



**Working for the full exercise of Sexual
and Reproductive Freedom of
Ecuadorian women**

My body, my first identity

Fundación Desafío was created in 2000, when it became evident that women could not make a decision about their bodies and reproductive health. It is important to note that we come from a process in which our initiatives as health professionals have largely contributed so that knowledge, access and enjoyment of the benefits of scientific progress can become a reality for women.

The life and political positioning of Fundación Desafío, has led us to this path. We care about the life of women in Ecuador, not in the abstract, but in practice. We care about their dignity and the exercise of their sexual and reproductive freedom, to be free from coercion and violence. We promote sexual and reproductive rights, within a human rights framework, the right to a life free from violence, the right to pleasure in all its dimensions especially sexual, and we promote the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress as it relates to sexual and reproductive health.



The scenario in which Ecuadorian women live their sexuality and reproduction is not the best; gender violence, especially sexual violence, is commonplace. Lack of access to emergency contraception and the legal restrictions to abortion as a legitimate decision for women, but illegal in Ecuador, place women in serious risks, which could even lead to death, affecting their overall health and life projects.

Fundación Desafío knows very well how women experience their sexuality under circumstances of inequality, subordination and violence. The unsatisfying sex life, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions are the most visible consequences of discrimination experienced by women in this area. One out of four Ecuadorian women suffer sexual violence, and one out of three have gone through an illegal abortion. Teen pregnancy is a public health problem in Ecuador, and pregnancies in girls under 14 continue to rise due to the situations of sexual violence in which they live.

State responses are not sufficient and do not affect the structural problem of institutionalized sexism and the highest levels of misogyny that prevent the successive governments from providing women with realistic answers that guarantee their right to comprehensive health. In this scenario, Fundación Desafío proposes feminist alternatives and resistance, which aims to advance the fulfillment of rights, building on existing legal frameworks and incorporating a focus on human rights as well as sexual and reproductive rights. To make this work happen, Fundación Desafío receives funding from international cooperation organizations that trust its work and the acquired results.

To address these
problems the
institution works
in:

● National Political Advocacy

To change the restrictive legal framework. We act and advocate in spaces of power to change laws, introduce amendments and/or improve the type of health care that is provided to women.

● International Policy Advocacy

With the development of alternative and shadow reports and participation in thematic hearings before the United Nations System.

● Information, Training and Raising Awareness

Of the need to understand and effectively exercise sexual and reproductive rights, as well as freedom from gender violence.

● Defense and advocacy

To eliminate the hurdles when accessing abortion that is permitted under the current Penal Code. On this topic we include emergency contraception for being a method that is still inaccessible.¹

¹These approaches, which have described our work, are expressed in the following institutional activities:

Demonstrate that unsafe abortion is a violation of the right to life of Ecuador's poorest women

Abortion is legal in two cases in Ecuador: To avoid any danger to the health and lives of pregnant women and when a mentally disabled woman is raped. Although the United Nations has recommended to Ecuador on three occasions to decriminalize abortion at least in the case of rape, the State has not made any type of changes.

The female population, health professionals, and even attorneys do not know of the existence of this legal framework. Because the State had failed to provide any information about this minimum possibility to exercise reproductive autonomy, Fundación Desafío develops actions to spread information, education and counseling on this issue that is aimed towards women's organizations, youth, NGOs, the health and legal sectors, and others.

Fundación Desafío works very hard in the process of social and legal decriminalization of abortion, with an emphasis on advocacy to ensure that as part of a non-negotiable minimum: the State should decriminalize abortion in cases of rape. Our proposals have positioned themselves in the women's movement agenda and eventually, in debates and forums related to changing laws and developing standards and procedures.

Through creative actions, workshops, and production of audiovisual material, we contribute to a change in the public discourse and to the improvement of respect for women's rights. Our presence was important in the constitutional process in 2008, when the current Constitution was drafted.

Our work around the proposal to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape managed to coordinate actions with the women's movement and generate reactions of sympathy and support from the media and other areas of the social movement.

● **Activities in this area:**

- Active participation in the incorporation of sexual and reproductive rights in the Constitution of 2008.
- Active participation in the development of the new Comprehensive Criminal Code in the chapter on reproductive rights, sexual violence. Advocacy for Therapeutic Abortion.
- Active participation in the development of the Comprehensive Health Code, in the chapter on Sexual and Reproductive Health.
- Participation in the review of the Ministry of Health's Therapeutic Abortion Protocol.



Participation in International Advocacy

Fundación Desafío's presence on the international stage has enabled it to denounce violations of women's rights and achieve significant recommendations for the State.

The U.N. Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights recommended that Ecuador loosen its restrictive abortion framework, specifically by decriminalizing abortion in cases of rape and congenital malformation. Yet the Ecuadorean State has not followed suit.

Fundación Desafío has reported about the violation to sexual and reproductive rights by participating in the following activities with international human rights bodies. Fundación Desafío has participated in the following spaces of the United Nations and the Inter-American Human Rights System with reports, denouncing the situation experienced by women regarding their sexual and reproductive health:

- Thematic Hearing on the right to information in sexual and reproductive health at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- Thematic Hearing on the state of emergency contraception in Ecuador at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

- Shadow Report on the situation of sexual and reproductive Health at the U.N. Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.
- Participation in drafting the shadow report to the Committee Against All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). February 16/2015
- Drafting of an alternative report on the situation of illegal abortion as a form of discrimination to the Committee Against All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). February 16/2015. Participation in the 60th Session of the CEDAW Committee
- Thematic Hearing with the national report " Stolen Lives " denouncing the impact of pregnancy resulting from rape in children under 14 years.

Defend and place oral emergency contraception –(PAE for its acronym in Spanish) as a woman's right

Raising awareness about emergency contraception, and counteracting disinformation and other attempts to eliminate it by conservative groups has been and is part of our daily lives. When facing conservatives that equate PAE to abortion, Fundación Desafío conducts a thorough scientific, political and communicational analysis to inform different spaces and disseminate information about PAE as a contraceptive that should be provided by all health services, which not only women but men are entitled to request it when there is an emergency.

● Activities in this area:

- Active participation in the defense of emergency contraception as a form of birth control to be accessed in the public and private sectors
- Participation in the incorporation of levonorgestrel (oral emergency contraceptive) in the National List of Basic Medicine
- Ongoing advocacy for the removal of the prescription requirement to purchase emergency contraception



Demonstrate the reality of women in key aspects: their sexuality, their reproduction, as well as perceptions and experiences around gender-based violence through qualitative research

Fundación Desafío produces and disseminates information. We accomplish this through our expertise as a team of health professionals and thanks to our active commitment to the feminist movement.

We expose and uncover women's reality through their life testimonies. Fundación Desafío - through various, mainly qualitative investigations - builds knowledge concerning the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights of women and their relation around gender-based violence and / or other rights' violations such as the right to information, to sexual pleasure, and the benefits of scientific progress.

Some of these research documents contribute to expose the situation of gender-based violence in adolescent and youth populations and / or provides more details regarding the situation of unwanted pregnancies especially in situations of sexual violence.

Activities in this area:

- Ecuadorian Feminism and its contribution to the exercise of Sexual and Reproductive Rights.
- “Stolen Lives,” a study that demonstrates the impact of pregnancy resulting from rape in children under 14 years old.
- Freedom and Respect from the Beginning of a Person’s Life- Gender violence in the dating relationships of adolescents in the Metropolitan District of Quito and Francisco de Orellana.
- Between the Ally China and the Sumak Kawsay - Gender-based violence in Kichwa and Shuar women of the Orellana province.
- Diagnosis of the situation of the promotion, supply and demand for emergency contraception in Loja, Guayas, Guayas, Esmeraldas, and Chimborazo
- Social and cultural barriers in the promotion of access and use of male and female condoms in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca.

Advise and train on topics like sexual pleasure, use of contraception, emergency contraception and unwanted pregnancy, under the right to information and access to the benefits of scientific progress

Fundación Desafío argues that women have to deconstruct the concept that sexual pleasure only takes place through heterosexual sex that is phallus- centric depending on the body and genital sex demand from men. The re-appropriation of the female body to enjoy, revalue autoerotism and / or masturbation would certainly lead to knowledge about the world of pleasure and enjoyment, sexual freedom, and the female body without shame or fear. This, in turn, will generate recognition of women themselves, as sexual and erotic beings, capable of being autonomous in the world of sexuality.

This recognition and change of women's relationships with their bodies leads to benefits like access to updated scientific information regarding the use of contraception and emergency contraception - which within the constitutional framework of the right to information - will strengthen and deepen women's empowerment to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, related to other fundamental rights that ultimately create the right to a life free of violence, with dignity and quality.



Training and Raising Awareness on Human Rights, Gender-Based Violence, Sexual and Reproductive Rights Sexuality and Reproduction to women's organization, health-related associations, and the society in general

Fundación Desafío is a national leader in the development of training and issue awareness proposals related to sexuality and reproduction. A feature of this is the link between the national political situation with organized women and relevant sectors. On this point, Fundación Desafío supports local institutions and several organizations nationwide.

The expertise acquired during the development of printed and audiovisual materials leads to training sessions and processes that change the minds of their viewers.

● Activities in this area:

- Training with the national association of nursing schools -ASEDEFE in Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Gender-Based Violence
- Training to 11 medical schools in 11 provinces of Ecuador in sexual and reproductive rights as well as the legal and constitutional framework

- Training to the administrative and operational staff of the Quito Trolley, on Gender-Based Violence with emphasis on sexual violence and harassment in the public transportation system of the Municipality of Quito
- Training to the operating personnel of the Ministry of Public Health - MSP, in Quality of Care incorporating the gender and sexual and reproductive rights
- Nationwide training to operating staff of the mobile health units of the Ministry of Public Health, in sexual and reproductive rights, gender-based violence, the promotion and prevention in sexual and reproductive health services, and Medical Update on STI - HIV - AIDS diagnosis
- Training of grassroots organizations in 18 provinces of the Ecuadorian Women's Political Coordinator (CPME) in Values Clarification on issues related to the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights
- Training for the KichwaKallaryKausay women organization in human rights, gender-based violence, and the strengthening of the organization and its microenterprise crafts
- Training and awareness-raising on sexuality and reproduction to women's organizations and associations that work on women's health

**Promote partnerships at the national
and international levels with
institutions and / or individuals who
share our vision**

Fundación Desafío belongs to networks and partnerships that enhance the scope of their activities.

● **At the international level, we are members of:**

- Health Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women
- Latin American Consortium for Emergency Contraception (CLAE)
- Latin American Consortium against Unsafe Abortion (CLACAI)

● **At the national level, we belong to:**

- Coalition of Ecuadorian Women 's Rights
- Ecuadorian Front for the Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Rights
- Fundación Desafío is part of a Services Network of Sexual and Reproductive Health, which is present in 10 cities across the country. PACAIPA Network.

Where does Fundación Desafío work?

- **Fundación Desafío has consolidated its work on three levels:**
 - The women's movement at the local and national levels, including feminist NGOs
 - The health sector: doctors, nurses and midwives, including members of the academia
 - The public sector, including the National Assembly and related ministries

Broadcasting platforms and social networks

Fundación Desafío disseminates information about its work through its web page www.fundaciondesafio-org.ec in which it disseminates the most relevant information in regards to training materials, sexual and reproductive rights, and research.

Fundación Desafío has a Facebook account - <https://www.facebook.com/fundacion.desafio>. This is a dissemination space in which we upload feminist pieces and important information that comes from allied organizations, scientific publications, and/or academia.

We have a Twitter account: [@DesafioDerechos](https://twitter.com/DesafioDerechos). It is actively involved in political and public policy news and contributes to campaigns that defend sexual and reproductive rights.

Our first digital platform is the digital magazine called Desafiando. It is a thematic journal and its contents can be downloaded from the website.

Additionally, we have a youtube channel under the name of Fundación Desafío which is available to all people where they can find all of our audiovisual material.



Some results

- Fundación Desafío has played a critical role in defending the right of Ecuadorian women to access emergency oral contraception, therapeutic abortion, and receive the most updated information on the rights that are enshrined in the Constitution. This results in health regulations that put into practice the right to choose on sexuality and reproduction.
- As part of the Women's Movement, Fundación Desafío has managed to denounce the situation of rights violations through the development of Shadow Reports and Alternative Reports that have been presented before the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In this context, both the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women made recommendations to Ecuador to improve its policies and strategies for the effective exercise of sexual rights and reproductive women in Ecuador.
http://media.wix.com/ugd/273e4d_8109bbb4e95042f79388c7e102fb9600.pdf

Awards

- In 2006, Fundación Desafío was awarded with the "SHE CHANGES THE WORLD " prize by the Dutch Foundation MAMA CASH, in recognition of the work done in defense of Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Ecuadorian women.
- In 2005, Fundación Desafío received an acknowledgment by PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION OF AMERICA, for work done in contraceptive counseling.

Institutions that support us

- HIVOS <https://www.hivos.org/>
- PPGlobal <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/>
- FAU <http://www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co/>
- GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN
<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/start>
- MEDICUS MUNDI GUIPUZKOA
<http://www.medicusmundi.es/index.php/gipuzkoa>



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