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Opinion – Sou Ciência: Human Rights in the pandemic – what we did

The rise in domestic violence during the pandemic has been alarming. According to data from the Brazilian Public Security Forum, reproduced on the Politize!, one in four women over the age of 16 (about 17 million people) suffered some form of violence or aggression in the first year of the pandemic (from May 2020 to May 2021); and Ligue 180 recorded a 36% increase in reports of cases of violence against women. According to DataFolha, in the same period, 51% of Brazilians reported having seen a woman suffer some type of violence in their neighborhood or community. Violence is associated with other consequences: almost half of the victims (47%) also lost their jobs and their family income decreased by 62%.

In addition to women, children, the LGBTQIAP+ community and more vulnerable populations (such as homeless, immigrants, unemployed, incarcerated and even the elderly) were also more exposed to situations of violence during the pandemic. Faced with this tragic scenario, the Federal Universities acted in the fight against domestic and gender violence, in the defense of human rights and in legal and judicial advice to victimized or at risk populations.

There were dozens of extension programs and projects, observatories, support centers and legal and psychological support that acted in the pandemic by providing free advice, welcoming and guiding the population. The assistance was almost always associated with teaching and research projects, allowing the recognition of the problem, the realization of mappings, the elaboration of booklets, the adoption of different communication strategies and the production of knowledge. Thus, students who worked on the topic, in interdisciplinary groups guided by professors, were able to act in solidarity and consider the problem in all its dimensions and possible actions.

See how our universities worked in all corners of Brazil:

In Acre, UFAC created the extension project “Education for Human Rights in the face of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Awareness Has Never Been So Essential”; in Minas Gerais, UFLA carried out the project “Niara – Empower to not silence”, which acted in the fight against gender violence, offering a support network, legal and psychological support to victims; in Brasília, UnB offered legal and psychological assistance to women victims of violence; in Bahia, UFBA monitored cases of domestic violence with tele-assistance guidance.

In Mato Grosso do Sul, UFMS provided free legal and judicial assistance to the population in situations of social vulnerability, through a partnership between the Legal Assistance Division (DAJ), the Center for Human Rights and LGBT Citizenship and the DH Clinic, which also offered psychosocial care and legal guidance to trans and transvestites and to populations living on the streets and in prison.

In Rio, UFRJ acted in the area of ??human rights and justice with 115 extension actions, aimed at groups in vulnerable situations such as children, adolescents, women, the elderly, traditional peoples, family farmers, workers in the popular and solidarity economy, quilombolas and people in a situation of incarceration.

In relation to the population with loss of income, for example, the Federal de Grande Dourados, in Mato Grosso do Sul, carried out a project focused on mapping the situation of labor law, with the elaboration of an informative booklet for the population and a distance course on the subject. the Covid-19 pandemic and labor law; UFMG created Citizenship Poles and produced, among other actions, a booklet for informal workers who needed to access emergency aid from the federal government. In Paraná, UFPR also provided assistance to access emergency aid, the “Good Food Card” and other programs, including welcoming immigrants; in São Paulo, Unifesp carried out actions related to human rights and citizen’s income, welcoming and guiding, in particular, the homeless population, trans people and immigrants.

In Minas, UFJF also implemented an outreach program aimed at the homeless population in Juiz de Fora and Governador Valadares, and expanded the actions of the Reference Center for the Promotion of LGBTQI+ Citizenship and the project “Revir – imprisoned women back to extramural life”. In Tocantins, UFT created a radio program to disseminate an educational campaign to combat violence against women.

Social isolation, loss of income and employment, eviction situations, school closures, among other factors, have increased inequalities and risks for the poorest. Our students were very involved in the extension and assistance actions in guaranteeing rights and the learning in these situations was enormous. Future professionals in Law, Social Service, Education, among other formations who acted in the fight against violence in the pandemic were undoubtedly sensitized and from these experiences the commitment to building a more just and solidary society is forged.

Do you want to know more about this topic and other actions by federal universities during the pandemic? Visit our Panel on the topic.

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