

CLADEM CAMPAGNING FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

20 years ago, in 1987, CLADEM started with the firm commitment to work as a network of organizations and women within a social and legal framework; that is why we adopted the slogan of “Women using the Law as a tool for change”.

This commitment has been incorporated to different activities in order not only to study the existing human rights international instruments and mechanisms but be able to make a contribution to the debate.

One of these activities was the launch of a **Campaign for a Human Rights Declaration from a gender perspective** which represented a big challenge by itself.

The process lasted several years and implied different stages according to the objectives of the campaign. It involved the participation of 17 countries and other networks which also joined CLADEM in this journey.

The main goal was to disseminate a Human Rights Declaration from a Gender Perspective that had already been drafted in Costa Rica in 1992, during the *Conferencia Satelite "La Nuestra"/ a satellite conference* named “OURS”, where we got together in order to discuss our strategy to influence the Vienna Human Rights Conference to be held in 1993. CLADEM assumed the challenge and from that time onwards the draft has been enriched with the contributions of more than 180 organizations.

The draft was revised by members of CLADEM and several experts in the field. It was submitted along with more than 65,000 supporting signatures to the UN General Secretariat on December 10th 1998 to be discussed and proclaimed during the General Assembly.

In February 1999, the Commission for the Socio-Legal Status of Women asked us to introduce some amendments to make it clear that we were not against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights . We asked for the creation of a Working Group to discuss and study the proposal to later be able to present it before the General Assembly.

One of the key members of the campaign, former Regional Coordinator of CLADEM Susana Chiarotti, compiled some of the lessons learned through this experience and she refers to the following:

1.- We learned that a world campaign to promote a new Declaration of Human Rights takes a minimum of 10 years to be developed at an international level. (Ex: Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous peoples, Right to development,etc)

2.- That not because of being feminists we can say we know everything and can do everything, from the design of communicational strategies to the organization of workshops at a district level, contacting diplomats, international organizations, drafting amendments or new proposals, convincing politicians, design posters and t-shirts, search for funding, etc; this experience taught us that we had to work with experts in very area and get their advice on how to do things properly and efficiently..

3.- When you launch an international campaign to recollect signatures we have to organize a strong team not only to be able to keep the campaign alive but to do a permanent follow up to get the expected results.

4.- The work that is done on the basis of voluntary work can be fragile in nature and may show limitations that must be taken into consideration.

5.- Coordinating a network and a campaign require two different levels of coordination not only because they are different in essence but specific in content.

We have achieved the following goals:

At a general level:

- We attracted the public attention about the androcentric nature of human rights.
- We make it visible the need to revise treaties and legal texts.
- We claimed and legitimized the right of women to rewrite International Law and Human Rights.
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- The declaration has been completely incorporated to the UNESCO Programme for Women and Peace.
- Experts in human security (Gaazt Group- Austria) have recognized that the declaration considers all issues for a new paradigm of human security.
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At institutional level:

- CLADEM grew stronger as a network because it was able to handle the same proposal in all countries.
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- The declaration and the campaign legitimized our work at an international level and marked our profile as defenders of women human rights.
- We have accumulated experience and knowledge in the field of human rights.

In relation to difficulties we can mention:

- Difficulties to neutralize resistance on behalf of internal sectors of the UN that looked upon our proposal as a threat to the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Difficulties to build up alliances within the women movement and with international agencies which launched parallel campaigns. Others questioned the need for a new declaration regarding the present difficulties to implement what we already have.
- Difficulties to get support from human rights organizations which could not come into terms with the chapter of Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Ex. In Spain one re-edition of 3000 publications of the Declaration done by the Spanish Federation of Human Rights included the text about abortion in parenthesis with the clarification that 3 organizations of human rights linked to the Church made reservations. In El

Salvador Human Rights NGOs highlighted the paragraph of Right to Pleasure because they considered it too individualistic and did not support the proposal. There are various cases like this in the region on these categories of rights.

- Lack of funds to maintain a long and intense campaign with a wide impact.
- Obstacles to manage a global scenario and the regional diversities. In Asia for example, where many countries did not sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights they were of the opinion to get support for the existing instrument which already had a universal consensus and did not agree on the need to start a new initiative that could be taken finally as an excuse not to adhere to the present instrument.
- Achievements and difficulties that we have encountered along these years are more than the mentioned above and have left a legacy of experience for CLADEM in relation to instruments, mechanisms and structure of human rights organizations as well as in relation of building alliances-its possibilities and limitations- and more important on the need of not to cut our dreams or impose limits to our boldness.

Besides we are very firm in our commitment of influencing the human rights arena and to incorporate the needs, hopes and claims of women. As we have already mentioned in one of the slogans of the campaign, only through this path these rights will be fully human.