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EVALUATION REPORT



UDF-NIC-11- 479 – Arts as an Action to Stand up for Women’s Rights in Nicaragua

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Disclaimer

The evaluators are solely responsible for the content of this publication, which in no case can be considered to reflect the views of UNDEF, Transtec, or any other institution and/or individual mentioned in the report.

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I. Executive Summary

(i) Project Data

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled: “*Strengthening Arts as an Action to Stand up for Women’s Rights in Nicaragua*”, which was implemented by ‘Movimiento de Teatro Popular sin Fronteras (MOVITEP-SF)’ from 01 May 2013 to 30 April 2015. The project benefited from a UNDEF grant of 250.000USD to carry out the following activities and objectives. The aim of the project was “*to protect and promote women’s rights using arts as an effective tool to communicate messages and to raise awareness of challenges women are facing (violence against women and the implementation of the Law on Violence Against Women (Law 779) in protecting and promoting their rights)*”. The strategy of the project is built around three specific components:

- (i) Capacity-building of women through participation in the creation and production of theatrical plays and artistic expression.
- (ii) Awareness-raising and sensitizing on issues related to women’s rights and violence against women through theatrical and artistic expression.
- (iii) Actions taken by women’s organizations, local authorities and/or communities, neighborhoods and/or citizens and artists to solve key problems and to implement the Law on Violence against Women (Law 779).

The innovative strategic approach of the project was the use of art and Popular Theatre as tools to facilitate processes of organization and to make social change possible. With a preventive focus, the action sought to spread Women’s Rights in peripheral urban and rural areas by generating protective spaces and practices in the face of violent situations encountered by women. One essential component was the organization of collective dynamism and means of expression which involved social actors and authorities of each municipality through working groups (WGs) and Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs).

In cooperation with women’s organizations, theatre groups and local authorities the project intervened in six Departments and ten municipalities, mobilizing a large group of direct beneficiaries – more than 200 women, 100 artists from 13 theatre groups associate with MOVITEP-SF, and about 250 young people (149 women, 93 men). In terms of indirect beneficiaries, an audience of around 23,529 people was reaches as well as about 6820 theatre spectators for the plays presented by the Youth Groups.

(ii) Evaluation Findings

The project is **relevant** in view of the Nicaraguan socio-political context and was carried out at a time of polarization and controversy over the passing of Law no. 779 on Violence against Women (2012) and the reform of this law in 2013. Taking an inclusive stance, the project provided specific information on the implementation of Law no. 779, on women’s rights, on domestic violence and other related issues. Popular Theatre was employed as a proximity instrument and promoted the participation of women from rural and suburban areas where there is a large presence of violence against women. The preventive focus was particularly emphasized through the work with Youth Groups. Promoting positive models of masculinity is one of the challenges that needs to be prioritized in future initiatives. With the aim of making the topics visible, the project relied on promoting collaborations and alliances, mobilizing women’s organizations, civil society actors and local authorities. The territorial space of the intervention turned out to be slightly ambitious in relation to the qualitative changes that were being pursued and MOVITEP-FS’s desire to consolidate and capitalize on the results.

The project's **effectiveness** is reflected in the quality of the quantitative and qualitative results that were achieved. The strategy that was implemented during the execution and follow-up of the project, especially the use of theatre and art, led to a total average achievement rate of 123.61%. When analyzing the quantitative indicators it can be seen that globally, the project was able to reach a broader coverage than had initially been identified, be it in terms of beneficiary participation, capacity-building, or productions and performances which were implemented. The project achieved highly important qualitative results in the areas of empowerment and capacity-building amongst women, young people and men (albeit to a lesser degree) and in strengthening an interwoven social fabric, including civil society actors and people from the governmental sector. All of this contributed to reaching the desired objective which was to protect and promote women's rights while raising awareness on the challenges they face and fighting and preventing violence in all its forms.

The project employed adequate and efficient administrative and follow-up processes which displayed a satisfactory and **efficient** cost-benefit relationship. The follow-up modalities and instruments focused on the analysis of the achieved qualitative effects and on verifying that the skills and knowledge acquired by the beneficiaries was put into practice by them. The difficulties encountered in some municipalities (organizing the groups, getting the authorities to participate...) did not prejudice the project's achievements. The project carried out the planned activities while respecting the requested budget. Of the budget, 53.76% was spent on developing the theatrical and artistic presentations that made up an essential part of the intervention. The recording and systematization of information as well as the production of a video memory (which was translated into English) constitute important elements of sustainability and transferability.

The project reached very positive levels of **impact**. MOVITEP-SF has strengthened its presence and capacity to encourage and drive processes of organization through art and theatre and using them as means for mobilization and to bring about social change. The theatre groups were given the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with civil society actors and local government entities. The productions and performances that were carried out empowered the participants both in terms of their artistic skills and in their knowledge of their rights and their ability to exercise them. The women have become more aware of domestic violence and wish to improve their relationships with their partners. The men claim to have become more aware of the need to work towards a social and domestic environment in which women's rights are respected. The young people have repeated the performances in educational spheres and in their communities. While the theatre groups sought to raise the issue of women's rights in Local Advocacy Group and indeed received some support, it still remains challenging to raise awareness on the issue among local authorities. The response by the audience was highly positive and the use of debates and forums fostered public participation and led to greater awareness of and respect for the status of women in Nicaraguan society.

The financial and institutional **sustainability** is based on a network of contacts and collaborations that was set up by MOVITEP-SF and includes both social and governmental actors (ministries, municipalities and town halls), as well as a number of funding bodies. Empowering the artists, including the groups of young people, meant that the beneficiary groups were motivated and committed to continue participating in these types of experiences. The theatre groups are still up and running and new groups have established themselves. The young people are repeating the performances and are presenting them in university settings as well. A group of 16 young men and women is pursuing a Diploma for Instructors. MOVITEP-FS is willing to capitalize on the lessons learned from this experience and to distribute them and for this purpose it is conducting a primary systematization of the information that was gathered.

The UNDEF **added value** lay in promoting the use of art as an innovative approach to promote human rights and build processes of organization among citizens. The initiatives that were developed by the project (learning, forming alliances and collaborating) in the ten intervention municipalities contributed to providing relevant and appropriate information on essential issues to increase respect for women's rights and to make the vulnerable situations they find themselves in more visible, particularly by raising awareness on domestic violence.

(iii) Conclusions

- ***The project offers a relevant response to important conjunctural problems and challenges.*** In a context that is marked by confrontation between the government, the authorities and feminist movements following the adoption of Law no. 779 (2012) and its reform (2013), the project was able to render visible the vulnerable situation of women in Nicaraguan society. Through the presence of theatre groups in local advocacy groups and by organizing the working groups, the project was able to strengthen links and organizational processes among social actors fighting violence against women. Furthermore, it raised awareness among and strengthened the capacities of women, men and young people in 10 rural and suburban areas. The difficulties which were experienced in coordinating with some of the Local Advocacy Groups and the authorities in some of the municipalities confirms that raising awareness among government entities presents one of the most relevant challenges to tackle in future interventions.

- ***The project was able to develop a coherent and innovative approach.*** The project introduced the use of popular theatre as an instrument to raise awareness and mobilize social actors. In order to do this, the project empowered and raised awareness among women who had become victims of violence and involved them in the production and performance of theatre plays based on a critical analysis of their own experiences, stories and testimonies, while motivating them to join the working groups and use them as an organizational space in order to defend their rights. The integration of positive messages and models of masculinity into the theatre performances, provided a way to strengthen the building of relationships based on respect and equity.

- ***The project focused on a highly participative methodological approach.*** The content of the productions and performances was based on highly participative processes¹, encouraging the emergence of experiences that had been lived by victims of violence. This process contributed positively to a sense of ownership of the messages that had been elaborated during the workshops and theatre performances. However, many of the situations that arose during the dialogue with communities and theatre audiences surpassed the capacity for support and/or advice that could be offered by the theatre groups, female counselors and/or advocacy groups. MOVITEP-FS recognizes that these cases require the intervention of specialized professionals (lawyers, therapists, social workers...) working in the field of domestic violence and sexual abuse of children. Being able to call on the support of such specialized professionals is one aspect that needs to be strengthened.

- ***The project was very ambitious but was able to achieve significant effects and impacts.*** The geographic coverage (six Departments, some of them far away from each other) and the mobilization of multiple actors and beneficiary groups was challenging in light of the available budget and the qualitative changes that were sought. A

¹ See Project Strategy (III -i)

more limited territorial scope would have made it easier to go into more depth and to capitalize on the results. This did not prejudice the achievement of important effects and unexpected results. The surveys show that the participants recognize the role that theatre plays in promoting communication and learning and not only as an element of entertainment. They also appreciated the alliances founded with organizations dealing with the issue of women's rights in the ten areas. Some of the youth and women groups are still up and running. In rural communities, the men accepted that their wives participate in the project although they themselves did not attend the majority of the theatre performances.

- ***The project documents the experience that was developed and makes it visible in a satisfactory way.*** A series of printed and audiovisual materials was produced with a high educational value and the information that was gathered was recorded and systemized. The wide dissemination of these materials among the general public, such as amongst CSOs, the press, in social networks and through other communication channels contributed to making women's rights more visible and encouraged the denunciation of domestic violence in the areas of intervention.

(iv) Recommendations

- ***Raise awareness amongst local authorities and Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs).*** Strengthening the organizational spaces that already exist in the municipalities (particularly the Local Advocacy Groups) and which are dealing with the issues of rights violations and forms of violence that affect women, in order to include these topics on the local political agendas. Support for the representative presence of theatre groups, youth and women's groups and organizations will be an essential component to increase the impact these actors may have on governmental bodies at the local level.

- ***Include positive messages on masculinity in the strategy of Popular Theatre.*** With the aim of strengthening the gender focus more explicitly, the content of the performances should work more in depth on positive models of masculinity. At the same time it would be important to adopt a preventive approach with the groups of young people and in educational centers. In order to do this, MOVITEP-SF and the theatre groups should rely on the experiences already gained in this regard and should take advantage of the fact that the beneficiary groups are convinced of the role that theatre can play in bringing about social change.

- ***Strengthen the interdisciplinary approach and the professionalization of the teams in order to offer a better response to situations of violence.*** Theatre helped bring to light several cases of violence and requests for support and guidance by the victims of such violence which in many cases required the intervention of professionals specialized in this area. This situation surpassed the main role played by the theatre groups which are not equipped to provide care for victims of violence. In view of the high demand from the audience, it is recommended that there be more collaboration with women's organizations, legal professionals and other professionals who have solid experience in this area and who can help determine what sort of intervention would be the appropriate response to each individual case. These interdisciplinary teams could also support the role played by the "female counselors" in guiding and referring cases and to relieve the theatre professionals of this responsibility.

▪ **Identify and capitalize on lessons learned.** In order to ensure the sustainability and transferability of this innovative experience, it is recommended that a strategy to capitalize on lessons learned and the added value generated by the project be implemented. This should also contribute to sharing the practices which were implemented on: (a) the use of theatre as a tool to promote grass-roots organization; (b) the use of a highly participative methodological approach and (c) processes of capacity-building bases on specific topics raised by the participants themselves.

II. Introduction and development context

(i) The project and evaluation objectives

The project: “*Strengthening Arts as an Action to Stand up for Women’s Rights in Nicaragua*”, was implemented by ‘Movimiento de Teatro Popular Sin Fronteras (MOVITEP-SF)’ from 01 May 2013 to 30 April 2015. UNDEF provided a grant of U\$250,000, including U\$25,000 which were retained for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The aim of the project was “*to protect and promote women’s rights using arts as an effective tool to communicate messages and to raise awareness of challenges women are facing (violence against women and the implementation of the Law on Violence Against Women (Law 779) in protecting and promoting their rights*”.

In Nicaragua there is a high level of violence against women, however, the current government has not adopted effective policies for the protection and promotion of the rights of women. Although their political participation at the municipal level has increased by approximately 50%, this has not resulted in proportional benefits. The rates of sexual violence and femicide remain very high and the majority of aggressors of women, girls and adolescents remain free.

The project is focused on the prevention and elimination of violence against women. In spite of the fact that Law 779 was adopted in 2012, it has not been implemented due to a lack of political will. Women’s organizations continue to fight for the implementation of this law, which is also negatively affected by a lack of government investment in the training of specialized judges and qualified personnel. In partnership with 20 women’s organizations, 10 theatre groups, cultural associations and local authorities, this project produced 200 theatre performances as well as 20 works of art to raise awareness of the abovementioned problems and to trigger concrete action for meaningful change and to improve the position of women within society.

The project’s strategy seeks to generate reflection and to create actions to improve women’s rights and fight violence against women using the arts as a tool. This strategy is built around three specific components: (i) Capacity-building of women through participation in the creation and production of theatrical plays and artistic expression. (ii) Awareness-raising and sensitizing on issues related to women’s rights and violence against women through theatrical and artistic expression. (iii) Actions taken by women’s organizations, local authorities and/or communities, neighborhoods and/or citizens and artists to solve key problems and to implement the Law on Violence against Women (Law 779).

The beneficiary groups were 200 women participating in the 10 Working Groups, 70 artists from the 10 MOVITEP-SF art groups², 150 young people (120 women and 30 men), 20,000 spectators of the theater performances and 1,800 spectators of the two festivals and debates, plus the indirect beneficiaries. The project covered 6 departments in Nicaragua (Matagalpa (with 13 municipalities), Jinotega (with 7 municipalities), Estelí (with 6 municipalities), León (with 10 municipalities), Managua (with 9 municipalities), and RAAN (with 7 municipalities).

² 10 theater groups in 10 locations in 6 departments of Nicaragua: ESTELÍ: El Bosque (Pueblo Nuevo). MATAGALPA: Quetzalcóatl (Matagalpa). JINOTEGA: Raza de Agüizotes (Jinotega). MANAGUA: 8 de marzo, Garabato, Cha, Tejutrali (Ciudad Sandino). LEÓN: Cautla Tilitik (Sutiaba), Capullo (Achuapa). RAAN: O-Kan (This group is based in Managua, but every two months it goes to Rosita).

The evaluation of this project is part of the larger evaluation of Round 2, 3 and 4 UNDEF-funded projects. Its purpose is to “contribute to a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF to develop future project strategies. Evaluations are also to assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved”³³.

(ii) Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted by an international expert and a national expert, hired under the Transtec contract with UNDEF. The evaluation methodology is spelled out in the contract’s Operational Manual and is further detailed in the Launch Note. Pursuant to the terms of the contract, the project documents were sent to the evaluators in August 2015 (see Annex 2). After reading and analyzing them, they prepared the Launch Note (UDF-NIC-11-479), describing the analysis methodology and instruments used during the evaluation mission to Nicaragua (Departments of Managua, Leon and Matagalpa) from September 07 to 11, 2015. The evaluators interviewed project staff and members of the MOVITEP-SF coordinating team and stakeholder representatives. The team also traveled from Managua to Leon, Achuapa and Matagalpa to meet project beneficiaries, theatre groups for women, men and young people, local authorities, educational centers and other project beneficiaries at the local level. Annex 3 contains the complete list of persons interviewed.

(iii) Development context

The territory of Nicaragua is organized into 15 Departments and two Autonomous Regions (North Atlantic Autonomous Region – NAAR and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region – SAAR). The current total population is 6,235,000 people⁴, 49.5% of which are male and 50.5% female, mostly concentrated in the pacific area of the country. Nicaragua, just like the rest of the Central American region, is characterized by its production and maintenance of patriarchal and “macho” cultural patterns which are accompanied by the perpetuation of violence, particularly against women and girls.

Gender-based violence continues to be one of the main problems in terms of the violation of women’s human rights, and even though it is difficult to access official data on this sub-category and women who become victims have very limited access to justice, 30% of crimes reported in the national police register⁵ are cases of domestic violence and sexual violence. Since 1993, there have been special police stations for women and children within the structure of the national police force⁶ in order to treat cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence. Currently there are 27 such police stations for children and women located throughout the national territory and they represent an important space along the difficult road to denouncing violent acts, together with women’s organizations which can generally provide specialized staff to accompany victims.

In spite of the advances made by the police stations, there was a significant set-back in women’s rights in 2006 when therapeutic abortion was criminalized by the national assembly repealing art. 165 of the 1893 Criminal Code, making Nicaragua one of the few countries, along with El Salvador and Chile, to still penalize therapeutic abortion.

³ Operational manual for the UNDEF-funded project evaluations, page 6.

⁴ Source: website countrymeters.info/es/Nicaragua

⁵ Source: website www.policia-gob-ni/cedoc

⁶ Source: *ibid.*

This legal set-back revitalized the work being done by women's organizations who for decades now have been conducting advocacy work to prevent gender-based violence and push for an improvement in legislation surrounding human rights. As a result of this process, the national assembly adopted in February 2012 Law 779, the "Law on violence against women" and a reform of law 641 in the penal code which represents the specific normative corpus dealing with the protection, reparation and sanction of all forms of gender-based violence. The entry into force of this law has provoked a strong debate throughout all of Nicaraguan society with some strong resistance coming from conservative and religious sectors which hold a lot of power in the national political landscape. Women's organizations considered this law to be a considerable advance, until it was reformed by presidential decree (decree no. 42 – regulating Law 779)⁷, introducing the concept of mediation as an



Performance by the youth group "Guasuyuquita" in the community of El Guayabo, Festival of Somoto

obligatory step in cases of "minor" offences. In article 13, the decree lists such offences as being: a. Child abduction or abduction of unable persons; b. Sexual assault as long as the victim is not a child or adolescent. c. Abduction of a son or daughter; d. Domestic or family-internal violence if only minor injuries are incurred; e. Physical violence if only minor injuries are incurred; f. Psychological violence if harm to psychological integrity is caused which requires

psycho-therapeutic treatment; g. Hereditary and economic violence with the exception of the economic exploitation of women; h. Intimidation or threats made towards women; i. Miscarriage due to negligence; j. Work-related violence; k. Violence against women while exercising a public office. At the same time the decree introduces the "Family counseling center", which is a counseling service provided by people from the community, such as priests, activists, officials from party structures of the governmental party (FSLN), female mentors. Basically, the current government which has been in power since 2007 with President Daniel Ortega at its head, has maintained close relationships with the leaders of the Evangelical and Catholic Church which seek to maintain family unity even in cases where there is violence within the family. That is why there is no effective implementation of Law 779 and women are afraid to denounce gender-based violence for fear of becoming victims yet again. There is also fear among those who are meant to take on the role of family counselors, since they are often the very neighbors of the families concerned.

This situation has led to a divide within the women's movement which had previously shown a united front to push for the law to be drafted and adopted: some organizations accept the concept of mediation even though the limits are not well defined and there still remains a lot of confusion concerning its implementation; and there are other women's and human rights organizations which reject the mediation tool and continue to fight for a reform that would return the law to its initial nature.

In various territories there therefore does not exist an effective coordination between the state institutions tasked with guaranteeing certain rights (the police, the ministry of family and

⁷ Source: website www.minim.gob.ni.

community, municipal authorities) and the women's organizations working at the grass-roots level and which generally present a privileged space for women who have become victims of violence to tell their life stories and receive support in the different areas that are necessary for them to escape violence. The debate within the country is ongoing, as are the conflicts between different actors seeking the most appropriate way to address the problem of gender-based violence which has been called "epidemic" and is considered a real public health issue. This conflict has repercussions at the level of international cooperation as well: there has been a reduction in funds flowing towards civil society organizations and women's organizations in general. Some international agencies, such as UN Women, have maintained two support programs essentially supporting government programs.

The project "*Strengthening Arts as an Action to Stand up for Women's Rights in Nicaragua*", UDF-NIC-11-479 was carried out by MOVITEP-SF in this national context and aimed at strengthening Women's Rights through art in peripheral urban and rural areas.

III. Project strategy

(i) Project approach and strategy

The project strategy selected Public Theatre and artistic activities as key components to increase and strengthen the knowledge of women’s rights and at the same time to generate spaces and practices of protection in the face of violence against women. The project took place around the same time as the passing of Law 779, the “Law on violence against women” and sought to provide information and raise awareness among different beneficiary groups on the advantages and challenges presented by the process of implementing this new law.

MOVITEP-SF based its strategic decision on the fact that, particularly in the Central American context, art has the power to bring about “social change” more forcefully than educational workshops. Popular theatre is a very important instrument of proximity to raise awareness amongst people and can more easily reach women, particularly in the urban periphery and rural areas.

The coordination team explained that this was the first project developed by the association which did not aim at performing a theatre play as such but which aimed to generate processes of expression geared towards raising awareness and promoting social change. The concept of this project therefore required a significant adaptation of the methodology and practices that the theatre groups would have to implement throughout the process, together with women’s organizations, local organizations, youth groups and authorities. In order to do this, a specific methodological approach was adopted which placed the emphasis on collective creation and linking various social actors at the local level. The intervention strategy was based around three successive and complimentary steps, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: Implementation stages of the strategy

Implementation stages	Focus/activities	Links between the actors
1. Preparatory stage and elaborating the theatre performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase in which to identify and organize the beneficiaries; - Investigating and analyzing local issues; - Collecting stories from women; - Joint construction of the story that will become the plot of the theatre play; - Raising awareness and strengthening capacities of artistic expression and women’s rights; - Studying and disseminating Law 779; 	Organizing local working groups and advocacy groups; Coordinating with SCOs and local authorities.
2. Organizational stage and performance of the theatre plays in the various municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performing the theatre play in a space which is easily accessible for the local population. 	Organized groups (local SCOs, educational centers, authorities...) provide support to the theatre performances.
3. Stage of entering into dialogue with the audience and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing space for debates and dialogue following the theatre performances; - In-depth discussion and analysis of the content/message that is sought to be conveyed; - Providing the participants with information and guidance on counseling, support and guidance on the issue of protecting victims of violence. 	Advocacy groups offer support and accompany the process of debate, information and guidance.

An essential part of the project strategy was to organize the various groups in the intervention locations. The aim of this was to strengthen the intervention impact and create organized spaces which would enable to continue the processes which had been worked on. To this end, working groups (WG) were created in each Department which had the role of

fostering contacts between social actors and local authorities. It was planned that Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs) would be created in order to provide a space to connect the members of the working groups to local authorities. It was also planned that ten Working Groups would organize Youth Groups around artistic activities and awareness-raising activities on the topic of women’s rights.

Finally, it should be highlighted that the project strategy focused on the adaptability and flexibility of its implementation modalities, seeking to respect the different contexts. The functioning of the Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs) and the way in which the meetings were organized would vary from location to location.

By working together with women’s organizations, theatre groups and local authorities, the project strategy was able to ensure the production of 200 theatre performances and 20 works of art. These activities would have the aim of raising awareness on the vulnerability of women’s rights and to trigger concrete action to bring about significant change in the status of women in Nicaraguan society.



Martha Meneses, Sandra Arceda and Cristina Arévalo from the group “Colectivo 8 de Marzo” in a scene from “Being as the air would like”. 2014

The project planned to reach a large group of direct beneficiaries, an estimated 200 women in 10 municipalities, 70 artists from 10 theatre groups associated with MOVITEP-SF, 150 young people (120 women, 30 men). The indirect beneficiaries would be around 20,000 theatre-goers and 1,800 visitors participating in the two national theatre festivals.

(ii) Logical framework

The following table represents the logical framework of the project's intervention: its activities, the desired and achieved results, its objective and the pursued development objective:

Activities carried out	Desired results	Project objective	Development objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing 10 WGs and LAGs in the intervention areas. • National project kick-off meeting (and one in each location); • Capacity-building amongst women on the issues of Law 779, gender equality, machismo and patricarchic culture,...; • Identifying the women's stories; • Support during the theatre productions; • Preparing and developing the workshops on artistic expression for women; • Elaborating the Action Plan for each WG in the municipalities; • Participation and support for the WGs in community dialogue. • Organizing the participation of the LAGs. • Identifying youth groups and group organisations in 10 municipalities; • Designing the capacity-building program and plans for 40 capacity-building sessions for young people; • Evaluation and drafting reports; • Identifying materials to put on the theatre productions; • Performing the plays; • Preparing the format of the post-performance debates; • Organization of the debates and the WGs; • Recording and systematizing the input from the audience; • Preparing and performing in three festivals (León, Somoto and Esteli-Condega); • Production and presentation of 20 works of art created by empowered young people; • Documenting the activities in a video memory; • Visit by UNDEF's media team and preparation of a 	<p>1. Capacity-building of women through participation in the creation and production of theatrical plays and artistic expression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 229 women, benefitting from 45 capacity-building sessions in 10 municipalities empowered in (a) the knowledge of their rights; (b) the benefits of the implementation of Law 779; - 272 women, benefitting from 45 capacity-building sessions on artistic expression and Popular Theatre - 242 young people (149 women and 93 men): (a) capacity-building in theatre and other forms of artistic expression; (b) raising awareness and providing information on women's rights and violence against women; (c) organized in 13 groups in the 10 areas of intervention; - Local groups created in each municipality with the ability to support the productions put on by the theatre groups; <p>2. Awareness-raising and sensitizing on issues related to women's rights and violence against women through theatrical and artistic expression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14 theatre groups (110 artists) in 10 municipalities were involved in the setting up of the theatre productions (251 performances); - 12 youth groups (239 young people) in 10 municipalities, who were able to jointly set up their theatre productions (86 performances); - Participants from the communities (23529) who came to see the performances put on by the theatre groups; 	<p>To protect and promote women's rights using arts as an effective tool to communicate messages and to raise awareness of challenges women are facing (violence against women and implementation of the Law on Violence Against Women (Law 779) in protecting and promoting their rights".</p>	<p>Contribute to improving the "status of women", strengthening a social surrounding conducive to the protection and enforcement of their rights in Nicaragua.</p>

documentary by them.

an audience of 6820 for the performances by the young people; and awareness-raising and information during the festivals on topics related to violence and women's rights.

- Forming of the LAGs and their liaison with the WGs;
- Organizing meetings by the LAGs in 10 municipalities (a total of 51 meetings);
- Follow-up, evaluation and drafting of reports;
- Organizing quarterly meetings in the communities;
- Preparing materials and information

3. Actions taken by women's organizations, local authorities and/or communities, neighborhoods and/or citizens and artists to solve key problems and to implement the Law on Violence against Women (Law 779).

- *Theatre groups and working groups establish alliances and take place in the activities of the Local Advocacy Groups.*
- *Awareness was raised amongst governmental organisations (MINSA, MIFAMILIA and MED), local authorities (town hall of León, Achuapa, Somoto and San Ramón) and the police stations for women (in León, Achuapa and district VI of Managua) and they supported the project's activities;*
- *Stronger links and collaboration between the social actors at the local level.*



XVII National Festival of Popular Theatre in Somoto: Street performance, 2014

IV. Evaluation findings

(i) Relevance

The interviews that were carried out made it possible to identify various positive factors related to relevance:

- The project intervened just after the adoption of Law 779, the Law on violence against women (2012) which has the aim of “acting against violence that is committed against women”. This law was a historic and important advance in the recognition of human rights in Nicaragua. The law presented a real instrument for social change by guaranteeing the right to live free from violence and promised women’s exercise of true equality. In September 2013 the Supreme Court of Justice recommended that Law 779’s article 46 be reformed and approved “mediation” in the law, which led to many human rights organizations and women’s rights organizations warning that the changes made to the law would expose women who denounced domestic violence and that they may find themselves in a situation where they have to face their aggressors during the mediation process while those accused of abuse could escape all accountability for the acts they had committed. A report by Amnesty International (AI) on human rights in the world (2014) stated that 7 of the 47 women who had died due to domestic violence during the first months of 2014 (and some of whom were under 18 years of age) had taken part in a mediation process with their abusive partner. Amnesty further emphasized that some changes “restrict the definition of femicide to homicide committed against women within the context of a relationship”. Due to this situation and ever since Law 779 was modified, discussions and confrontations between the government, the authorities, feminist movements and civil society organizations have increased. The government’s reaction to this public confrontation was to close down the coordination spaces and in many cases to cut off dialogue with NGOs who were fighting violence against women. This project offered an opportunity to address the issue in various scenarios. On the one hand, it made it possible for the theatre groups to be part of the Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs), thereby enabling the awareness-raising and reflection on

“.....I know that my children were seeing how their father was abusing me. But I told my son that he must never repeat such behavior.”

“I’m going to tell my story as if it was a fairy tale: Teresa was a young girl of 16 and she sold water at the market place, near the bus stop. That is where Teresa met Juan and fell in love with him. When they went and lived together, everything was wonderful in the beginning. After five years, Juan started to abuse his wife, damaging Teresa’s eyesight until she became blind. And still Juan continued to abuse his wife physically and verbally, telling her that she was good for nothing. However, Teresa continued to work in the market with her son. Juan would come to the market to take her money. One day a human rights activist came to the market, talking about how important it was to *break the silence* and to denounce violence and abuse against women. And so Teresa thought: “this is my chance to talk” and she started to tell the lady about all the abuses she had suffered at the hands of her husband, over so many years. The people who saw Juan nearby started to denounce his behavior and called him a rapist. The activist accompanied Teresa in the process of denouncing her husband on the basis of Law 779.”

Life experiences, women from León Sureste. (The human rights activist was a member of the Theater group)

these topics. However, many LAGs found themselves subject to political censorship. On the other hand, by preparing the theatre plays, specific information could be provided to the project beneficiaries on the benefits of the Law and the protection of women's rights as well as information on the risks and implications of the changes that had been made to the legislation. This contribution was highly appreciated by the women's organizations and the beneficiaries.

- The project's objectives responded to pending needs and challenges in the field of women's rights in Nicaragua. Taking a broader and more inclusive view and using popular theatre as an instrument for mobilization and change, led to awareness being raised on situations of violence and vulnerability that affect women in order to improve knowledge, respect and enforcement of their rights.
- The criteria that were applied to the choice of intervention zones were based on the contacts and the previous knowledge that MOVITEP-SF had in the municipalities of intervention, placing a priority on rural and suburban areas where access to this type of information and such initiatives is often scarce. The intervention was planned and implemented in six Departments and ten municipalities, seeking to mobilize a high number of beneficiaries. By including youth groups and promoting the equal participation of men and women, a preventive approach could be taken which was a suitable and relevant choice. However, taking into account the qualitative processes and changes that the project sought to realize, it may have been wise to strengthen the intervention by selecting a smaller territorial space and working with a less ambitious number of beneficiaries in order to allow for a more in-depth experience and to capitalize on results.
- The project strengthened the participation of civil society and fostered collaboration between actors involved in similar initiatives. The choice of promoting alliances that included other local actors as well, in particular through the LAGs was also highly relevant and contributed to the impact and sustainability of the experience.

- The strategic approach selected by the project focused on the use of art and popular theatre as instruments to facilitate a process of organization and to enable social change and was highly relevant considering the profile of the beneficiary groups. Women who have become victims of violence often do not know about their rights and often they cannot access the road towards support that may exist. The



Mystical women of the “Lapta Yula” theatre group of Bilwi, Caribbean Coast during the Estelí Festival

possibility of jointly constructing the production and performance of theatre plays based on their own experiences allowed them to positively integrate the messages they had worked on. However, in some cases there existed the risk that the content and language of the performances suggested by the group focused too strongly on negative and violent experiences. By including more positive messages about masculinity in the performance elaboration process it was possible to show that “other

constructive ways” exist to establish social relationships and communication. This strengthened the relevance of the methodological approach.

- From the point of view of sustainability and experience transfer, the careful recording and systematization of information conducted by MOVITEP-SF represents a highly relevant aspect.

(ii) Effectiveness

The project achieved very significant qualitative and quantitative results. From a quantitative point of view, MOVITEP-FS was able to mobilize and link a large number of actors in the six Departments and 10 municipalities of intervention⁸. It can however be seen that the participation of the beneficiary groups and the level of success varied from one municipality to the other, depending on the specific local context. The strategy that was implemented for the execution and follow-up of the project were appropriate and contributed to a very satisfactory level of effectiveness. The average of achieved results is estimated to be 123.61%.

Table No.2 presents the level of achievement of the indicators and results identified in the PD. Globally, the indicators were achieved and in many cases even surpassed. This is the case for R1, the percentage of empowered young people and women (counting the number of people who participated in the capacity-building sessions); the number of workshops and hours of training organized. For R2, it can be seen that the number of theatre performances that was carried out was also surpassed, both in the youth groups and in the women’s groups. The audience also exceeded the numbers which had originally been foreseen. Also in R3, in spite of the difficulties encountered by some of the Local Advocacy Groups, the percentage of meetings and debates that were carried out is positive. It was also possible to elaborate the Action Plan for the Working Groups based on the project’s objectives and including capacity-building amongst women and young people, performances, debates, artistic presentations by young people and in some cases these plans were more ambitious than what had originally been foreseen by the project.

Table 2: Level of achievement and follow-up of the indicators

Analysis of the indicators by Result	Intended	Implemented
R1 Indicator 1.1	Percentage of trained young women (150) that participated in the production of 200 theater plays	161.3% of empowered young people (242 – 149 women and 93 men) participated in the production of 19 works of art.
R1 Indicator 1.2	Percentage of empowered women (200) who understand the concept and have the practical knowledge to use art to help solve social problems. (Target) 80% of trained women comprehend...	114.6% of women trained (272) and taught how to implement theatre work to express their various problems.
R2 Indicator 2.1	Number of people expected in the audience of the theatre performances.	- 251 performances with groups of men and women with an audience of 23,529 people (93,7 per performance)
R2 Indicator 2.2	Number of people expected in the audience of the annual theatre festivals. Base line: N/A Target: 3600 people expected – 300 per day – during the festivals)	Three festivals were carried out: <u>León</u> : 450 people. <u>Somoto</u> : 1600 people. <u>Condega-Estelí</u> : 600 people. Total: 2650 people attended (331.2 per day)
R3 Indicator 3.1	Percentage of bi-annual meetings carried out by the Advocacy Groups (4)	-100% of the LAGs (6 groups) carried out bi-annual meetings (4 times)
R3 Indicator 3.2	Percentage of the Action Plan implemented with the recommendations of each WG.	123.61% of the recommendations were implemented

⁸ (1) In the Department of Managua, it intervened in three districts (San Judas, Bertha Díaz, Ciudad Sandino); (2) In León in two districts (Achuapa, León Sureste); (3) In Estelí in (Pueblo Nuevo y Condega); (4) In Matagalpa in (Matagalpa city, Esquipulas); (5) In Jinotega, in (Jinotega City); and in the Department of NAAR in (Rosita).

In terms of the qualitative results, the project was rather ambitious considering that 24 months is not a very long time to bring about changes to a culture that is predominantly macho and very rigidly patriarchal⁹. In spite of encountering difficulties of varying degrees, the project was able to open up positive spaces at various levels and made a highly significant contribution.

- It was possible to make the vulnerability of women's rights visible and to raise awareness on the violence they face by bringing these issues into the public sphere and before local authorities.
- The beneficiary groups: women, young people, theatre groups and the audience were able to gain better knowledge of issues such as Law 779, women's rights, gender equality as well as information on how to react to different situations of violence. For the "female counselors", who are in charge of accompanying the "mediation" process in cases of domestic violence¹⁰ but who often do not have the professional training to determine the necessary road to support, it was very important to participate in these capacity-building sessions.
- Through the 'Methodology of Collective Creation' the beneficiary groups were directly involved in all of the stages of the project, carrying out their own research and collecting stories and testimonies from women. This methodology made it possible to on the one hand get to know the opinion of women and their perception of the problems as well as their level of knowledge on their rights and on the possibility to access support services. On the other hand it facilitated individual and collective ownership of the knowledge, enabling processes of trust and a change in attitude.
- Although the participation of men was quantitatively lower than that of women (depending on the activity and the municipality), from a qualitative perspective it can be said that some important changes in attitude were observed. In several theatre groups the men (especially young men) participate regularly and state that they are convinced that change will be slow but that it is possible. In light of the controversy surrounding Law 779 (many groups of men protested against the law, saying that it was a law "against men")

Actions taken in target areas

- In León Sureste: 10 women decided to create their own theatre play based on their experiences. The head of the police department for women met with them and invited the group to perform their play in front of a delegation of the police force of León Sureste.
- In Achuapa: An office for the police station for women was opened and the Municipality of Achuapa restored the 'Casa de la Cultura' cultural center in the community of Lagartillo.
- In Esquipulas: A prosecution office was opened in Esquipulas.
- In Managua, 10 women who were health activists from the NGO IXCHEN launched their own theatre group 'Máscaras del Hogar' (Masks of the Home).
- In Rosita: 22 local women created their own theatre performance around the topic of violence against women in the home, on the streets, in educational center and in the work place. This performance was put on 12 times including before the authorities of Thwaska (who had initially denied the existence of violence in their community).
- In Somoto: local authorities invited and supported the National Theatre Festival with the participation of more than 120 artists who were invited by the municipality to stay in Somoto for three days.
- In Managua: The group CHA worked with fathers and girls and boys in schools, conducting important prevention work.

⁹ According to the police station for women and children in Nicaragua, there is an average of 97 reports every day of crimes related to violence against women in this country.

¹⁰ The reform of Law no. 779 (2013) establishes mediation for cases of light crimes where there are no wounds and the applicable punishment would not exceed one year in prison. But it remains open who is to decide the severity of the violence that was committed and on what basis.

and some of them even called it a “satanical law”¹¹) it became necessary to do a lot of work on awareness-raising. The opinion surveys conducted by MOVITEP-SF show that there have been some advances: in response to the question “what did you learn on domestic violence”, 30.61% of the men stated “a lot”, compared to 63.27% of the women. On the questions “What have you learned about gender-based theatre and to what extent has it changed your life or your way of viewing the world”, 4.08% of men replied that they had learned that women had rights, compared to 18.37% of women. This data confirms the need to increase the work with male participants but it also shows the awareness that the project was able to raise in the face of this challenge.

- The organization of the Working Groups (WG) contributed to strengthening the dynamism of the already existing link between the theatre groups, local NGOs, civil society and local authorities around the topic of women’s rights and around better understanding how theatre can be used as an effective tool for personal and social transformation.
- The inclusion of the theatre groups in the Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs) strengthened this joint multi-actor space which already existed in many places¹² between civil society, local NGOs, representatives of the church and local leaders. In some places, upon a government initiative, LAGs had already been put in place to work on the issue of violence against women, Law 779 and the family code (law 870). These LAGs were open to the project proposal and took part in various meetings. In other places, the WGs and the LAGs worked together.
- Nevertheless, involving local authorities remained one of the most difficult components of the project. Overall, the response from the local authorities was not very enthusiastic and stated that they were already part of the Local Advocacy Groups. Therefore, most of them limited their involvement to supporting theatre performances in one way or another (transport, performance venues, advertising). In these municipalities, the LAGs did not work or were not interested in the issue and the police, representatives of the Family Ministry, the Municipality or the police station for women were indifferent and did not understand the project proposal. In fact, during the evaluation mission it was not possible to interview representatives of the police or the police station for women in any of the municipalities visited. Those authorities which were most supportive of the performances were the Ministry of Education (MED), Ministry of Family (MIFAMILIA) and Ministry of Health (MINSA).
- A blatant example of the authorities’ reluctance was the postponement of the Third National Theatre Festival in Estelí which was cancelled by the mayor 24 hours before it was due to start based on the argument that he did not agree with the slogan “Art in Defense of Women’s Rights”. This measure meant that the permits and the support for the event, including accommodation and subsistence for 180 artists for three days, was cancelled. MOVITEP-FS decided to go ahead with the festival using its own funds although it did have to cancel the participation of 9 groups.
- Finally, it should be noted that although some of the theatre groups left the project and some of the women left the theatre groups, overall the indicator of global participation in the activities was higher than expected (see table 2). In addition, these dropouts did not affect the overall results of the project.

This violence thing is seen as something very normal. It is passed on from generation to generation.

The project offered a lot of advice on specific topics. When a theatre performance was shown between 300 and 400 people came and people stayed until the end.

**Adriana L., Lawyer, Association
‘Proyecto Miriam’**

¹¹ Testimonio recogido en las entrevistas con una ONG de mujeres.

¹² Municipalities, representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Family, the Ministry of Health, police, delegates from the prosecution office and the police station for women.

(iii) Efficiency

When analyzing efficiency, it was possible to appreciate the coherence between the budget requested in the PD and its level of execution, which reveals a very satisfactory cost/benefit relationship. In spite of the large geographical scope and the high number of actors who were mobilized, MOVITEP-FS employed adequate technical and financial follow-up processes in order to ensure professional, transparent and efficient management.

The project's National Coordination Team was made up of an Executive Team (two artistic directors, a methodological expert and one administrator, who were all permanent MOVITEP-FS staff)¹³; and of the Coordinators of the 13 theatre groups in the various locations of the intervention. The National Coordination Team carried out periodical meetings in order to supervise and adjust the planning and the implementation of the activities (two days/once a month). The Executive Team met at least once a month or more often when the need arose. The project also established collaborative relationships with about twenty women's rights organizations working on the topics of domestic violence in the various locations.



León, the Advocacy Group in action. Before a theatre performance.

The quality of the follow-up process was particularly noteworthy. The MOVITEP Executive Team was divided up by locations in order to make the monitoring visits easier¹⁴. The logical framework was used as a follow-up tool for the execution and the results obtained were analyzed according to previously identified indicators (see table under point II – Effectiveness).

Beyond supervising the execution of the activities, the project also developed specific tools to follow-up on the achieved effects. In order to do this, random surveys were carried out (pre-test and post-test) with the aim of recording changes observed in the theatre group participants, the youth groups and the women's groups. For the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data of both the open and closed questions, IBM SPSS Data Collection (version 18) was used. As a means of verification, data triangulation was carried out, comparing the data collected in the monthly reports with that of the bi-monthly meetings and the findings in the field (theatre performances, workshops and meetings with organizations). In addition, all of the project reports document the implementation of the activities in a detailed fashion and are accompanied by specific annexes which offer specific and complementary information. All of the information that was collected and documented is an important input for future processes of systematization and capitalization on the innovative approach that was developed.

¹³Initially, it was also planned that Els van Poppel would participate, but she returned to Holland one month after the start of the project. However, she provided support from the Netherlands and during a few visits to Nicaragua over the course of the two years.

¹⁴The PD had foreseen that Douglas Mendoza would participate in the monitoring tasks. However, he accompanied the start of the project by helping to formulate the project but he did not participate in its implementation.

The contribution made by the three UNDEF visits (including the team of journalists) and of the Unit Democracy and Human Rights Department for International Organizations and Policy Support (SIDA) were much appreciated and valued by MOVITEP-SF.

Another positive efficiency factor that should be highlighted is the excellent quality of the published materials, both in terms of their reliability and content as well as the broad dissemination that they enjoyed. The translation of the video memory into English will make it possible to distribute it at the international level.

In terms of the budgetary implementation, the project carried out the planned activities while using the resources available. The financial reports were checked by the auditing company Ovidio Sotelo. The NGO’s directors have admitted that the cost of certain activities was underestimated. Table no. 3 shows the percentage of the budget dedicated to each category of activities. The largest category (53.76%) is that of the theatre productions and performances, the festivals, the presentations of the 20 works of art with the youth groups and the production of the video, which are the most important components of the project. The coordination and administrative management of the project accounts for 15%; travel costs (7.46%) cover the follow-up visits carried out by the Coordination Team; 8.76% and 9.77% represent resources dedicated to the capacity-building, organization and meetings of the WGs and LAGs respectively. It is important to note that the amount dedicated to the staff salaries did not allow for the minimum wage as defined in Nicaraguan law to be respected.

Table No. 3: Implementation and percentage of spending by category of activities in US \$

Budget line	Expenses per category/activity	% of the total budget
1. Staff Costs	33,750	15%
2. Travel costs	16,800	7,46%
3. Meetings of WGs, LAGs, Coordination	19,680	8,74%
4. Training women and youth	22,000	9,77%
5. IT Equipment	2,500	1,1%
6. Theatre production and presentation/video	120,970	53,76%
7. Miscellaneous	4,800	2,13%
8. Audit	4,500	2,00%
Total Project Cost	225,000	100,00%

The budget allocation is relevant to the objectives and priorities pursued. No major changes were observed. In January 2015, MOVITEP-SF asked UNDEF and was authorized to use the surplus of some of the budget lines so to conduct further performances and activities that would strengthen the theatre groups in 7 locations¹⁵ and 3 municipalities. j

In terms of the implementation deadlines, no significant changes were observed that would have altered the initially planned results. In some of the groups, the start of the process was delayed by four to six months due to organizational difficulties in some of the municipalities. The National Coordination Team decided to intensify the activities in the second year in order to avoid a negative impact on achieving the planned results.

The Executive Team highlighted that it was difficult to work in English, in particular with the project document PD for which there was only drafts in Spanish and no final version. This did

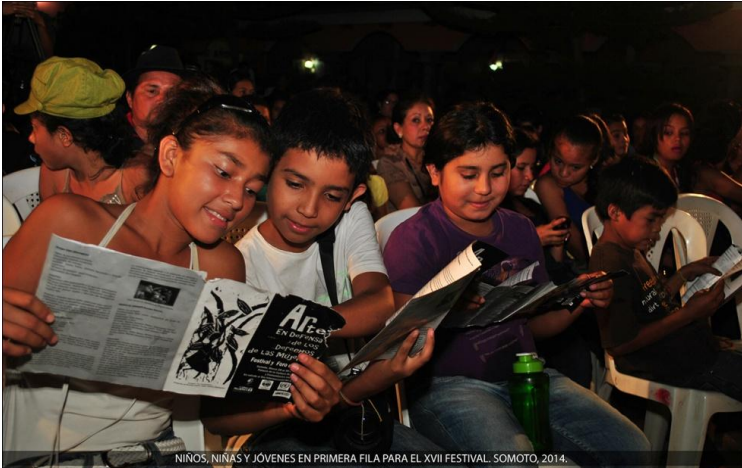
¹⁵ 4452 US\$ to 7 locations: GARABATO in Managua, CHA in Managua, CAPULLO in Achuapa, CUAUTLA TLILTIK in León, El Bosque in Pueblo Nuevo, Yamni Rumhsik Wana in Rosita, COLECTIVO 8 DE MARZO in Esquipulas and 3 municipalities: Quetzalcoatl in Matagalpa, Raza de Agüizotes in Jinotega and Pánico de Risa in Ciudad Sandino. See the Final Narrative Report – Section 2 “The project’s financial status” for more details.

not apply to the other reports which were all first written in Spanish, shared with team members and then translated.

(iv) Impact

The project made a positive contribution at various levels:

- Impact on MOVITP-FS, the theatre groups and social organizations. The Executive Team noted that the project offered a learning opportunity in bringing the process to a successful conclusion. Internally, MOVITEP-SF said that the project enabled them to put their institutional work into perspective and that it confirmed the potential of artistic creation to trigger social change and mobilize the community. The audience's response largely exceeded expectations; each night between 500 and 600 people attended. In addition, the NGO expressed an interest in making this experience part of a more long-term strategy and to examine how it could capitalize on lessons learned during the project.



Girls, boys and young people in the front row during the XVII festival, Somoto, 2014.

- Impact on the theatre groups. The women members of the theatre groups who were interviewed particularly appreciated the project's contribution, through the Working Groups, to build bridges and establish links with civil society organizations in the municipalities. Especially the contact to women's organizations allowed for mutual support and enabled joint experiences, offering information on women's rights and Law 779 and going into more depth on the topic of domestic violence based on the life experience of the participants. The surveys carried out by MOVITEP-SF displayed some important changes among the members of the theatre groups. The women believe more strongly that a positive message can be spread through theatre performances, while the men increasingly feel that theatre is something important for the community. The women appreciate and feel very positively about what they learned during the theatre workshops, especially getting to know their rights, learning about domestic violence and strengthening their self-esteem as well as having been able to join the theatre group which is a permanent space of collective organization.

Although the participation of men was globally lower than that of women, it varied greatly depending on the groups and locations. In Achuapa in the Capullo group, or in Managua in the Garabato group, the presence and commitment of men was very positive. Furthermore, the project was able to get men to allow their wives to participate, which already constitutes an important effect. In addition, some of the women from the women's group in León Sureste stated that being members of the theatre group had allowed them to realize the situation of violence they were facing in their families and to work towards changes in their relationships.

- Impact on the Youth theatre groups. The project opened up a space of awareness-raising and organization for youth and adolescent (both males and females) theatre groups, achieving interesting effects, especially in terms of awareness on the consequences of gender-based violence and “macho” behavior in interpersonal relationships. Many of the young people have set up theatre groups and in Achuapa for instance a group is putting on performances at the University on the topics of rights and violence against women. Currently 16 young people¹⁶ have joined the Julio Vargas National Theatre School.

To my mind, women have come very far, because people are now really coordinating. From now on, the work has to be done as a team, working collectively. There have been great advances in communication and in getting to know each other, and that’s very positive.

Daniela M., Coordinator at the Office for Community Development in the Municipal Town Hall of León

- Impact on local actors and authorities. In spite of the differences in results between the municipalities, the integration of the theatre groups in the Local Advocacy Groups enabled to strengthen the commitment and awareness of local institutions with regard to the topic of women. In addition, in some local governments, a greater recognition of women was achieved and the issue was incorporated into local policy. In such cases where the work was coordinated with the police station for women and/or the town halls, it was appreciated that artistic resources and particularly theatre can strengthen the mechanisms for providing information on the Law on violence against women and appropriate information on the ways of denouncing cases of violence or to claim alimony. In many of the municipalities, there exist territorial groups to address the problem of violence or working networks which made it possible to establish mechanisms for participation. In some territories such as (Achuapa, San Ramón and Somoto), the town halls provided their own resources to support the artistic groups and carry out the activities. Although the commitment from local authorities was one of the most difficult points the project had to face, the impacts which were achieved offer an important basis for continued work and a more in-depth relationship with governmental actors.

Women testimonies

- “It is possible to request investigation, to obtain information; I had no idea about this before and in fact I confess, I was not even aware about my own rights”, **Mary Acevedo (youth participant from Managua).**

- “Coming here is an experience in itself; it is putting me into a new perspective, giving me a new look and knowledge that I can apply in my daily life and share with my family and classmates”, **Xiomara Cruz (actress from the group Quetzalcoatl)**

- “I learned that the Law is protecting us and that many organisations are striving to protect Women rights and support us in claiming their recognition. Now I am aware that there are many provisions in law for family protection, in particular law 779 which protects children rights”. **Yorlenn Zamora (youth participant from Managua)**

- “I like it very much because I can discuss and explain to women what violence is ; to make them aware that violence is not always visible and does not restrict to punches as most of them believe” **María Esther Silva (IXCHEN officer and participant in the theatre group “Máscaras del hogar”, Managua).**

- Impact on the spectators and beneficiary audience.

¹⁶2 from Managua; 2 from El Sauce; 2 from Achuapa; 3 from León; 1 from Condega; 2 from Somoto; 2 from Pueblo Nuevo; 2 from Matagalpa.

By choosing the local level as a priority space for the intervention, it was possible to provide information on Law 779 and raise the issue of domestic violence among rural and suburban populations who have little access to this sort of information. The use of popular theatre and especially the debates which were organized following each performance encouraged the participation of citizens and made it easier to raise awareness and generate understanding of the issue.

Finally, it is worth mentioning some significant and unexpected impacts, such as the work with indigenous women on the Atlantic Coast. The lady heading the Department for Community Support in the municipality of León joined the local theatre group and is still performing with the troupe. A Woman Member of the Parliament, who attended a play a while ago, is now supporting the theatre group to obtain the status of legal person. Although it was the first time that MOVITEP-SF had intervened in this region, the achieved results were highly successful.

(iv) Sustainability

MOVITEP-SF is a well-respected and renowned organization which has generated influential social leverage and has been an interlocutor and reference for other organizations involved in participation and social change, at local as well as national and international level. This background has enabled them to establish working relationships with government entities, in particular with the Ministry for Education (MED), the Ministry for Family (MIFAMILIA) and the Ministry for Health (MINSA), as well as with local governments, municipalities and town halls. It also works with many civil society organizations that are developing projects on topics surrounding human rights, women's rights, children's rights, violence, gender and participation.

The diverse relationships that it has with international cooperation agencies has contributed to consolidating its financial sustainability. Therefore, at the end of the project, MOVITEP-SF has contacts and support that will allow it to carry on the implementation of its organizational strategy. Among this support, it is worth mentioning that provided by Terre des Hommes Germany, which is financing the "Diploma for Theatre Instructors" which is launching its third cycle of training in 2015. This diploma is recognized by the Nicaraguan Institute for Culture. At the time of this evaluation, the NGO was participating in a call for tender organized under the European Instrument of Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) of the EU.

"From the beginning, this project helped me to develop skills of my own with enabled me to express myself without fear and to believe deep inside me that we are "women fighting for women's rights". It encouraged me to keep sharing this feeling with other women".

"I believe that I have changed in terms of patience. I did not used to be as tolerant, but now I feel that I am more in control of myself. We can also help other people who are facing problems of abuse... Theatre can help us to better develop and to learn to have more confidence in ourselves".

Testimonies of two women on changing through theatre.

The project was able to mobilize theatre groups and other social actors in the 10 intervention municipalities which are still running and acting. The methodological focus on "closeness/proximity" that the project developed placed a strong emphasis on community dialogue during all stages of the intervention (during the theatre group rehearsals, during the training sessions with women and young people, during the debates). This way of working led to a progressive feeling of ownership among the beneficiary groups, who took on a

sustainable commitment towards their communities as members of the theatre groups. Likewise, the Methodology of Collective Creation enabled each group to carry out their own research and to collect stories and testimonies from women as well as to analyze and include information on the issues of women’s rights, domestic violence and Law 779. Through the process that was carried out, the project was able to empower actors and to encourage them to continue using popular theatre and art as tools to examine and transform social realities. All of this leads to the conclusion that the experience that was gathered will be sustained and transferred.

In addition, the interviews made it clear that many of the organizations that participated in the project as beneficiaries, partners or collaborators are still in contact with MOVITEP-SF and are motivated to continue the process that has been started. So for instance, several youth and women’s theatre groups are still running and are continuing their work, among them the group of organized women Ixchen and the women of León Sureste, who have become women counselors of the police station for women and are supported by the Municipality of León as well as the Garabato group in Managua, which is in the process of acquiring legal personality, and the Capullo group in Achuapa.

In order to maintain these sustainability components that have been generated through the project, it is important that MOVITEP-FS define an appropriate mechanism to capitalize on lessons learned and to enable their dissemination in other contexts.

(v) UNDEF added value

The UNDEF project provided the opportunity to show how art and popular theatre can be used to promote organizational processes, mainly with women and young people, in suburban and rural areas. The added value provided by this project contributed to promoting this innovative approach and to strengthening the institutional capacity and presence of MOVITEP-FS in the ten municipalities of intervention, including on the Atlantic coast where indigenous populations live. Furthermore, the benefit provided by the developed initiatives enabled learning experiences as well as alliances and collaboration between social actors at the local level. Thirteen theatre groups were able to strengthen their relationship with women’s organizations working in the field of domestic violence and with youth groups, Local Advocacy Groups and local authorities dealing with this issue. All of this allowed for the reinforcement of collective awareness-raising spaces with a commitment to improving the status of women with regards to their rights in Nicaraguan society and increasing knowledge of the applicable law (Law 779).



Young people in capacity-building workshop in the community of “Los Rincones”, Pueblo Nuevo.

V. Conclusions

(i) The project offers a relevant response to important conjunctural problems and challenges. On the one hand, in a context that is marked by confrontation between the government, the authorities and feminist movements following the adoption of Law no. 779, and in some cases even the closing of spaces for coordination and dialogue with CSOs working to combat violence against women, the project was able to render visible the vulnerable situation of women's, children's and adolescents' rights. On the other hand, the participation of the theatre groups in the Local Advocacy Groups strengthened these spaces of organization and citizenship and the social actors in the fight against domestic violence. Although this process was not equally successful in all of the municipalities and needs to be further consolidated, it did strengthen the participation of women and young people in rural and suburban areas. In addition, albeit in smaller numbers, it encouraged the participation of men in the theatre groups and other local spaces of encounter (educational centers, social committees, churches, etc.). However, in some municipalities it was not easy to coordinate and find spaces for dialogue with the Local Advocacy Groups since the commitment by local authorities who were part of the LAGs was insufficient. The Ministry of Education (MED), the Ministry of Family (MIFAMILIA) and the Ministry of Health (MINSA) authorities were more cooperative. In any case, awareness-raising among and creating linkages with governmental entities will remain one of the open challenges for future interventions. This conclusion stems from findings on relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

(ii) The project was able to develop a coherent and innovative approach. The intervention strategy introduces art and popular theatre as instruments which facilitate organizational processes. Through the production and performance of theatre plays addressing the issue of violence against women and based on their experiences, stories and testimonies, the project empowered and strengthened the capacities of women who had become victims of violence, helping them to regain their self-esteem and giving them the knowledge to defend their rights while motivating them to participate in local dynamics of collective organization. In some cases, the need can be seen to integrate more positive messages of masculinity that would promote alternative relationship models based on respect and equity. This conclusion stems from findings on relevance, effectiveness and impact.

(iii) The project focused on a highly participative methodological approach. The direct involvement of the beneficiaries in the three implementation stages of the strategy¹⁷, facilitated the relevance and ownership of the messages that were communicated through the theatre plays. This conclusion stems from findings on relevance and effectiveness.

(iv) The project was not able to respond to the call for support from women victims of severe violence. MOVITEP-FS is aware that many of the situations of violence that were addressed in dialogue with the communities and the theatre audience surpassed the capacity of the theatre groups, female counselors and/or advocacy groups to respond. Determining cases of "severe violence" as well as providing support during the process of debate, information and guidance which was elaborated during stage 3¹⁸ require

¹⁷ See Project Strategy (III -i)

¹⁸ See Project Strategy (III -i)

the intervention of specialized professionals (lawyers, therapists, social workers...), especially in the areas of domestic violence and sexual abuse of children. In some of the municipalities there was support from the police stations for women. This conclusion stems from findings on relevance, effectiveness and impact.

(v) The project was very ambitious but was able to achieve significant effects and impacts. The intervention was planned in six Departments (some of them far away from each other) and sought to mobilize a very high number of beneficiaries compared to the available budget of the project. Since it is a project promoting qualitative changes, it might have been possible to focus the efforts on a more limited territorial scope in order to go into more depth and to capitalize on the results. In spite of this, the project achieved important effects and some unexpected results. One of the results that should be highlighted is the role that participants recognize can be played by theatre as an element of communication and learning and not only as an element of entertainment. The beneficiary groups also appreciated very highly the relationship that was established between CSOs and alliances founded with organizations dealing with the issue of women's rights in the ten locations. Some of the youth and women's groups are still running and are motivated to continue their work. Another highly positive achievement to be noted is that in rural communities, the men accepted that their wives participate, although they themselves did not attend the majority of the theatre performances. This conclusion stems from findings on effectiveness, sustainability and impact.

(vi) The project documents the experience that was developed and makes it visible in a satisfactory way. In order to do this, relevant and diverse information was recorded and systematized in order to produce a series of printed and audiovisual materials with a high educational value. These materials were widely dissemination through communication channels and had a strong impact on public opinion and on various contexts and actors that participated directly or indirectly in the project. The broad dissemination of the activities that had been developed amongst the general public, such as amongst CSOs, the press, in social networks and through other communication channels contributed to raising the issue of women's rights and encouraging the denunciation of domestic violence in the areas and municipalities of intervention. This conclusion stems from findings on efficiency and effectiveness.

VI. Recommendations

The project reached a very satisfactory level of accomplishment of its objectives, which is why the evaluation team will limit itself to suggesting some guidelines which could contribute to overcoming some of the challenges that were identified during the implementation of the intervention and to capitalize on lessons learned. It is therefore recommended to:

(i) Raise awareness amongst local authorities and Local Advocacy Groups (LAGs). Strengthening this permanent space for relationships (LAGs) between the local social actors and encouraging the representative participation of the theatre groups, women and youth groups and seeking to strengthen their capacity to influence local authorities and governmental entities. The aim would be to increase the awareness among these organizational structures of violation of rights and forms of violence that affect women in the communities so that these issues can become part of the political agenda in local policy. (See conclusion i).

(ii) Include positive messages on masculinity in the strategy of Popular Theatre. Taking into account the positive perception that the beneficiary groups had of theatre as a tool for communication and learning and as a motor for social change, MOVITEP-SF should more explicitly integrate new paradigms which clearly display the advantages of gender relations based on respect and equality. In order to do this, the theatre groups could build on the experiences that they had previously already worked on and seek to integrate this perspective into the preparatory and elaboration phase of the theatre productions such as in the performances and in the debates and dialogues held with the local community and the theatre audience. The aim would be to place a strong focus on this preventive approach when conducting activities with youth groups and in educational centers. (See conclusions ii and v).

(iii) Strengthen the interdisciplinary approach and the professionalization of the teams in order to offer a better response to situations of violence. The main role of the theatre groups is not to respond to the needs brought forward by victims of violence who often require the intervention of specialized professionals. In view of the high demand from the audience, MOVITEP-FS should select the social organizations according to the specific contribution that these groups can make in terms of professionalizing the teams and including an interdisciplinary and systemic approach to identify the best path towards support in cases of domestic violence and abuse. Working with women's organizations, legal professionals and other professionals who have solid experience in this area could for instance help to determine the "severity of the cases of violence" and the "type of intervention that is needed". In addition, these interdisciplinary teams could provide additional support to the role played by the "female counselors" and all of this should help provide guidance and refer cases, thereby lowering the level of what is expected from the theatre professionals. (See conclusion iv).

(iv) Identify and capitalize on lessons learned. Taking into account the innovative approach of the use of art and popular theatre to promote organizational processes, the evaluation team recommends that a strategy be designed to ensure the sustainability and transfer of this experience. Good practices should be determined within this and other projects carried out by MOVITEP-SF in order to capitalize on lessons learned

and the added value generated by them. This exercise should show how (a) the use of theatre as a tool to promote grass-roots organization processes; (b) the use of a highly participative methodological approach and (c) processes of capacity-building bases on specific topics raised by the participants themselves were linked up. In order to ensure that the methodology to systematize experiences sharing echoes and disseminates widely at the groups and individual levels, it would be important to select the most appropriate means to display them while taking into consideration the specificities of the different contexts, including the cultural dimension. (See conclusions v and vi).



Women participating in a capacity-building workshop conducted by the “Garabato” group, Ixchen Managua.

VII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions:

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Project documents:

- (i) PO Note - UNDEF;
- (ii) Initial project document;
- (iii) Mid-term and Final narrative reports submitted by Movimiento de Teatro Popular sin Fronteras (MOVITEP-SF).
- (iv) Annexes I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII
- (v) Travel reports 2013, 2015
- (vi) Milestone Verification Report by Tamara Delgado, September 3rd 2014
- (vii) Milestone Verification Report by Isolda Espinosa and Tamara Delgado 15-17/11/2013
- (viii) www.movitepsf.com, <http://movitepsf.blogspot.com>, [https://es-es.facebook.com/MovimientodeTeatro Popular sin Fronteras](https://es-es.facebook.com/MovimientodeTeatroPopularsinFronteras), <https://es-es.facebook.com/.../Mujeres-de-León-Sureste/>, [http://www.elpueblopresidente.com/noticias/ver/titulo:1151-arte-en-defensa-de-la-mujer./november 8/2013](http://www.elpueblopresidente.com/noticias/ver/titulo:1151-arte-en-defensa-de-la-mujer./november8/2013). www.managuafuriosa.com/teatro: Güegüejá, la risa y la reflexión desde el teatro popular. www.tn8.tv/festival de teatro popular en Somoto: arte en defensa de los derechos de las mujeres. <http://revistavórtice.wordpress.com> y <https://es-es.facebook.com/vórtice> revista: XVIII Festival Nacional de Teatro Popular Nicaragua 2015. www.alcaldiasomoto.gob.ni/Somoto, sede del XVII Festival Nacional de Teatro. Marzo del 2014. foronicaraguensedecultura.org/ Teatro contra el machismo cantinero.

Materials edited during the project execution:

- March activity plan/14, León Sureste, Advocacy Group;
- Reports on activities developed in the different locations;
- Examples of meetings that were carried out (pre-test, post-test); workshops with young people in the municipalities.
- Power Point presentation used within the project;
- Interview with women in IXCHEN Villa Flor(Managua) who were members of the GARABATO group
- Stories of women who survived violence;
- Brochures, posters and programs produced for the Festivals and forums that were carried out;
- Ad for the National Television to promote the Estelí Festival, published on 26 March 2015; <https://youtu.be/L5or40tZ1Nc>;
- Video on NAAR work: <https://youtu.be/pQDuEfpZDkk>;
- Video report on the national channel YV8 on the El Bosque group: <https://youtu.be/YaWxdVMI7mE>
- Newspaper articles.

Other documents:

- Law No. 779, Law on violence against women and reform of law no. 641, penal code; National Assembly, published in La Gaceta, official journal, 22 February 2012, Managua, Nicaragua;
- Decree A.N. No. 6748;
- Family Code (Law 870);
- Report on Human Rights in the world 2014, Amnesty International;
- National strategic document and multiannual indicative program 2014-2020, Nicaragua, European Union;
- UN Women, The progress of the world's women 2015-2016. Transforming economies, realizing rights, 2015;

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

7 th September 2015	
Daniel Pulido	General project coordinator, MOVITEP-SF
Magdalena Rivera	Person in charge of the project administration, Accountant of MOVITEP-SF
Ernesto Soto	General artistic director, Treasurer of MOVITEP-SF
Pablo Pupiro	Methodologist, actor and teacher of theatrical art, MOVITEP-SF
Grazia Faieta	National Consultant
Luisa María Aguilar	International Consultant
Sandra Arceola,	Collective “Colectivo 8 de Marzo”, person in charge of community development in Esquipula (Matagalpa) and member of the theatre group
Martha Meneses	Collective “Colectivo 8 de Marzo”, person in charge of project elaboration and management, member of the theatre group
8 th September 2015	
Ada Julia Brenes	Head of the country office, UN Women
Johana Hernandez Salgado	Coordinator of the CHA group
Orlando Cordorero Ortiz	Director of the CHA group
Doreyda Obando Robleto	Sub-director of the Republic School of Cuba (“Escuela República de Cuba”)
Gabriela Robleto	Psychologist, Tesis Association
Rafaela Ramos	Young member of the theatre group, Colegio Cristo Obrero
Scot Cordorero Hernandez	Young member of the theatre group, Colegio Cristo Obrero
Bradley Perez	Member of the Garabato theatre group
Moy Acevedo	Member of the Garabato theatre group
Carlos Ramirez	Member of the Garabato theatre group
Josè Maria Ramirez	Member of the Garabato theatre group
Mariam Elisabeth Martinez	Member of the Garabato theatre group
Mercedes Gonzales	Member of the Ixchen theatre group
Salvadora Gonzalez	Member of the Ixchen theatre group
9 th September 2015	
<i>The evaluation team moved from Managua to León</i>	
Cristal Celeste Pichardo Briceño	Member of the women’s group León sureste
Maria Fernanda Munguia	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Lesbia Escoto	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Francia Urania Flores	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Grethel Robleto	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Yolanda Pichardo Briceño	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Arelys Pichardo Briceño	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Maria Fernanda Munguia	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Daniela Arauz	Member of the women’s group León sureste and community promoter
Daniela Deyanira Munguia	Coordinator of the Office of Community Development, Municipal town hall of León
Urania Aracely	Psychologist, NGO Ixchen, León

10 th September 10 2015	
<i>The evaluation team moved from León to Achuapa</i>	
Nestor Osorio	Coordinator of the Capullo theatre group
Byron Cerros García	Member of the Capullo theatre group
William Osorio Pérez	Member of the Capullo theatre group
Ery Osorio Pérez	Member of the Capullo theatre group
Juan Ramón Rivera Pérez	Member of the Capullo theatre group
Adriana Mercedes Lopez Gutierrez	Lawyer, Project Miriam Association
Marisa Martinez	Secretary of the Municipal Council of Achuapa
Carla Valentina Hernandez	Member of the youth theatre group “Corazón de Fuego”
Marlon Ramon Alfaro	Member of the youth theatre group “Corazón de Fuego”
Lenin Monjarez Cerros	Member of the youth theatre group “Corazón de Fuego”
Hellen Rodriguez Lanusa	Member of the youth theatre group “Corazón de Fuego”
<i>The evaluation team moved from Achuapa to Matagalpa</i>	
11 th September 2015	
<i>Closing meeting of the evaluation</i>	
Daniel Pulido	General project coordinator, MOVITEP-SF
Magdalena Rivera	Person in charge of the project administration, Accountant of MOVITEP-SF
Ernesto Soto	General artistic director, Treasurer of MOVITEP-SF
Pablo Pupiro	Methodologist, actor and teacher of theatrical art, MOVITEP-SF
Luisa Maria Aguilar	International Consultant
Grazia Faieta	National Consultant
<i>The evaluation team moved from Matagalpa to Managua</i>	

Annex 4: Acronyms

AI	Amnesty International
APC	Asociación de Promotores de la Cultura
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EIDHR	European Instrument of Democracy and Human Rights
EU	European Union
GRO	Grass-roots Organizations
LAG	Local Advocacy Group
MED	Ministry of Education
MIFAMILIA	Ministry of Family
MINSA	Ministry of Health
MOVITEP-SF	Movimiento de Teatro Popular sin Fronteras
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PD	Project Document
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
WG	Working Group