

To be a policewoman

In Mexico, women were admitted in police corporations in 1930, conforming a group called “Female Police”, made up of 69 women. Although the roles of women in the police have expanded, the majority still carry out administrative tasks. Overall, they now represent around 20% of the total police force of the country.

According to the General Law of the National System of Public Security, the police career is defined as the mandatory and permanent system, that defines the procedures for selection, recruitment, training, certification, promotion and recognition. However, there is usually a gender gap that limits the professional growth of female police officers. In addition, they are also usually victims of harassment, discrimination and violence within their institutions.

It is in this context, that a study “To be a policewoman” was carried out in the Secretary of Security of the State of Mexico and in the Citizens’ Security Secretary of the municipality of Nezahualcóyotl, also in the State of Mexico. The aim was to observe the obstacles that women regularly face, the incidence of misconducts, and the formulation of gender awareness workshops. The project was financed by the Canada Fund for local initiatives.

A total of 5 workshops were held, attended by around 150 police women and 60 male officers with the following topics:

- Gender, sex, stereotype
- Equity, Equality and Discrimination
- Gender violence
- Relations between women
- Police ethics and gender
- Corporate regulations to sanction misconducts

After conducting these workshops, some conclusions were:

- There is a high level of mistrust, which hampers the reports for misconduct. Police women believe that those responsible will not be punished or, even worse, that there will be retaliation for filling the report.
- Many women normalize high levels of violence, both, in general terms and against them.
- Especially in the case of digital violence, it is common for police women to blame other police women for the abuse.

- Some women noted that men prefer to work with other men, and feel discriminated for promotions.
- Special emphasis was placed on the fact that their superiors do not usually generate an adequate work environment which fosters gender equality.
- Male police officers consider that female partners perform better in intelligence work, social proximity, and detection of cases of child abuse.
- There is a clear deficiency in promoting the options to report abuses among female officers.
- There is a clear deficiency in gender equality education.

Recommendations

- Maintain gender awareness workshops, at all levels of the institution, and with instructors.
- Design ethical guidelines, especially designed for police corporations, including gender equality and respect.
- Design awareness campaigns for all the police force, including the options to report abuses or misconducts.
- Introduce investigation procedures that guarantee the follow-up of all reports of abuses or misconducts, until a clear and final resolution is made.
- Ensure, always, the integrity of all victims of abuse, providing them with the full support of the institution.