

# Safe Enterprises: Implementation Experiences of Involving the Private Sector in Preventing and Fighting Violence Against Women in Peru

*Christine Brendel, Franziska Gutzeit, and Jazmín Ponce*

## *Executive Summary*

A medical representative was absent on Monday – one of many occasions – but the reality was that she was not merely absent, she had been killed by her husband who then committed suicide. No one could have foreseen the fateful event. (General Manager, Laboratorios Bagó, Peru)

The general manager of Laboratorios Bagó in Peru depicts this as being the turning point that prompted the lab to start a program to combat violence against women. Yet, it should not have required the death of an employee to deliver a wake-up call. Estimates show that 30–50 percent of women in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador are subjected to physical violence by their partners (World Health Organization, 2013). If warning signs such as the repeated absence of a medical representative are noticed, such fateful events can not only be foreseen, but prevented.

The Laboratorios Bagó case is just one example of the many reasons that the “Combating violence against women in Latin America” (ComVo-Mujer) program was initiated; the team pushed through the obstacles in their way to prevent cases such as these. This case study aims to outline the implementation strategies, experiences, challenges, and successes of the ComVoMujer regional program involving a new actor – the private sector – in preventing and fighting violence against women (VAW) in Peru. The study answers three main questions:

- Can the private sector be an important partner in preventing VAW?
- Will the private sector take ownership, despite the fact that VAW is perceived as not being their concern?
- Will governmental institutions recognize the engagement of the private sector and work together?

ComVoMujer was launched in 2009 and was prompted by the commissioner, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and

Development (BMZ), to include the private sector into its activities by creating ownership and encouraging cooperation with governmental and non-governmental actors. Although faced with challenging circumstances, ComVoMujer was able to manage obstacles mainly by understanding the nature of the private sector and using its logic to create innovative measures.

As VAW is an extremely multifaceted and widespread problem, it was also important to reduce complexity while focusing on prevention and intimate partner violence against women in order to successfully carry out decisions and steer the program toward a fruitful implementation. Clearly structured internal-steering processes and permanent supervision were also vital. Additionally, it was helpful to count on knowledgeable and multidisciplinary staff with experience in the field and valuable contacts to important and relevant external partners.

An important counterpart was the Peruvian Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP<sup>1</sup>), which signed a work agreement committing formally to include the private sector in its work after having been convinced of the advantages of a multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder approach. In order to win over the private sector and connect all sectors involved, the program elaborated a conception framework and indicators for safe businesses as well as carried out various research studies on the economic consequences of VAW for companies with the University of San Martín de Porres (USMP). Especially the empirical evidence of the financial impacts of VAW provided a very useful argument.

Along the way, the program also learned other valuable lessons that it took into consideration for future actions: It became evident that it was necessary to always count on the approval and involvement of the upper management of possible partners in the private sector, as only in this way could a sustainable partnership be guaranteed. Additionally, alliances were always helpful as door-openers. Exchanging best practices and mutual learnings was not only a great asset but also a very effective scaling-up strategy. It was also of utmost importance to involve the media to spread knowledge and information and to generate further interest.

Looking back at the three main questions before implementation, all can be answered with a “yes.” This proves that the strategies applied by

---

1 The ministry was known until 2012 as the Ministry for Women and Social Development (MIMDES), and thereafter as the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP).

ComVoMujer worked: Having started with zero enterprises to work with, the program is now working intensively with 100 companies, 4 business associations, and has collaborated with about a further 400 companies.

After having been convinced of the effects that VAW has on them, companies took ownership by conducting campaigns, carrying out further studies on the effects of VAW, training their employees – both through workshops and online certifications – and implementing special management models to prevent VAW.

State institutions are increasingly recognizing the work that has been done by the private sector. The MIMP, for example, launched the certification “Safe enterprise without violence and discrimination against women” in order to encourage more businesses to implement preventive measures. Even the USMP and other representatives from the academic sector carry out – and will continue to carry out – research on the effects of VAW by analyzing, for example, which consequences VAW has on students’ productivity.

## *Introduction*

Gender-based violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights violations: It is an expression of the unequal power relations between genders and hinders social and economic development. Violence against women not only affects individuals, it also has consequences for families, communities, nations, and the global community at large, as well as generates high costs for both the public and private sectors.

## *Development challenge(s)*

Combating violence against women poses unique development challenges in Latin America, as it takes place in a socio-cultural environment in which the concerns of women are subordinate, and in which violence against them is tolerated. Despite international attention and the progress achieved, the number of victims of violence is still alarming. The main shortcomings are in the implementation of measures for prevention, but when it comes to counseling and assistance, punishment and compensation measures are also lacking.

As VAW is particularly widespread in Latin America, BMZ saw that it would be useful to set up a regional program to prevent violence against women and commissioned the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to create a program to tackle this particular issue. The program was to directly support the implementation of international and regional human rights conventions such as the Millennium Development Goals (especially MDG 3), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention of Belém do Pará, as well as the development agendas of the partner countries and BMZ.

### Implementation challenge(s)

The program was not based on an explicit demand from one partnering country, but an answer to a severe regional problem. As there was no regional state organization dealing with violence against women, after a long discussion of who might be the best lead partner for the program, the regional network for women's rights, the Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (CLADEM) was chosen, as they were the only regional organization that explicitly dealt with the topic. However, the partnership came to an end after only one year due to irreconcilable differences on the implementation of the program. One of the problems was that CLADEM did not really want – due to their ideology and principles – to work with the private sector, which complicated cooperation significantly. Since then, the program's political lead partner has been the MIMP, which had been previously considered but did not have a regional interest, which they later developed.

In the program's first phase (2010–2013), the emphasis was on indigenous women and the private sector. Focusing on the private sector seemed like a risky initiative at the time, as so far there had been few examples of cooperation dealing with human rights – although the German development corporation had been focused on working with the private sector since 1999. Yet, because the program was drafted as a pilot, BMZ was willing to take the risk and include the private-sector component.

All partner countries have committed themselves to preventing, combating, and punishing violence against women. They have also ratified major international agreements, put in place laws on protection from violence, and developed action plans to tackle gender-specific violence. How-

ever, the limited exchange of information and experience between countries and the lack of dialogue between public-sector, non-governmental, and private-sector stakeholders make it difficult to implement existing laws and action plans, and even more difficult to realize prevention strategies.

Additionally, one challenge in implementing the program was that civil society, the state, and the private sector showed no major interest in working together on the prevention of violence against women, as they did not consider the others to be relevant partners for them. As a matter of fact, the only actor that was truly active in the field of human rights was civil society. This made it even more important to encourage cooperation between the sectors. Yet, the deep split and mistrust between the three parties at the beginning of the program made it very difficult to get them all involved to exchange information and experiences.

These splits and levels of mistrust have an historical background: These actors generally work independently of one another, and there have been few common socio-political interests. In Peru, civil society movements are usually left-wing and seen as being a very strong opposition to the profit-oriented private sector as well as to the government. On the other hand, the relationship between the Peruvian government and the private sector has always been very volatile, as it heavily depends on the political orientation of the current administration. Therefore, cooperation between the sectors has been difficult and, in some cases, when achieved, it has only been selective and never long-lasting.

The program's implementation challenges ranged from finding and successfully working with the right lead partner to involving the private sector, communicating between and within countries, as well as cooperating between sectors. The decision was made to focus on the private sector in order to gain a new player to increase the possibility for change. The fact was that there had been hardly any work done in Peru, and the private sector did not consider VAW at all as an issue that affected them. Only a single company had done some basic work on the topic. The program at the time did not have an entry point for collaboration with the private sector and could not count on its support.

## Implementation questions

The main concerns and questions as program implementation began were therefore:

- Can the private sector be an important partner in preventing VAW?
- Will the private sector take ownership, despite the fact that VAW is perceived as not being their concern?
- Will governmental institutions recognize the engagement of the private sector and work together?

In the following pages, the contextual conditions of the case study will be elaborated in further detail, including the strategies used to convince partners when there was very little interest in collaborating, and especially how things got started when, at first, it seemed there was nothing to get started with.

### *Contextual conditions of the case study*

This case study mainly focuses on Peru due to the fact that the first activities to involve companies in the prevention of violence against women were initiated there. Peru is a presidential democracy divided into 25 regions with a business-friendly policy framework that encourages further economic growth. The main economic activities are mining, manufacturing, agriculture, and fishing, with a very strong informal sector (more than 50%).

The political landscape is marked by weak institutions, time-consuming bureaucratic procedures, a low-skilled workforce, and precarious infrastructure. Private-sector influence in the political sphere was – and is – very strong. In contrast, the general interest in political issues as well as political participation of Peruvian citizens is very low: 8 percent according to El Comercio and Ipsos Apoyo (2014). This is especially true when it comes to VAW.

VAW is a widespread problem due to unequal power relations, strong patriarchal structures, and machismo. It is tolerated and barely considered a public concern, which translates into little political interest and a strong societal indifference to preventing and combating it. Even though the prevention of VAW is included in Peru's development agenda and the country has a strong normative framework, many of these norms and laws are not

properly implemented. The country ratified conventions such as Belém do Pará and CEDAW. Additionally, the MIMP has a National Plan<sup>2</sup> as well as a National Program against domestic and sexual violence: “Programa Nacional contra la Violencia Familiar y Sexual” (National Program Against Domestic and Sexual Violence). However, these plans and programs are not as effective as they should be for different reasons – one being that they focus mostly on addressing violence when it occurs and rarely on prevention.

Furthermore, one of the most important weaknesses in the eradication of VAW in Peru is a nearly non-existent budget in comparison with the dimension of the problem. The limited budget that MIMP has, compared with other ministries and even other social programs, has resulted in a poor and weak presence in all regions. All this adds up to why – despite the government’s efforts over the last decades – VAW has not been notably reduced.

In the case of the private sector, due to the socio-economic development of Peru and the influence of globalization in the last decade, companies have started to include social measures in their actions. At first, this was done through philanthropic intentions, which later developed into a corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach, in which sustainability and the generation of capacities in society are required principles. ComVo-Mujer used CSR as a door-opener for the prevention of VAW as well as the wide range of implementation possibilities within companies’ action plans because CSR initiatives have to produce a positive impact on employees, clients, and the community.

On the other hand, even though companies do not have specific budgets for programs to prevent VAW, they normally have a general one for CSR. This means that VAW competes with numerous other social themes, as well as the fact that it is mainly considered a private matter. For that reason, it was very important to develop arguments demonstrating the economic impacts of intimate partner violence for companies.

In summary, even being conscious that the relationship between state institutions and the private sector has had its ups and downs, it was of utmost importance to develop a multi-sectorial approach in order to pre-

---

2 Up until 2016, this National Plan was known as “Plan nacional contra la violencia hacia la mujer 2009–2015” (National Plan to Fight Violence Against Women 2009–2015). Now the plan has been renamed “Plan Nacional Contra la Violencia de Género 2016–2021” (National Plan Against Gender-based Violence 2016–2021).

vent resistance to a program that specifically fights against VAW. The program was therefore challenged to achieve a sustainable alliance between the government and the private sector and overcome some obstacles.

The program was designed based on a few assumptions, which did not all play out in reality. One assumption was that companies would have specific demands and be interested in engaging with the topic of VAW. Another assumption was that finding a regional partner would be easy. Yet, at the beginning, there was no explicit demand for the program and finding a reliable partner for the whole region proved to be difficult. On the one hand, this posed some serious challenges when it came to enlisting enough partners in time, but on the other hand, it gave program coordinators the freedom to choose who to work with and ensure that chosen partners had a strong level of ownership and were highly motivated to succeed with a new theme under difficult circumstances, as described above.

When making the decision about whom to work with, the program based its choice on several criteria. First, the political, legal, and economic contexts within the countries and on a regional level were analyzed. Second, the potential partner's interests, capacities, strengths, and weaknesses were considered. Third, the resources they could allocate and the level of pro-activeness they demonstrated in preventing and combating VAW were assessed. Finally, their openness to cooperate with entities from other sectors was analyzed. This was done while always remembering that, in order to come to a successful collaboration, the combination of potentials, experiences, contacts, financial resources, etc., needed to be mapped out well – within one partner but also between different partners.

This process demonstrated the importance of not only analyzing potential partners, but also potential opponents or possible risks or disturbances. The main criteria while making decisions focused on potential-seeking criteria rather than problem-solving ones, meaning the program selected partners that were interested in combating VAW and did not have to be convinced to do so – a task for which the ComVoMujer lacked the means and time.

To formalize collaborations, ComVoMujer negotiated with each partner a legally non-binding memorandum of understanding (MoU), the perfect instrument for this working context. Why? Because it allows for the strengthening of ownership through a specific and incremental implementation of interventions; opens space for iterative proceedings, experiments, and learning; and gives partners the required flexibility to move forward



and the feeling of importance. Very often partners used the act of signing the MoU for public-relations exposure.

For the program, tracing the dynamics in the landscape of its partners is an ongoing process. The results of monitoring that is based on facts were used for making further decisions, as a means to stay on track with a specific chosen partner, for adapting or re-orientating the work in a new direction, or ending collaboration. For example, the need to re-orientate the work was necessary once the partner gained experience working with the topic; their engagement was institutionalized into their politics; and processes were incorporated into their value chain. The intensive phase of working together is completed and then only occasional advice is required. In contrast, when the partner changes its CSR priorities and VAW is not a main concern anymore, it is necessary to end the collaboration.

As elaborated above, because of existing challenges in trying to implement a sustainable program and connect – in this case especially – the private and public sectors, a reflexive management approach was chosen. This means there has to be a process of continuous searching and questioning, disputing conclusions, devising alternatives to setbacks, and helping to open up new possibilities for action by allowing deliberation from the middle ground between skeptical and overly optimistic approaches. It also means recognizing that every intervention has consequences on all management processes.

### *Tracing the implementation process*

Connecting the private and public sectors and using existing interest in the country was seen as another helpful strategy to gain traction for the initiative. The question was: How to find this interest? The very first idea that came to mind, which seemed like a logical step, was to undertake a baseline study. The study was commissioned to determine the Peruvian companies and business sectors to start working with and to have local information on the issue. It was a difficult process that received a lot of resistance from companies. They showed no interest, refused to set up meetings, or stated that VAW was not an issue within their company. The baseline research nevertheless enabled the creation of specific criteria that showed which companies were suitable to work with and how to best approach them.

An important side effect that we did not anticipate at the time – but which served us in the long run – was that the information garnered about the local Peruvian context additionally helped to approach the MIMP, as they had not previously had such a baseline available. It was an important step, as the government holds significant sway in Peru and, as such, would help to open doors to corporations.

Integral to this process was having a Peruvian project team member. She had previous experience and connections to the government and knew how ministries worked and how to implement new policies. She contacted the director of the National Program in the ministry, signaling that GIZ was very interested in collaborating within the priorities of the National Program, one being the inclusion of the private sector.

Some branches of the ministry were initially skeptical as to why the government should do something for enterprises, when these have a bigger budget than the ministry. The resistance was also political, as the government feared garnering the image that it was getting too involved with the private sector – at the time, the government had also been privatizing many former state-owned entities. The answer that quieted the doubting voices was that combating VAW required a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectorial approach, as was evident by the fact that, despite the government's efforts over the last 15 years, VAW had barely declined in Peru.

After several meetings and workshops, the Peruvian project member from ComVoMujer arranged with the ministry to use businesses as new allies for the prevention of violence against women. This result was reached by simply asking questions and letting the MIMP draw their own conclusions, as this seemed to be the most sustainable form of communication and exchange.

The MIMP signed a work agreement in 2010, committing themselves to championing a prevention initiative against VAW, which was to be implemented along with the private sector. This document was particularly important, as it showcased a formalized commitment of a state agency to collaborate with the private sector. The collaboration and resulting work agreement were helpful in different ways: The slowly developing relationship with the MIMP (still called MIMDES at that time) gathered strength, as demonstrated through formalized agreements, which are particularly important in a context of high informality, as is the case in Peru.

With the support of the MIMP now acquired, a set of strong arguments was needed to convince the private sector, yet the information that was needed to formulate those arguments was sparse. As there was no data

available on the subject of VAW and the private sector in the region, the initial investigation – conducted in collaboration with the Gender Program of the GIZ headquarters in Germany – was based on research done worldwide in order to outline arguments for the private sector.

The results of this investigation demonstrated that most of the work done worldwide had been realized in Western, Anglophonic countries and focused on CSR. Study results and arguments were presented in a conceptual framework. Once the conceptual framework was finished, it became clear that – since there had been so little previous regional research on the subject – having an academic partner involved would help deepen the subject matter and create proper data for the region. Scouting for academic partners, the manager of the program reestablished her contacts from a former work stay in Peru with the USMP. Their business management faculty showed interest and, as a first action, jointly published the previously elaborated framework.

At this stage of implementation, the overall strategy evolved so as to include all counterparts in approaching the private sector, as opposed to solely focusing on the private sector itself. First, the focus was on establishing contacts and creating trust between the program and the individual actors. Now those actors also had to be connected with each other, with ComVoMujer serving as the connecting piece.

The program was therefore willing to work with whoever showed real interest, involvement, and commitment, as demonstrated through time, money, and human resources pledged. It became clear that keeping an open mind, understanding the logic and rationality of the private sector, and finding different approaches was imperative to open doors. At the time, the program mainly used the personal relationships of its two senior technical advisors to achieve the necessary contacts. To build on solid arguments, it was necessary to create scientific academic evidence regarding the effects of intimate partner violence against women on the private sector.

Multi-stakeholder business breakfasts held to start a conversation on VAW with companies

Directly confronting company representatives had previously proven not to be very successful, as they did not believe that VAW affected them, and additionally felt accused of ignoring violence that affected employees

within their companies. It was therefore seen as necessary to create a more open, non-confrontational space or platform to enable enterprises, the state, universities, and civil society to exchange opinions and experiences about the role of companies to prevent VAW. To achieve this, GIZ came upon the idea of holding business breakfasts. Simultaneously, the program tried to strengthen the bond between different actors, which is why the government and civil society were also always present.

One company, BELCORP, was invited to present their experiences at the first business breakfast. This decision was made in order to start a dialog and because the work BELCORP had done was the only experience available in Peru. The results of the breakfast were mixed: Direct feedback was not really received, some queries came from companies, but most of the interest came from state and civil society representatives. The breakfasts were successful in the sense that they exposed companies to the topic of VAW, but they did not have the desired effect of creating cooperation and partnerships with them. So the question remained about what to do to really motivate businesses to get involved in the prevention of VAW.

At that point, companies in Peru were already using CSR certifications to prove their social commitment and image. The program manager of ComVoMujer took advantage of this and came up with the idea of developing concrete indicators for VAW that businesses could use to fulfill part of their certifications, such as ISO 26000, the Global Reporting Initiative, etc., and/or existing laws and norms by implementing measures against VAW in their own organizations and within their communities.

These indicators were then developed in collaboration with Peru 2021 – a business association that focuses on CSR – and the USMP. The decision to partner with Peru 2021 was made because it is a well-recognized and well-regarded entity by corporations, and it would help to give the indicators more political weight. Additionally, Peru 2021 was very interested in the work and provided some interesting new perspectives about the elaboration of the criteria.

Simultaneously, the program ended up partnering with its first enterprise, TASA – one of the biggest Peruvian fishing companies. Contact with their human resources department was established through a team member of ComVoMujer Peru. The first activities were the elaboration of an informational leaflet and the organization of workshops for male employees along the coast.

An effort was also made to implement activities in the frame of a public–private partnership (PPP) project with TASA. After investing the

necessary time for meetings on the elaboration of the PPP, it turned out that, although middle management had been successfully working together with ComVoMujer and the work was well-received by employees, the head management was not well-informed about the collaboration. So when it was time to sign the document, they stated that they were not interested in the prevention of VAW and pulled out. This once again confirmed for the program and its members that for a successful cooperation, an agreement with the head management had to be in place. Fortunately, this was not the end of the road with TASA: After bringing the collaboration to a halt for two years, TASA renewed its commitment to working together.

At the same time, ComVoMujer explored a new avenue and came across the idea of expanding its network by joining forces with other GIZ programs. The manager of ComVoMujer asked several directors of other programs, but the main answer was the same as with businesses: They did not think that violence against women was something that affected their work. But there was one exception: The GIZ water program in Peru had a lot of cooperating enterprises and good ties with them, so it was an ideal partner to work with. Initially, they were also reluctant, but the manager of the water program was willing to start a small survey on the ground and discovered that 11 of the 14 representatives he had in the field confirmed that VAW was a relevant topic – so the collaboration could continue.

An advantage was that the water program's communications officer was simultaneously the gender representative for GIZ in Peru. He was imperative for the cooperation in general, and specifically in creating an effective campaign. He orchestrated for the ComVoMujer manager to present the VAW project at the water provider's annual meeting. The manager was slated to hold the presentation at the end of the half day. This could have been a disadvantage but ended up being a boon, since the communications manager was able to use the time beforehand to convince the Arequipa provider to sign on – they were not only hosting the meeting that year but also celebrating an anniversary and looking to do something special. Being able to say the water provider in Arequipa and some other companies had already signed on during the manager's presentation greatly helped to push the other companies that were present to follow suit.

The reason why this event was more successful than the business breakfasts was due to the lobbying work done before and during the event within their association and among their members. Additionally, the cho-

sen approach focused on their core business, with a strong connection to VAW: The slogan was “Turn off the tap against violence against women” (*Cierra el caño contra la violencia hacia las mujeres*). And third, the water companies were offered three options to get involved: Print the previously designed slogan on their November invoices, send a calendar with messages against VAW along with their invoices, and/or hold workshops about VAW for their employees. In the end, 37 companies signed on, allowing the VAW message to reach more than 3 million households, equal to 15 million people – or 49 percent of the Peruvian population.

### A government seal to reward companies’ efforts

At the same time, the implementation of measures with the MIMP was concretized: The “Seal for safe businesses free from violence and discrimination against women” – elaborated by using the indicators developed with Peru 2021 and the USMP – was finalized and launched at the end of 2010. The seal certifies companies that have taken measures to prevent violence against women. This was an important step to connect the different parties (state, private sector, and civil society as their service providers).

Unfortunately, national elections were held in 2011 and the change of government paralyzed the ministerial approbation of the seal. However, some of the permanent staff members of the MIMP lobbying and negotiating to maintain the seal succeeded, and the new government only changed parts of the design, but luckily not the content. That same year, the seal was finally approved with a ministerial decree, which converted it into an official government policy instrument, deepening the ownership of the ministry and making it more sustainable and public. This drawn-out process is symptomatic of any process that deals with government entities in Latin American countries – there are always unforeseen delays in getting ventures off the ground, which can be problematic because projects are only slated to take place for a limited amount of time.

In 2012, the MIMP relaunched the seal on March 8, International Women’s Day, by presenting some prior results of the Peruvian study on the effects of intimate partner violence against women on businesses in Peru and inviting companies to participate. This proved to be very effective, as the surprising cost of VAW in terms of financial loss encouraged

even more companies to take part and served as a very strong argument to implement preventive measures for VAW.

The seal was received well and 33 companies signed up, including big international companies such as IBM. After a process of assessment and evaluation, 23 companies qualified, from which 16 received honorary recognition and 7 received the seal. The MIMP followed up with companies that received honorary recognition and encouraged them to gain the necessary qualifications to be awarded the seal.

This initiative exemplified that the processes of competition as well as awarding committed companies correspond very well with the competitive character of the private sector. The seal helped make their social engagement marketable, which meant they could use their “unprofitable” extra work to improve their image. This instrument helped to place violence against women on the CSR agenda and make it more visible. This experience underlined the importance of working together with the state. One can also not disregard that, although previous ventures such as the business breakfasts might not have been as successful as desired, they did establish a good base that could be built upon with the seal.

A further supporting factor for the seal was the press coverage and interest generated by the research project between ComVoMujer and the USMP on determining the economic costs of intimate partner violence against women for businesses in Peru. At the time, there was no research available on the economic impacts of VAW on businesses in Peru or even Latin America, and, as already mentioned, local companies did not feel that VAW had any bearing on them, so a Peru-specific research study acted as a strong motivator. In addition, the MIMP successfully leveraged the study results as a marketing tool to gain public attention. The process of how the USMP and the MIMP involved the media and the public was an important lesson learned by ComVoMujer – a lesson that led to ComVoMujer deciding to hire a communications professional.

Using research to prove to companies that VAW is a critical matter

Understanding the nature of the private sector and its need for economic arguments, the investigation idea was presented to the USMP through previously established ties. The Director of the Research Institute of the Business Management School, Dr. Vara-Horna – an open-minded and innovative researcher – expressed interest in conducting the study. It is also

important to note that the investigation would not have been possible without the financial support of the sectorial GIZ Gender Program, which has its headquarters in Germany.

For Dr. Vara-Horna, his team, and the team of ComVoMujer, it was a steep learning curve at the beginning – although the USMP was enthusiastic about the study, the team did not have a gender background, and the ComVoMujer team did not have the necessary economic one. Quite a number of meetings, discussions, and reviews of the research were necessary in order to become versed on the subject before the actual study began. Of course, this was also an ongoing process, and it was imperative to maintain a balance between gender and women's rights and the economic perspectives as well as to guarantee the use of gender-sensitive language. Dr. Vara-Horna and his team proved to be extremely cooperative and always faced the program's feedback head on.

The combination of the professor's passion for the project coupled with the USMP's network of alumni enabled the involvement of 211 companies in the research – something the program would have never been able to achieve on its own. It was still a challenge to gain this pool of companies in order to have a representative sample for the survey, but the university's backing greatly aided in the process.

One success factor for the investigation was to include the private sector, civil society, and state during the initial design of the study as well as to make them part of the discussion once the results came in. This ensured that all sectors felt included and valued, which not only resulted in a better study but also guaranteed their support.

Another important factor was that, because of the experience and knowledge of the ComVoMujer team concerning gender-based violence, a challenge that needed to be addressed was revealed when the research was designed: If victims of VAW create higher costs for a company, this could be translated into the argument that women in general are more costly employees compared to men and should not be hired. Such a message would be very counterproductive to the overall purpose of the program's women's right agenda, that is, the social and economic empowerment of women. Dr. Vara-Horna therefore suggested including the costs generated by aggressors as well. This idea had very positive effects, and in the end it proved that aggressors in some areas generated greater costs than victims.

There was also some pushback from the ComVoMujer team internally to accept "capitalist theories" and to work with companies, as these did not necessarily represent the values of some team members. Up to this



day, this resistance is part of the continuous learning process of ComVoMujer as a team, but it does not affect its work, as it is made clear in meetings and conversations that the cooperation with the private sector does not replace the rights-based approach but rather complements it. Furthermore, certain criteria have been established, such as not working with blacklisted companies or dealing with the topic always in the frame of CSR. The little to no knowledge about the work with the private sector also played an important role in the resistance of the team, which is why team members were trained in order to feel more secure when dealing with the topic. In the end, an agreement could be reached that companies were valuable allies for achieving the overarching objective.

After a year and a half, the results were in: VAW in Peru generates an annual loss of more than \$6.7 billion due to 70 million missed working days. This remarkable number is equivalent to a loss of 3.7 percent of gross domestic product. These results had a big impact, in large part because Dr. Vara-Horna also continually involved and interacted with the media, thereby gaining exposure for the study. The study in itself, of course, merited this attention – it was the first of its kind, not only in Latin America, but worldwide, and it offered a huge amount of primary data that opened up a lot of new research aspects.

This research delivered the needed arguments to create interest within companies, as it demonstrated how VAW economically affects them. The broad distribution of the results also generated great interest in all sectors and enabled the establishment of VAW as a business matter in Peru.

### Advising companies on implementing campaigns and educating staff

In 2011/2012, still trying to expand its network, ComVoMujer started working with Laboratorios Bagó, a pharmaceutical company that was very interested in the prevention of VAW. One of its employees was murdered by her partner, who then committed suicide – an event that left management in shock and very much committed to preventing VAW. They contacted ComVoMujer with a specific goal: They wanted to specifically sensitize and educate their 14- to 24-year-old customers about VAW through one of their products, Anaflex Mujer – a medication that helps to alleviate menstrual pain. They already had a young soap opera actress on their payroll who they wanted to use to produce informational video clips to be disseminated online. The program's role was to provide assistance to the

writer, be present during filming, and establish a connection between Laboratorios Bagó and the MIMP in order to tie-in that young women could contact the MIMP's chat, making it a win-win situation for all parties.

Laboratorios Bagó continues to spearhead its own campaigns, occasionally bringing in ComVoMujer to consult. But by and large, it has autonomously continued to champion the cause, thereby exemplifying an ideal result: that technical assistance is provided to companies for them to get acquainted with a topic and how to deal with it, enabling them to take on the cause as their own, even after the support has ended.

On the scientific side, although the study had been thorough and successful, a number of new research questions had emerged that could not be answered solely in one study. There was some room for new research, but there was no budget to fund another large-scale project. Dr. Vara-Horna came up with the idea to start a scholarship fund to support students who would write their research projects on the topic. Additionally, the inclusion of VAW in their academic career meant that these future employees would be aware and educated on the topic, transferring their knowledge to their future workplaces.

With the study on economic costs, the involvement of state institutions and civil society, and the concrete work done, there were convincing arguments for more companies to get involved in the prevention of VAW. Now ComVoMujer was able to offer them different options of participation, such as capacity-building, technical assistance when applying for the seal, inspiration while developing campaigns for employees or clients, guidance to develop projects within the community, and then custom-tailoring their choices. This was the most fitting approach because companies did not want to take part in a standard program – they wanted to know the options that they could choose from and then adapt them to their own needs and timelines.

### A handbook to support training in companies

However, the offer of instruments or concrete products to use for preventing VAW within businesses was not yet completely accomplished. Although programs had been tailored to companies' needs, there was still a request for a specific guide. Therefore, in 2013, ComVoMujer developed a handbook with training modules for businesses that served to develop capacities of employees and management, and one training module specif-

ically developed for men. This instrument has proven to be an important part of a constructive solution to the problem, a tool to reduce the effects of VAW.

Once the handbooks were created, it was necessary to teach trainers who could instruct companies' personnel. It was necessary to establish a network of trainers who could educate other trainers in order to have enough qualified human resources. Additionally, everyone that took part in the training program committed to holding two free workshops so that it would not remain just a theoretical goal.

The continual problem – also with this training program – is that there are people specialized in the topics of VAW and gender, and then there are those who specialize in dealing with companies and human resources. But it is difficult to bridge the gap between the two in order to have fully trained people in both specialties who are able to train others.

Now that the work with companies had started and first results could be seen, something was needed when approaching a new company that did not just appear as GIZ trying to convince them, but also to have them hear from their peers. Although GIZ has a very positive image in the region, it is simply not part of the private sector. Therefore, a video was created in which companies shared their experiences when participating in the program, and it turned out to be a great motivating factor when companies heard directly from others about their positive experiences.

### Different reactions in different countries

Although the work in Peru was fairly successful, the progress with companies in Bolivia and Paraguay was rather slow. The problems were the same as in Peru initially: Although the study was interesting, companies did not feel the findings applied to them. A logical next step at this point was to duplicate the study in Bolivia and Paraguay, to confirm the findings applied there as well, and have local discussions.

The role of the government was different in both cases, compared to Peru's. In Bolivia there was little interest from the government in participating. In Paraguay the replacement of the government meant having to rebuild a previously established relationship with the Ministry for Women's Affairs. Fortunately, at least in Paraguay, cooperation has thrived and the ministry has given the program better access to companies.

Dr. Vara-Horna conducted the study in Bolivia, and a consulting company was hired in Paraguay that was, however, still trained and supervised by Dr. Vara-Horna. In Bolivia the Bolivian-German Chamber of Commerce supported the work to reach companies, and in Paraguay it was the Global Pact. Originally, an exchange between the University of Asuncion in Paraguay and the USMP in Peru was planned. But at the last minute, there was a change in management at the Paraguayan university and the exchange fell through, as the new director's goal for the administration was for it to differentiate itself from the previous one, so the agreed cooperation was cancelled. The necessary human resources and time that were needed to convince the director were not available in Paraguay at the time. Luckily, the relationship with the Global Pact, which had initially been part of the exchange efforts, could be maintained. In Paraguay, the desired positive uptake in interest was achieved, yet in Bolivia – despite the study results being the most harrowing of the three countries – there has been little movement, which is currently being investigated.

The idea behind the scientific studies was not only to advise companies to take reactive measures against VAW but rather to show them the greater effects of proactive measures. The USMP elaborated a “Model of Management,” in which companies would see the return on investment when dealing with VAW proactively. It is hypothesized that for every dollar invested, the return would be around \$24.50 in four years.

In order to go beyond theory, the validity of the model is currently being tested. ComVoMujer had built a relationship with the Bolivian-German Chamber of Commerce and was acting as a consultant to the PPP that the chamber had set up with INTI, a big pharmaceutical company. The implementation of the Model of Management is part of this deal. Dr. Vara-Horna is jointly overseeing this challenging process with ComVoMujer, and there certainly are more lessons to be learned. To ensure that knowledge about VAW and the private sector is maintained as well as further distributed, the USMP, with the assistance of ComVoMujer, is elaborating a master's degree on equitable management.

### *Main results*

ComVoMujer works in a triangular relationship between the private sector (which takes the view that VAW is not a relevant topic for them), the state (which has a normative framework regarding VAW but executes it poorly,

be it because of a lack of resources or other priorities), and civil society, or more accurately, women's rights organizations (which have a reduced implementation radius).

With a view toward long-term political-strategic goals, ComVoMujer takes steps that emphasize the common goals shared with counterparts – even as they differ for each sector – and provide them with the evidence and technical tools needed for them to create a framework based on their individual visions and missions. This converts counterparts into agents of change, generating a value of their own, which in turn drives them to continue implementing measures against VAW, thus ensuring the program's sustainability.

Sustainability is further ensured not only by working with counterparts in all four countries, but also by fostering cooperation between the sectors while implementing new measures into their daily work. It is also important to concentrate on replicable measures and to distribute tasks to the team as a whole, not individuals. This allows each team member to contribute their strengths, and thus maximize the use of available resources.

The general response to the work with the private sector could be qualified as being surprisingly positive, as evidenced through its additional outcomes in the governmental and academic sectors as well as other international development agencies beyond Peru. There are new strategic partnerships (public–private, public–public, and public–private–social) in the region to prevent and fight VAW.

The progress made has matched or overcome the good practices of the Anglophonic countries that first inspired the work, which at this time is seen as an international example when it comes to knowledge-transfer about intimate partner violence against women and its consequences for companies, for example in the “Guide for Companies: Companies Free of Violence Against Women” of the United Nations Development Programme and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. Four of ten case studies demonstrate the work of ComVoMujer with the private sector. ComVoMujer additionally receives many national and international invitations to present its work with the private sector.

Having started working with the private sector in 2010 with no enterprises on board, the project's goals were more than surpassed when, in 2015, ComVoMujer had worked intensively with 100 companies, 4 business association, and collaborated with about a further 400 companies. Thanks to the scientific evidence elaborated, now enterprises not only know that intimate partner violence against women leads to the loss of 70

working days and \$6.7 billion per year (3.7% of GDP) in medium- and large-sized Peruvian companies, they also know that VAW is not a private issue and that it is a problem affecting all companies – and as such, it is a human resources management issue. This includes companies with a majority of male workers – for them, monthly presenteeism costs are \$100 higher than for victims.

Companies are also clear that prevention of VAW improves the work atmosphere, leads to higher motivation, loyalty, and personal commitment, and results in less turnover, which means improved staff performance and capability. It also helps to improve the public image of the company, which leads to greater consumption and use of their products and services. Another outcome is that around 300 enterprises wanted to know what is going on in their own businesses and carried out studies to measure the costs of violence against women in their companies.

To ensure information and capacity-building, new instruments have become available, such as: training modules for employees, managers, and a specific one for men; online certification; and a management model to prevent VAW in companies that was completed by an actualized conceptual framework, now with best practices of the region.

Concerning the outcomes in state institutions, the following should be noted:

- The Peruvian Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP) is launching for the second time the certification “Safe enterprise without violence and discrimination against women.” The initiative was replicated by the Ministry for Women’s Affairs in Paraguay.
- The MIMP asked ComVoMujer to conduct a national study on gender-based violence against female owners of small and micro businesses and showed interest in a study concerning the costs of VAW for the government.
- ComVoMujer’s work with enterprises has likely contributed to the creation of the Department of Entrepreneurship and Development in the MMIP.
- GIZ was invited to present the investigation results during the APEC Women and the Economy 2016 forum “Breaking Barriers to the Economic Integration of Women in the Global Market” in order to promote similar studies and measures in other Asia-Pacific economies.
- BMZ sees and uses the work done as a good practice.

There are also some very important outcomes regarding the academic sector:

- The study has been undertaken in Bolivia and Paraguay, and there are demands for more investigations in other business areas.
- Interest in the methodology of the study is spreading worldwide, for example the National University of Ireland is using parts of it in order to do surveys in African and Asian countries, and there is knowledge-exchange with Canadian, American, and European universities.
- Studies of the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank are inspired by the new aspects of the Peruvian studies.
- New lines of business research as well as scholarship contests in the region are being created, and an MBA program is in development.
- In Paraguay, ComVoMujer is currently undertaking an investigation that has not been carried out before in the American continent or in Europe. It concerns the costs of intimate partner violence against women, which include costs for the government, the costs for the private sector, and the costs for households and their interrelations.

The work conducted by ComVoMujer is anchored in existing structures and mechanisms, allowing for its continued sustainability, even after the program's end. For example, when elaborating the quality seal, it was intentionally designed as a "national-owned label" rather than one imposed from the outside, since the goal was for it to become national policy.

The approach taken was that working on VAW is an investment, and that integrating measures to prevent it into corporate policies and action plans – combined with strong ownership – fosters sustainability, since companies tend to want to secure their contributions. Last but not least, the feeling for which measures could be sustainable is a very important skill for program teams to have to ensure continued success upon completion.

### *Lessons from the case study*

Focusing on **key implementation lessons**, let us come back to the questions posed at the beginning of the program's implementation. *Can the private sector be an important partner in preventing VAW? Will the pri-*

*vate sector take ownership, despite the fact that VAW is perceived as not being their concern? Will governmental institutions recognize the engagement of the private sector and work together?* These questions could definitely be answered with a yes, as long as one takes into account the following points:

- A political understanding of the implementation requires asking to which extent traditional and modern political theories – such as the distinction between the public and private sectors, manufactured categories that have become fundamental in our thinking – are imbued with traditions of sexual order. This results in VAW being relegated to the private-life sphere and the communal responsibility being assigned to the state, which further strengthens stereotypes. Rather than combating this problem head on, it is important to focus on the potential, as ComVoMujer did with the seal. Since the private sector values governmental recognition, this hierarchical setup is not viewed as a problem but converted into an opportunity to motivate the private sector to combat VAW.
- Conducting initial context research and focusing on potentials, not problems, is important to gain a good entry point – in this case intimate partner violence and its consequences for companies, using the framework of CSR instead of VAW in the workplace.
- Alliances (personal connections, other GIZ programs, the USMP, the MIMP) are needed to open doors when introducing a new subject matter.
- Exchanging best practices and mutual learning is not only a great asset but also a very effective scaling-up strategy. The exchange of knowledge and capabilities between the academic, private, and public sectors as well as civil society is very important to develop strong actions for the prevention of VAW. For example, business conventions and meetings are very useful to disperse relevant information about the issue and link businesses that have good practices and experiences.
- To involve companies and state institutions in the prevention of VAW, it is necessary to generate empirical evidence, thereby making the effects and costs of VAW visible.
- It is, however, also necessary to involve the media to spread the knowledge and generate broader interest, as evidence-driven argumentation works very well. Concrete, easy-to-understand messages are therefore needed.



- (Re)orient and sequence the collaboration according to the conditions, new demands, and capacities of companies and state institutions, for example TASA, the seal.
- Minimize the project's visibility as much as possible. This might at first glance seem counterintuitive, but ComVoMujer found that smart implementation in this case meant establishing partnerships, starting discussions, and providing support – but ComVoMujer itself should never be the center of attention.
- The commitment of higher management is necessary in order to guarantee adequate implementation and sustainability.

The above points combined to form a certain code for ComVoMujer when it came to rules of engagement, namely “goals before personal opinion” in some cases. The goal of the program is for change to take root in society, and although ComVoMujer plants the seed, change should flourish even without its help.

## Principles of managing and steering implementation

Within the requirements of human and women's rights (conventions, treaties), the implementation is driven by counterparts. Their demands, priorities, and mechanisms (national and sectorial politics, CSR) as well as existing instruments (action plans, business policies) and multi-sectorial relationships at all levels are at the forefront of management. The exploitation of opportunities, flexibility, the timely adaptation of strategies, consideration of the motivations and logic of counterparts as well as their operative capacities and possibilities of cooperation are mandatory.

The reduction of complexity for a subject such as VAW – focusing on prevention and intimate partner violence against young women – was the right choice and as important as designing strategies from a regional perspective based on sound competition between countries and sectors. The generation of evidence accompanied by appropriately timed dissemination and exchange – tailored for the particular needs of every group of actors – is a door-opener and fosters learning at the personal, organizational, and political levels.

For the abovementioned aspects, clearly structured internal-steering processes and permanent supervision are necessary. This means having memorandums of understanding with counterparts to define technical and

financial responsibilities. It means acting like a competent “knowledge broker” supported by professional information management.

Last but not least, it means building a multidisciplinary team that is committed and works together well to face all these challenges to bring about permanent change.

## References

- Diario El Comercio. (2014). *Los peruanos somos poco solidarios y apolíticos*. Retrieved from <http://elcomercio.pe/lima/ciudad/peruanos-somos-poco-solidarios-y-apoliticos-noticia-1717227>
- World Health Organization. (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. Geneva: Author. Retrieved from [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf)