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Mexico: Protection and resources provided to women victims of domestic violence in the state of Puebla (2005 - June 2007).

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Situation

In February 2007, America Soto Lopez, Director of the Puebla Institute for Women (Instituto Poblano de la Mujer), a government agency, asked the state congress to introduce reforms that would allow the application of a new federal law, the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (*Ley General de Acceso a las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia*) (Notimex 6 Feb. 2007).

In 1 June 2007 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, the Assistant Director of the legal and psychology department of the Puebla Institute for Women noted that the state of Puebla has a law to prevent, handle and punish domestic violence and a law to protect crime victims, and that these laws have provisions to deal with violence against women.

The Assistant Director also indicated that statistics on gender violence are incomplete and that those provided by justice and health agencies do not give an accurate picture of the extent of the problem (Puebla 1 June 2007). According to statistics from Mexico's National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information Technology (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas Geografía e Informática, INEGI), presented in an article by CIMAC Noticias, 340 women were killed between 2000 and 2005 in the state of Puebla, in contrast to 1,961 women in the state of Mexico, 682 in the Federal District and 31 in the state of Jalisco (20 March 2007).

Services and resources

Over a 10-month period in 2005, the Puebla Institute for Women's 075 telephone help line received 5,500 calls reporting acts of violence (Notimex 25 Nov. 2005). The Institute distributes brochures about the help line and the services it provides, which include legal and psychological assistance and crisis intervention (Puebla n.d.d). The Institute provides women who are victims of domestic violence with information on the various services offered by agencies that work with those women; Puebla's Network of Family Development Agencies (Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia del Estado de Puebla, DIF Puebla) and the state's Office of the Attorney General (Procuraduría General de Justicia, PGJ) offer the most complete range of care and services (ibid.).

DIF Puebla provides victims of domestic violence with the opportunity to go to or to telephone its offices to report the violence (Puebla n.d.c). Some of the results of DIF's violence prevention and victim assistance program appear in the second report on its activities for 2006 (ibid. 8 Feb. 2007, 46). It was through that program that the 24 violence prevention and victim assistance clinics - 10 in the city of Puebla and 14 in the rest of the state - handled 3,543 reported cases by providing legal as well as medical and psychological assistance (ibid.). About 53 percent of those cases involved minors, and over 38 percent involved women (ibid.). The number of interventions conducted by these clinics increased from 26,233 in 2005 to 29,501 in 2006 (ibid., 47). In addition, in 2006, the public prosecutor's office (Ministerio Público) received 244 reports of violence; the individuals involved also benefited from the services offered by the DIF clinics (ibid., 46).

DIF Puebla also organizes [translation] "assistance days" through travelling aid units (ibid., 48). In 2006, according to DIF Puebla, of the 15,541 people who participated in activities offered by the traveling aid units (conferences, workshops, etc.), 3,119 received free psychological (1,011), medical (1,287) or legal (905) assistance (ibid.).

In addition, Puebla's Human Rights Commission (Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Estado de Puebla) offers a protection program for women and children who are subject to domestic violence (*Programa de Atención a la Mujer, Ninez en Condiciones Extraordinarias y Violencia Intrafamiliar*, PROMUNI) (Puebla n.d.e). Follow-up services for victims are offered through this program (ibid.). The Commission has also created a prevention campaign and distributed brochures on domestic violence and on the agencies that provide services to victims (ibid. n.d.a).

An article from the daily *El Sol de Puebla* reports that Puebla's PGJ organized several domestic violence awareness activities, including hundreds of workshops for school children, as well as conferences for the general public (22 Dec. 2006). In addition, Puebla's Ministry of Public Safety (Secretaria de Seguridad Publica) organizes domestic violence prevention workshops upon request (Puebla n.d.b). In 2005, the municipal-level DIF in the city of Puebla also provided legal assistance to 11,500 people and organized 685 presentations on domestic violence prevention (*Diario Cambio* 12 Mar. 2006).

According to the Assistant Director of the legal and psychology department of the Puebla Institute for Women, training is constantly being offered to employees of the PGJ and the public prosecutor's office (Ministerio Publico), as well as to police officers to teach them how to react in cases of violence against women; in total, 2,000 public servants are expected to attend training in 2007 (Puebla 1 June 2007).

Court orders prohibiting offenders from entering the matrimonial home must be requested at the public prosecutor's office or in family court; the orders allow the police to ensure that an offender has left the matrimonial home, whether he is the owner or not (Puebla 1 June 2007). If the application process for a divorce has not begun within nine days of the offender being prohibited from entering the matrimonial home, the offender can return there (*ibid*).

The Assistant Director at the Puebla Institute for Women stated that there are seven shelters for women who are victims of violence that are managed by the state government and three that are managed by civil society organizations (Puebla 1 June 2007). The largest shelter can accommodate up to 300 people at a time (*ibid.*). To stay in a government-run shelter (for a maximum of three months) a woman must have filed a complaint with the PGJ (*ibid.*). A woman from another state can use the same services, but she must have filed a complaint with the authorities where the crime was committed (*ibid.*).

Law students at a university in Puebla, Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, offer free legal services to women who are victims of domestic violence; figures from September 2005 show that they were handling 600 cases per month (Notimex 22 Sept. 2005). The service coordinator concluded that most of the victims use the service because of the lack of support from government agencies for this kind of problem (*ibid.*).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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El Sol de Puebla. 22 December 2006. "Cerca de 400 talleres y cuentos presento PGJ para prevenir adicciones y violencia familiar." (Organizacion Editorial Mexicana)
<<http://www.oem.com.mx/elsoldepuebla/notas/n109718.htm>> [Accessed 17 May 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Atencion a Victimas del Delito department of the Procuradoria General de Justicia del Estado de Puebla did not respond within the time constraints of this Response.

Attempts to contact the Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia del Estado de Puebla (DIF Puebla) were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Gobierno del Estado de Puebla, Honorable Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado de Puebla, Procuradoria General de Justicia del Estado de Puebla.

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