



Venezuela Enacts Law on Violence Against Women

by **Paul Kivel**

On 16 March 2007, Venezuela enacted the **Organic Law on the Right of Women to Be Free from Violence**. The law aims at promoting and guaranteeing the right of women to a life free from violence and creating conditions for preventing, attending to, punishing, and eradicating violence of any kind against women. It provides for among others, the right to: a) life; b) protection of the dignity and physical, psychological, sexual, and legal integrity of victims; c) equality between men and women; d) protection of women who are particularly vulnerable to violence; and e) information and counseling for victims. The law defines violence as including, psychological violence, harassment, threats, domestic violence, sexual violence, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, violence in employment, sexual harassment; economic violence, violence to property, violence in the provision of obstetrical care, forced sterilization, exploitation and discrimination, violence committed in jail and institutions, and trafficking.

It also sets forth punishments for engaging in all of these forms of violence, including ignoring or delaying treatment in obstetrical emergencies, performing unnecessary caesarean sections, performing sterilizations without informed consent, denial of sexual rights, and failure to advise the victims of violence. It allows victims to bring civil suits against their perpetrators.

Further provisions of the law deal with the obligations of various public agencies and institutions, the creation of shelters, preventive measures, training, assistance to victims and persons bringing legal complaints, procedures to be followed when legal complaints are brought, and policies and programmes against violence committed against women. The law repeals the 1998 law on Violence against Women and the Family, whose provisions it greatly expands.

<http://www.tsj.gov.ve/gaceta/septiembre/170907/170907-38770-01.html>



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Venezuela Enacts Law on the Protection of Families and Parenthood

On 19 September 2007, Venezuela enacted the **Law for the Protection of Families and Parenthood**. The objective of the law is to establish measures for the integral protection of families, as well as to promote responsible practices in families and create means for preventing intrafamily conflicts and violence, while providing education on equality, tolerance, and mutual respect in the family and ensuring its members a dignified life and their full development. The law does the following, among other things: a) prohibits the dismissal of fathers from employment for one year after the birth of a child or the adoption of a child under the age of three; b) guarantees fathers 14 days of paid leave upon the birth of a child or adoption of a child under the age of three; c) obligates the State to promote and disseminate programmes on sexual and reproductive rights and duties and on sex education for children, adolescents, and adults, which include information on and access to family planning methods; d) obligates the State to provide assisted reproduction services as part of health care; e) obligates the State to promote programmes and activities to protect families from domestic violence; and f) obligates the State to provide families with nutritional, health, and housing programmes, among others.

These programmes are to be directed at families and individuals in vulnerable situations, including the poor, pregnant adolescents, families affected by domestic violence, the seriously ill, orphans, those with limited access to health care, and families in which the person primarily responsible for the family is ill or has died. The law is based on the principle of the equality of rights and duties of all family members.

<http://www.tsj.gov.ve/gaceta/septiembre/200907/200907-38773-02.html>

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