MOTIVATED SEXUAL ASSAULTS COMMITTED BY NON-INDIGENOUS MEN (PRIMARILY OF EUROPEAN DESCENT, KNOWN AS “CRIOLLOS”) AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NORTHERN ARGENTINA. THIS BRUTAL PRACTICE HAS ROOTS IN ARGENTINA’S COLONIAL PAST, WHEN EUROPEAN SETTLERS USED SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS A MEANS TO DOMINATE INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS AND SEIZE THEIR LAND. “CHINEO” REFLECTS DEEP-SEATED RACIAL HATRED AND A BELIEF IN THE SUBJUGATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. THIS CRIME CARRIES A UNIQUE RACIAL COMPONENT, WITH PERPETRATORS EXPLICITLY TARGETING INDIGENOUS WOMEN, OFTEN MINORS, AS A MEANS OF DOMINATION AND CONTROL.**

**THE PRACTICE CONTINUES TODAY, WITH INDIGENOUS WOMEN FROM COMMUNITIES LIKE THE WICHÍ SUFFERING FROM GANG RAPES, MANY OF WHICH GO UNPUNISHED DUE TO SYSTEMIC RACISM AND LACK OF LEGAL PROTECTIONS. FEW PERPETRATORS ARE IDENTIFIED, LET ALONE PROSECUTED, LEAVING SURVIVORS WITH LITTLE RECOURSE. THE WORD “CHINEO” ITSELF UNDERSCORES THE RACISM BEHIND THESE ASSAULTS, WHICH ARE PART OF A BROADER HISTORICAL PATTERN OF VIOLENCE, LAND THEFT, AND GENOCIDE AGAINST ARGENTINA’S INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS.**

**DESPITE SOME HIGH-PROFILE CASES, SUCH AS THE 2015 CONVICTION OF SIX MEN FOR RAPING A 12-YEAR-OLD WICHÍ GIRL, MOST ASSAULTS GO UNPUNISHED. THE LACK OF LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT, ALONG WITH BARRIERS SUCH AS LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES AND THE REMOTE LOCATIONS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, MEANS THAT MANY VICTIMS NEVER REPORT THE CRIMES. THIS PATTERN OF VIOLENCE IS PART OF A LARGER HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF GENOCIDE, LAND DISPOSSESSION, AND ONGOING MARGINALIZATION OF ARGENTINA’S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, WHO NOW MAKE UP JUST 2.4% OF THE POPULATION.**







# Cuajojodie

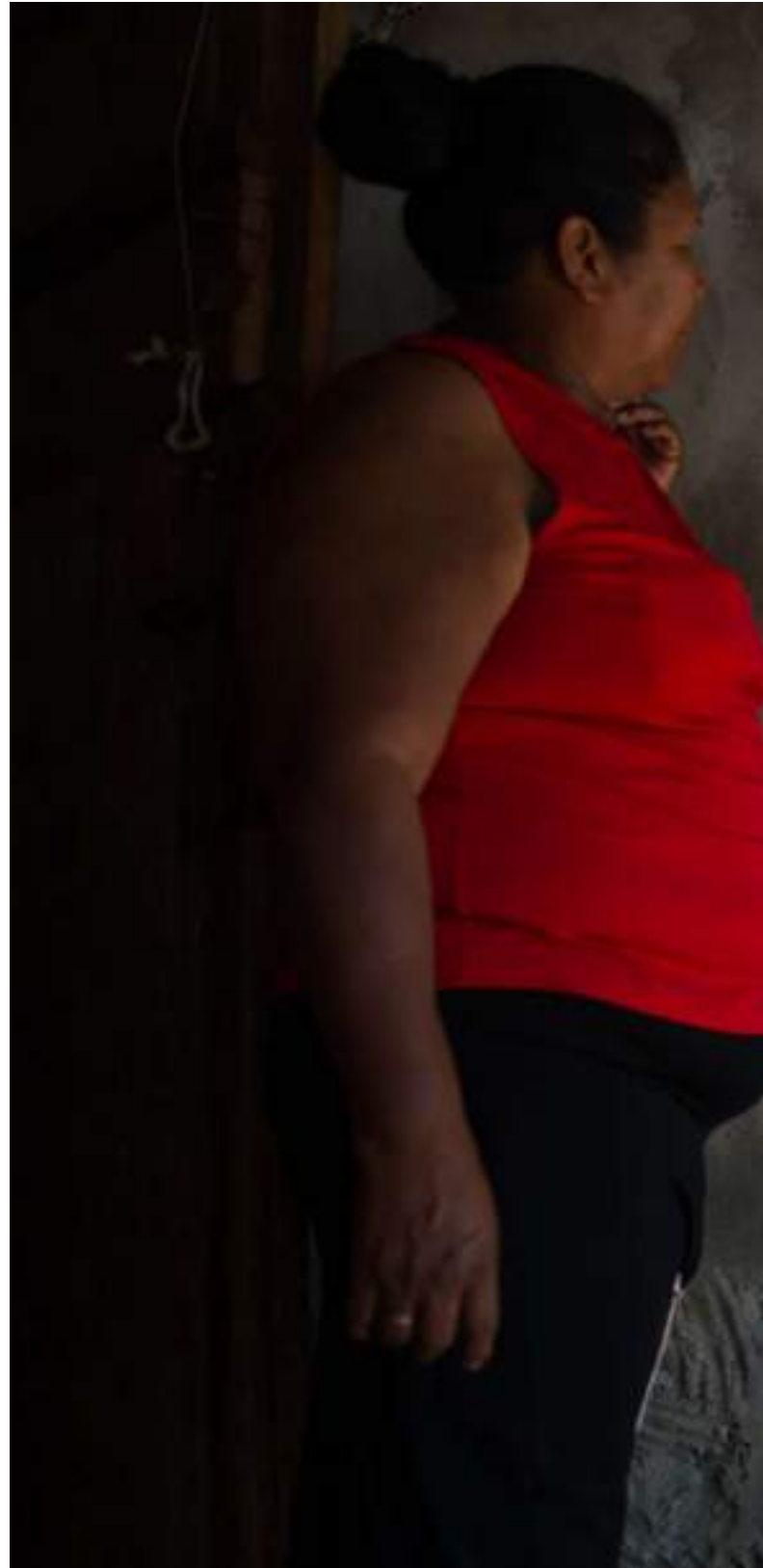
by Claudia Belaunde

A Friday night, Rebeca Cutanurajai Etacore, 14 years old, walked outside the door of her community, took a cab, and was found dead days later. She was a “cuajojodie” (bird woman), a term used for females subjected to sex trade. Her family believes that her spirit guided them to her killer.

The ayoreo indigenous tribe is an ethnic group that lives in Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay. A small group lives in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and since the 60s are in a critically endangered situation, they still can't find their place in society.

The lack of jobs due to their language barrier has led many ayoreo women into prostitution, and now they suffer due to incomprehension of their cosmovision, social organisation, STDs, addictions, and violence. Women have been imprisoned for prostitution, and their rights have been unprotected. As a way to stop this, mothers have been promoting early marriages.

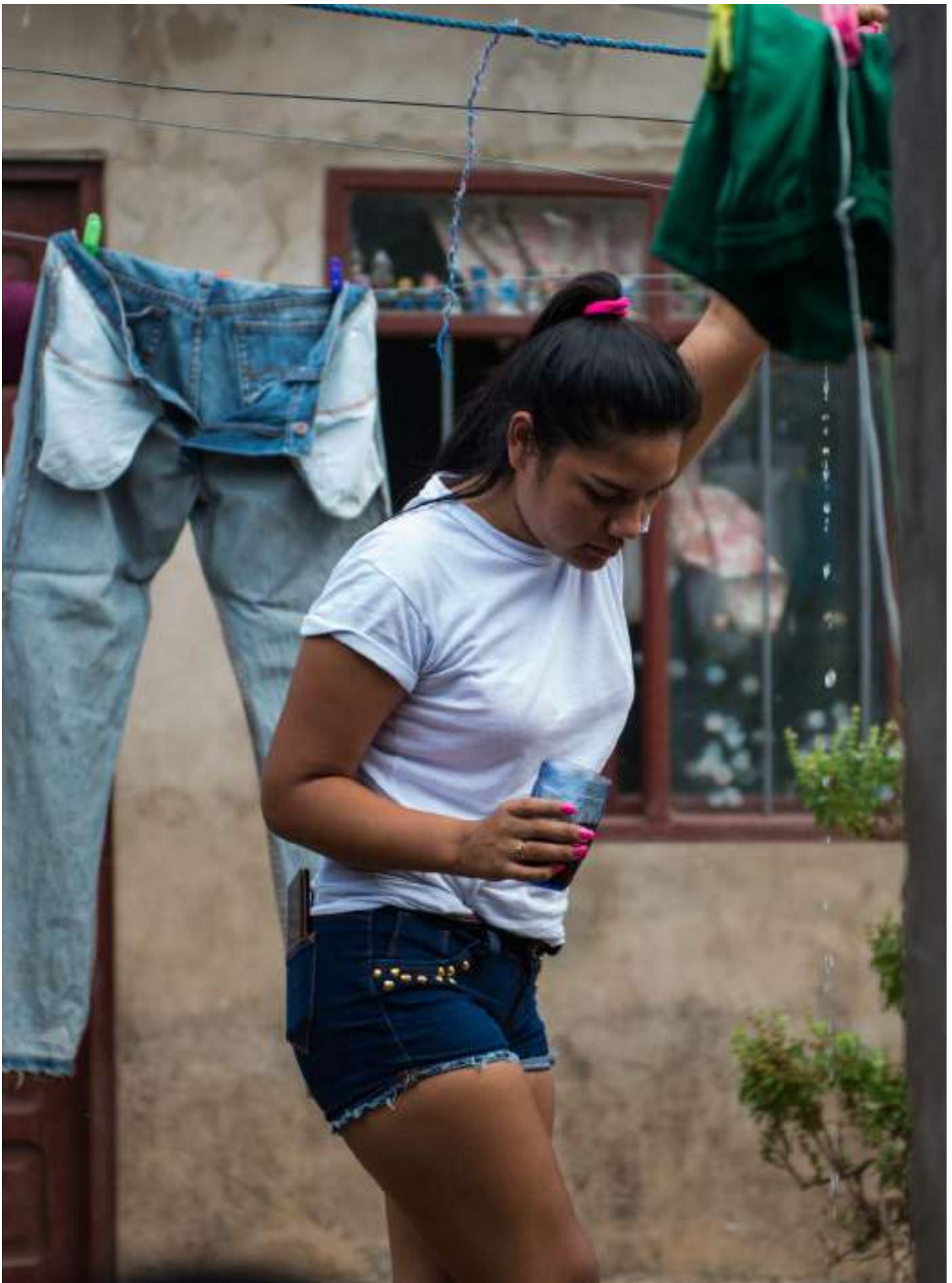
**Claudia Belaunde is a 36 years old Bolivian photographer and documentary filmmaker. Claudia is a nature lover and culture explorer. She studied audiovisual production and has a master's degree in education. For years she worked with the main media companies in Bolivia as a journalist and reporter. Most of her work is about women's issues, social conflicts, politics, indigenous people, and climate change. Claudia truly believes that women's views on social issues have a bigger power to transform and expose these issues, so we as a society should care and respond to them.**





















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femLENS MTÜ is an Estonian non-profit association (registration number 80429622). Our vision is empowered women creating and sharing their own stories about their lives.

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# WE SEE

The femLENS magazine

**Editor**

femLENS

info@femlens.com

**Publisher**

Blurb.com

**Contacts:**

femlens.com

info@femlens.com

Instagram/Facebook: @femlens

Twitter @femlensphoto

Front cover photo by Sushila Bishwakarma from project "Kaali".

Back cover photo by Nanda Porta Rocha from project "High Tide" by TiT Collective.

"High Tide" brings reflections from several women from Poland and Brazil on the experience of menstrual bleeding and its social consequences. Participants in the project belong to generations that lacked comprehensive sexual education, making this awaited moment coincided with the discovery of pain, vulnerability, and subsequently, disappointment and a rejection of their own bodies. Despite the civilisational development, menstrual blood is still socially stigmatised as impure, and the experience itself is shamed. Additionally, the portrayal of menstruation often serves as a tool of patriarchy for controlling and patronising women. Menopause, in Western culture, is synonymous with exclusion, perceived uselessness, and unattractiveness. Older women are no longer seen as wise matriarchs, who hold knowledge in herbal medicine and life experience. They are instead moulded into the image of witches or hags.

The goal of the project is to bring body positive consciousness and to run a strong message of sisterhood: we have each other, different in our femininity and cyclicity but are all present, ready to listen and support.



Photo by Katarzyna Rychły  
Photo from "High tide" project by TiT Collective



**Photo by Agnieszka Nowacka-Witczak**  
Photo from "High tide" project by TiT Collective





