

## Summary

Domestic violence is a phenomenon of great magnitude in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in the rest of the world, that produces significant physical and psychological damages. It is well known that domestic violence is rarely reported and the phenomenon remains concealed by fear, shame or due to the difficulties that the public sector faces to attend to the difficulties associated with this problem. The Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL) (Institute of Legal Defense), a Peruvian NGO, developed and implemented – with the determined support of the Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia (UNICEF) (United Nations Children’s Fund) – a model of community defenders. The “defenders” originate from the community itself and are trained to address the problem and provide support to the victims during the process of reporting and throughout the entire legal process.

Since the community advocates are female volunteers from the neighborhood and can speak the same language as the victims, the quechua, the victims are able to better relate to them and share their problems more easily. The defenders support and accompany them during the process of reporting that their husband, companion or another person practices violence within their family, which is a difficult procedure for them. The model uses direct support from the public sector to help the victims face the difficulties, which all are familiar with, and to offer help to treat this grave problem. The government authorities consider the advocates as a type of regulatory force, which helps solve problems of low income families.

It should be emphasized that it is a simple and inexpensive strategy that allows the justicial system to reach distance places that otherwise would be beyond their range. It also represents a work methodology that is clearly innovative and has allowed for the empowerment of the women, both the victims of violence and the program advocates, who today are aware that they play a very important role in the community. In addition, it’s easily replicable throughout the region, only requiring adjustments to the training and work model to apply to the local setting, the support of the public sector, and above all, people who are dedicated and convinced of the proposition to better their lives and eliminate this affliction.