

CORE Model

Building Relationships

Preliminary findings on the reduction of gender-based violence committed by male offenders

July 2025



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The document "*CORE Model (Building Relationships): Preliminary findings on the reduction of gender-based violence committed by male offenders*" is the result of a collaborative effort by the teams at LAB-CO and Prosociedad. Its analysis and writing were made possible thanks to the active contributions of each team member.

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In Mexico, 7 out of 10 women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. In 25% of cases, the perpetrator has been a partner or a family member.

1. Executive summary

The CORE Model (Building Relationships)¹ is a contextual cognitive-behavioral therapy intervention designed for men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence (IPV). **Preliminary findings show an average 32% reduction in various forms of IPV, as measured through standardized assessment tools.**

Domestic violence remains a critical issue in Mexico and across Latin America. In Mexico, 7 out of 10 women report having experienced some form of violence at some point in their lives. In one out of every four cases, the perpetrator is a partner or family member. Within this context, the **CORE Model focuses on men who have a personal history of family violence.** Its key innovation lies in shifting the therapeutic focus: rather than seeking to explain why violence occurs, the program equips participants with practical tools to make better decisions and manage impulsivity in situations that could otherwise lead to aggression.

CORE is inspired by international models such as Achieving Change Through Values-Based Behavior (ACTV)—an evidence-based approach that has shown effectiveness in reducing violence in other countries but had not previously been implemented in Mexico. In 2024, with support from the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), **LAB-CO and Prosociedad began piloting the CORE Model** with male IPV perpetrators in Guadalajara, Jalisco, aiming to adapt the program and generate localized evidence.

¹ In Spanish, the program is called *Modelo CORE (Construyendo Relaciones)*, which translates to Building Relationships Model. The acronym CORE is derived from the Spanish name.

Initial data reflects meaningful changes among participants. **A 32% decrease in violent behavior toward partners was documented using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2)** across the first five implementation groups. Qualitative findings reinforce this trend, with participants expressing a high level of acceptance of the model and reporting **perceptible shifts in attitudes and behaviors related to gender-based violence**.

This preliminary evidence suggests that violent behavior can be transformed through an ethical, structured, and evidence-based intervention. Investing in models like CORE not only contributes to reducing IPV, but also supports the transformation of masculinities, strengthens family relationships, and helps prevent recidivism. **These findings underscore the potential of the CORE Model to become a sustainable strategy for addressing gender-based violence in Mexico.**

The CORE Model focuses on men who have perpetrated violence within the family context. Its innovation lies in helping participants learn practical tools to make better decisions, reducing their impulsivity in situations that could trigger new acts of aggression.

2. Overview of gender-based violence in the intimate partner context

2.1 Globally and regionally

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN Women, an estimated 81,100 women and girls were intentionally killed worldwide in 2021 alone, with 45,000 of those deaths perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member (UNODC, 2022). More recent data from UN Women indicates a worrying increase: **in 2023, 51,100 women and girls were killed globally by intimate partners or family members (UN, 2024).**

In Latin America, gender-based violence has emerged as a major public concern, often linked to high levels of inequality, discrimination, and broader patterns of violence. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 3,897 femicides were recorded in the region in 2023, with the **perpetrator being a partner in 8 out of 10 cases (ECLAC, 2024).**

2.2 In Mexico and Jalisco

In **Mexico**, according to the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (SESNSP), **797 femicides and 278,220 cases of family violence** were recorded nationwide between January and December 2024 (SESNSP, 2024). Data from the National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (ENDIREH) further highlights the scope of the problem: **7 out of 10 women –approximately 42 million women– report having experienced some form of violence in their lifetime.**

In the state of **Jalisco**, the situation mirrors the national crisis. According to data available as of December 2023, **reports of domestic violence have shown a steady rise in recent years**. In 2023 alone, 14,756 complaints were registered, a 7% increase compared to the 13,747 reported in 2022 (Igualdad Jalisco, 2024). Regarding violent deaths of women, 517 cases were recorded in the same year (Igualdad Jalisco, 2024).

In addition, according to the National Data and Information Bank on Cases of Violence Against Women (BANAVID), **in 2024, 230,951 cases of violence against women were reported in Jalisco**. In response, authorities issued 126,885 protection orders and provided 376,059 support services (BANAVID, 2025).



Photograph: CORE Model Graduation

The main objective of the CORE Model is to reduce the propensity for and exposure to situations that generate gender-based violence, focusing on the treatment of men who have perpetrated violence.

3. What is the CORE Model?

3.1 Background

In response to the problems described above, **various models for the prevention of violence against women** have been developed around the world, **most of which focus primarily on victims**. In contrast, interventions aimed at the perpetrators of violence have been developed and implemented to a lesser extent.

CORE is a therapeutic intervention designed to contribute to the eradication of violence against women by focusing on the men who perpetrate it. The model is aimed at men between the ages of 18 and 65 who have been perpetrators of domestic and/or intimate partner violence.

The program consists of **six modules delivered over 24 sessions**, although it can be adapted to as few as 16 or up to 36 sessions, depending on the characteristics and needs of **each group**, which are made up of up to **12 people**. The intervention is structured around three transversal pillars:

- a) Automaticity (behavioral skills and self-regulation);
- b) Identity and community (social context and personal values);
- c) Future projection (relationships and immediate decisions).

3.2 Model Design

The CORE Model **was developed in 2022** by the civil society organization **Prosociedad** in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, and has been **monitored and evaluated since 2024 by LAB-CO**, a civil society organization based in Mexico City. Its main objective is to **reduce the likelihood and intensity of situations that lead to gender-based violence** by decreasing reactive aggression, limiting **exposure to risk factors** for family or intimate partner violence, enhancing **self-regulation and decision-making skills**, and reducing **antisocial behavior** among individuals who have perpetrated violence.

CORE is grounded in a **cognitive-behavioral-contextual framework**, which seeks to understand behavior in relation to how individuals engage with their thoughts and emotions within specific social contexts. More specifically, CORE is based on the **Achieving Change Through Values-Based Behavior (ACTV)** approach—an innovative intervention model that, unlike traditional programs, focuses on **equipping men with practical tools** to reduce abusive and controlling behaviors, rather than attempting to uncover or explain the root causes of such violence.²



Photograph: CORE Model Session

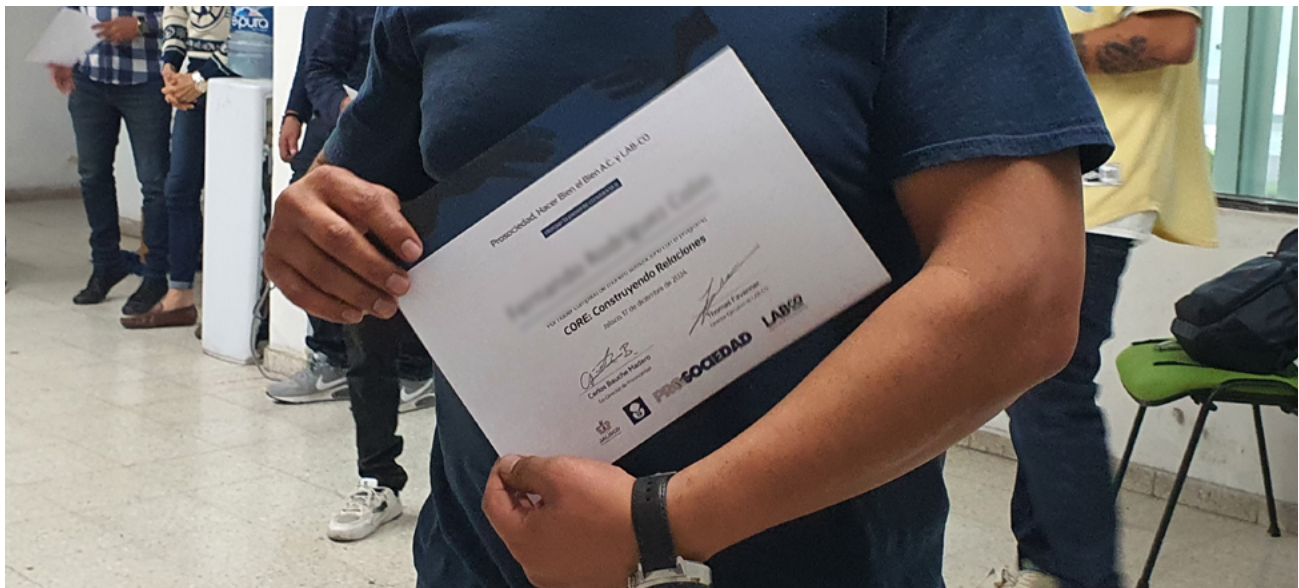
² ACTV is a relatively new treatment that is part of the vision of *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* (ACT) which, since its inception in 1980, focused on men convicted of domestic violence in Iowa, United States, and showed positive results from the reduction of recidivism. Since its emergence in 2010, ACTV has focused on behavior change based on reducing abusive and controlling behaviors of men, rather than trying to understand why a man becomes violent (Lawrence, Mazurek and Reardon, 2021).

CORE aims to develop solutions that address gender-based violence and to generate evidence based on the ACTV approach, which has not been implemented or studied in Latin America or Mexico.

In contrast to traditional Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs)—such as the Duluth Model, which emerged in the United States in the 1980s and is rooted in Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT)—protocols based on the ACTV approach, including CORE, aim to alter the function of harmful thought patterns and to increase tolerance for difficult emotions, impulses, and thoughts, acknowledging that these internal experiences do not need to dictate behavior (Lawrence, Mazurek & Reardon, 2021).

In Mexico, most existing efforts have focused on primary prevention of violence against women—that is, interventions implemented before violence occurs. However, very few initiatives address secondary or tertiary prevention, which respond to violence after it has been identified or once victimization has already taken place. As such, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of interventions designed for men who have already committed violence.

In this context, **CORE aims to generate solutions to the problem of gender-based violence once it has been detected that violence occurs (secondary prevention) or has already occurred (tertiary prevention) based on the ACTV approach, the effects of which have not been studied in Latin America or Mexico.** Analyzing the scope of the ACTV approach in contexts different from the one in which it was initially developed, i.e., in low and middle-income countries observed in the Latin American and Caribbean region, is extremely promising.



Photograph: CORE Model Graduation Diploma

4. How evidence was generated: the CORE Model process

4.1 Implementation

Since 2022, CORE has had **two iterations**, the first was self-funded by the organization that designed it, **Prosociedad**, while the second, in partnership with **LAB-CO** and through the support of the **Sexual Violence Research Initiative**, the team has reached 53 men who have completed treatment, while 43 more are still in the process.

Although CORE already had previous elements to implement the Model before starting the groups for the second iteration, the Implementation Manual and the Modular Protocol were refined through a seminar provided by Dr. Milagros Ascencio. With these two documents fully developed, the implementation team could start **the sessions in a structured manner in August 2024.**

4.2 Inter-institutional linkage

To form the intervention groups, the implementation team established collaborative agreements with two key institutions: the **General Directorate for Crime Prevention of the Jalisco State Security Secretariat (DGPD)** and the **State Unit for the Supervision of Precautionary Measures and Conditional Suspension of Proceedings (UEMECA)**. These entities have served as the primary referral channels for male participants.

CORE is implemented thanks to the partnership between LAB-CO and Prosociedad, in collaboration with the General Directorate for Crime Prevention of the Jalisco State Security Secretariat, the State Unit for Supervision of Precautionary Measures and Conditional Suspension of Proceedings, and with the support of the Sexual Violence Research Initiative.

Participants identified positive changes in their ways of thinking, managing emotions, and acting in conflict situations.

The program has been implemented in two time slots (4–6 PM and 6–8 PM) on Tuesdays and Thursdays at two locations. The implementation team includes: one therapist, one mentor, a field coordinator, a technical coordinator, three monitoring and evaluation specialists, three researchers focused on theoretical and technical analysis, and two academic advisors.

4.3 Measuring instruments

To evaluate outcomes quantitatively, the team applied **standardized instruments** that capture various dimensions of participant behavior.³ The **Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2)** served as the **primary tool for measuring changes** in violent behavior toward women, and its results are presented in this document.

For qualitative data, and in collaboration with Dr. Edith Carrillo, the team developed a comprehensive methodological approach to assess both the acceptability of the CORE Model and the self-perceived changes among participants throughout the intervention.



Photograph: CORE Model Graduation

³ Gender-Based Violence Attitude Scale, the Cognitive Flexibility Scale, the DERS-EAM Emotional Regulation Scale, the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II) and the Gender-Based Violence Situational Risk Assessment, the latter was a tool designed by Prosociedad in 2024, based on the situational action theory literature.

The CTS-2 Scale measures how individuals handle conflicts in their intimate relationships, including the use of physical, psychological, or sexual violence. The pre-post difference analysis reveals a 32.16% decrease following the implementation of the CORE Model.

This qualitative study was designed to explore how participants experienced the model and interpreted their own behavioral transformations. The methodology included in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted at three key moments: early in the program (second session), mid-way through, and at its conclusion. In total, seven in-depth interviews and two focus groups (with six participants each) were conducted and systematically analyzed.

5. Quantitative findings

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2) measures how individuals manage conflict in intimate relationships, including the **use of physical, psychological, and sexual violence**. An analysis comparing pre- and post-intervention scores shows an average **reduction of 32.16% in violent behavior**. This figure reflects both a decrease in the incidence of violent conflict among participants and a notable reduction in physical and psychological aggression. Among the 53 men who completed the program, **significant improvements were observed in 35 participants (66%)**.

The findings indicate a reduction in physical and psychological violence, as well as fewer verbal conflicts and less discomfort in social situations involving their partners. **Participants also demonstrated greater emotional regulation, including improved tolerance of uncomfortable feelings and difficult situations without resorting to avoidance**—skills that are essential for forming and maintaining healthy interpersonal attachments.

Encouraging signs of progress were also identified in more complex behavioral domains, such as a reduction in coercive control and severe physical aggression. These results highlight not only the transformative potential of the CORE Model, but also the capacity for change in men who have committed intimate partner violence. **The intervention offers them practical, evidence-based tools to build more respectful, responsible, and sustainable relationships.**⁴

⁴Resultados significativos: violencia física ($r=0.607$, $p=0.001$), violencia psicológica ($r=0.435$, $p=0.009$), conflictos verbales ($r=0.390$, $p=0.027$), incomodidad ante interacciones sociales de la pareja ($r=0.519$, $p=0.018$), flexibilidad cognitiva ($r=0.475$, $p=0.001$), aceptación emocional ($r=0.374$, $p=0.015$). Tendencias con efectos medio-altos: daño físico severo ($r=0.342$, $p=0.071$).

The participants showed a strong commitment to attending the CORE Model sessions.

6. Qualitative findings

In contrast, others were open to reflection from the beginning. In terms of **acceptability**, the degree to which participants perceive an intervention as appropriate based on their expectations, beliefs, and emotional responses during and after the process, the qualitative findings provide valuable insights into how the CORE Model was experienced by its users.

At the **beginning of the intervention**, some participants expressed **negative attitudes**, largely shaped by **previous encounters with the justice system**, while others were **more open to self-reflection** from the outset. However, by the **midpoint of the program**, most participants demonstrated a **shift in attitude**, reporting a **better understanding of the model** and increased engagement with its content.

Although several participants initially noted **challenges related to time commitment, transportation costs, and adjustments to work routines**, many reported that, as the sessions progressed, they **found ways to adapt**. Some even began to **enjoy their participation** and recognize its personal value.

Additionally, participants frequently cited the **support or encouragement of family and friends** as a motivating factor for fully engaging with the intervention. This underscores the **potential of the CORE Model not only to influence individual behavior, but also to positively impact broader social dynamics** surrounding the participants.

"I felt good, because since when did I want to be in a place like this. Yes, because I have behavioral problems, I am very explosive, that is, I am a quiet person, I do not like to get into trouble with anyone or have problems, because when I have to react, I lock myself up, I do not know what might happen..."

As for the **causes of absenteeism**, participants showed a **strong commitment to attend CORE sessions**, motivated mainly by the desire to avoid legal problems and close their court case. They did not contemplate dropping out of the process and stressed the importance of punctuality.

"Well, if you miss the weeks you must complete, and if your talks are going well, you will be notified.... You must take it (the session you missed), but you will miss your deadline for finishing. As they said, they report, but we can have repercussions, because it will take longer to finish the process."

Finally, regarding **self-perceived changes**, the findings showed that participants identified changes in their thinking, managing emotions, and acting in conflict situations after five or six sessions in CORE. In general, there was a deepening of their conceptions of gender-based violence; learning to identify and control emotions that could lead them to lose control and developing strategies to resolve arguments without resorting to violence. The usefulness of the program's dynamics and tools to improve their behavior and how they relate to friends, family, and co-workers was highlighted.

"Well, yes, yes, I knew the word (violence), but no, I was not so, so, let us say, so, so into the word of violence. Because, let us say it, violence... is extensive... as an example, before, for me violence was just aggression, right, hitting, something like that, right, but being in the talks and everything, violence comes from the way they look at you, that they do not respect you, well, many things encompass all that..."

7. What's next for the CORE Model?

The CORE Model can be consolidated as a sustainable and replicable option for addressing gender-based violence in intimate partner contexts in Mexico and Latin America.

Preliminary evidence from the implementation of the CORE Model suggests that it is indeed possible to transform violent behavior through an ethical, structured, and evidence-based intervention. The results observed so far show that participants begin to **recognize their behavioral patterns** and develop **concrete tools** to manage their emotions, identify high-risk situations, and respond in nonviolent ways.

Investing in models like CORE contributes **not only to the reduction of intimate partner violence, but also to the transformation of masculinities, the strengthening of family relationships, and a significant decrease in recidivism.** The program offers men a safe, structured space to question deeply ingrained beliefs and behaviors, while fostering self-care, emotional regulation, and co-responsibility.

These preliminary findings reinforce **the potential of the CORE Model to consolidate itself as a sustainable and replicable option in the treatment of gender-based violence in intimate partner contexts in Mexico.** Its comprehensive approach positions it as a valuable tool for public policies in tertiary prevention, restorative justice, and community mental health. As evidence of its impact strengthens, the CORE Model could be scaled up and integrated as a key strategy in violence care systems, contributing to a more effective and transformative response.

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