

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Glasgow
Unit of Assessment: C21 – Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: Documenting, understanding and addressing gender violence in El Salvador
1. Summary of the impact

A high-profile campaign documenting the influence of public perceptions of gender-based violence in El Salvador led to greater public awareness, demands for change and new national legislation. Research for Oxfam America by Dr Mo Hume played a key role in driving the campaign, *Una Vida Diferente*, which was organised by a broad-based coalition of international and national NGOs and state organisations.

2. Underpinning research

El Salvador drew the attention of the world in the 1980s for its brutal civil war. Since the signing of the UN-brokered peace accords in 1992, one of the most notable characteristics of Salvadoran society has been continued high levels of violence, demonstrating one of the highest murder rates in the world. The ‘paradox’ of El Salvador’s peace is that it has yielded more violent deaths than the civil war. How to understand these high levels of violence alongside processes to build peace and democracy has emerged as a key concern for both scholars and policy makers. International organisations, such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, UN agencies and NGOs are primarily concerned with its impact on development and have commissioned research on the impact of violence on political and economic processes to feed into policy. For scholars in Latin American politics, understanding these contradictory processes provides a fascinating, if troubling, area for research.

Staff at Oxfam America in Boston approached Dr Mo Hume (Senior Lecturer, Politics, 2005-present) to carry out research on local perceptions of gender violence in two municipalities. Hume’s research was based on four field trips to El Salvador between 2007-2008 and provided a baseline for Oxfam’s Campaign to End Gender Violence as well as setting up a system to monitor and evaluate the campaign. Each case provided in-depth analysis of women’s knowledge, perceptions and experiences with gender based violence, as well as a critical evaluation of the available statistics and background on the two localities. This research formed the basis of a refereed journal article (Hume 2008) and a research monograph published by Wiley Blackwell (Hume 2009a).

Building on recent debates in international development on the necessity of evidence based policy making and the importance of qualitative indicators, Hume facilitated a process with local stakeholders to identify how they would measure positive change in terms of prevention of gender based violence. Key areas identified by the research were the need to strengthen the leadership of local women activists; assess the degree of credibility in state institutions; establish credible legal mechanisms; and improve the quality of statistical data to allow effective measurement of gender violence over time.

In June 2008, Hume was invited to present initial research findings to the women parliamentarians in the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador. The passing of a new integrated law on gender violence was facilitated by a change in government in 2009 which was more open to civil society organisations. In the context of the new law, Hume was invited to carry out further research in 2011 to assess change since 2008.

3. References to the research

- Hume, Mo (2009a) *The Politics of Violence: Gender, Conflict and Community in El Salvador*. Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, UK. ISBN 9781405192262 [REF 2]

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- Hume, Mo (2009b) Researching the gendered silences of violence in El Salvador. *IDS Bulletin*, 40 (3). pp. 78-85. ISSN 0265-5012 ([doi:10.1111/j.1759-5436.2009.00042.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2009.00042.x)) [*IDS Bulletin* publishes intellectually rigorous articles on development issues presented in an accessible manner, and has become a leading journal in its field through engaged scholarship between academic and policy communities].
- Hume, M. (2008) The myths of violence: gender, conflict, and community in El Salvador. *Latin American Perspectives*, 35 (5). pp. 59-76. ISSN 0094-582X ([doi:10.1177/0094582X08321957](https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X08321957)). [*Latin American Perspectives*, peer-reviewed and published bi-monthly, is a theoretical and scholarly journal for discussion and debate on the political economy of capitalism, imperialism and socialism in the Americas.]

4. Details of the impact

University of Glasgow research contributed to a campaign against gender violence in El Salvador that was driven by civil society organisations, gained widespread popular support and ultimately helped to create the momentum that led to a change in the law. Dr Mo Hume conducted case studies, collecting qualitative evidence of violence against women which was utilised by Oxfam America and a coalition of Salvadoran NGOs in their campaign [*Una Vida Diferente*](#) (A Different Life).

In 2008 Oxfam America published an internal report on Hume's fieldwork which detailed the evidence-based findings of women's perceptions of and responses to gendered violence in San Marcos and Ahuachapan. This report directly informed the *Una Vida Diferente* campaign, by confirming (and exploring in depth) initial indications that public perceptions were a significant contributing factor in the problem of gender violence (a 2005 survey by Salvadoran NGO CS Sondea had shown that 83% of people did not consider rape a crime and 56.4% considered it normal behaviour for a man to strike a woman).

Oxfam America, together with Salvadoran NGOs and the Human Rights Institute of Central American University working in a coalition called Campaign to End Gender Violence (Campaña de Prevención de la Violencia de Género – CPVG), launched the *Una Vida Diferente: A Different Life* campaign, to raise awareness, mobilise public opinion and drive changes to both practice and legislation. *Una Vida Diferente* recognised the importance of preventing gender-based violence through advocacy, leadership programmes and working with men to try and influence cultural factors and concepts of masculinity. As part of this wider campaign, Hume assisted in disseminating evidence from her study to a wider audience, presenting her research findings to women parliamentarians in 2008, focusing on the stories of women who had lived in a climate of fear and violence, and highlighting the importance of improved legislation on this issue. The female parliamentarians participated in a certificate course on gender violence as part of the CPVG, and later played an important role in drafting the new legislation.

Hume's second field study in 2011 (report published by Oxfam America in 2012) assessed the impact of the campaign for Oxfam and allowed the organisation to measure the success of their initiative and focus efforts on the methods shown to be successful. Key achievements of the CPVG include:

- development and approval of the Protocol for the Application of the Domestic Violence Law, allowing it to be more consistently enforced.
- development of the draft bill that ultimately resulted in the Special Integrated Law for a Life Free from Violence for Women. This was a major policy victory for the women's movement in El Salvador.
- Ministry of Education's adoption of school-based violence prevention as a priority and inclusion in curriculum of content on gender based violence.
- establishment of specific standards and procedures for dealing with teachers accused of violence or sexual harassment under the Reform of the Law Teaching Profession. This had not

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existed previously in El Salvador and there was no disciplinary mechanism available to schools to dismiss teachers who had been found guilty of sexual harassment.

Oxfam America's Research and Evaluation Advisor says "Campaign stakeholders still speak very fondly of [Hume's] research and work with [Oxfam] on indicators; it was truly of great value to partners and field staff." Due in part to the *Una Vida Diferente* campaign, the Salvadoran government passed the Special Integral Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women on 25 November 2010. This law addresses El Salvador's record of femicide, which in 2006 was 13 times higher than that in the United States, by introducing a penalty of 30-50 years' imprisonment for femicide, and fines and jail sentences for pornography and psychological abuse. The law came into effect 1 January 2012. Hume's research had shown that many Salvadoran women did not report domestic violence due to the paternalistic reaction from police and other officials, which often meant that a woman would be sent home to suffer further abuse from a husband outraged that she had complained. The new law enforces the role of the police and other officials in protecting women's rights in all cases of domestic or gender violence. Hume's follow-up fieldwork from 2011 demonstrated that local service providers who had been working with the campaign demonstrated greater effectiveness in detecting and following up cases of gender violence and highlighted important developments in local women's advocacy strategies whereby women have formed 'Citizen Windows' to provide support for survivors of violence and to hold state institutions to account.

As a result of Hume's work with Oxfam and her ongoing research into gender violence in Central America, she has been asked to act as an expert witness in Canada and the United States for political asylum cases where people have escaped gender or gang violence in El Salvador. Hume contributed expert witness evidence (both written and oral) to over 10 cases since 2007. The attorney of one such political asylum case in the United States stated:

We are extremely grateful for your assistance on our recent asylum case, concerning an imputed LGBT and gender-related violence claim out of El Salvador. Your research and expert affidavit was very on point to our client's case and the fears he faced if returned to El Salvador. It was absolutely essential to corroborating his claims before the court. Your research and analysis...provided the necessary context through country conditions and addressed the validity of his unique situation - both the past horrors he had suffered and the future fears he faced if returned.

In January 2008, Hume was an invited speaker at a roundtable workshop at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on violence in Latin America. In May 2012, she was invited to speak on 'Social Peace: Poverty, Social Inclusion and Security: the Ongoing Challenges' at a discussion panel hosted by the Salvadoran Embassy in London. The purpose of the event was to inform the public of the achievements in El Salvador since the 1992 peace accords, an aim that the Ambassador stated '*would not have been possible without your (Hume's) participation*'.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- Supporting email from Research and Evaluation Advisor, Oxfam America (contact details provided), confirming importance of research in gender violence campaign
- Oxfam America coverage of the gender violence legislation (15 December 2010) ([link](#)) and campaign (August 2010) ([link](#))
- Hume, Mo (2011) *Salí de esa cueva donde yo estaba, he salido a la claridad y a la realidad: a qualitative assessment of the Campaign to Prevent Gender Violence*. Project Report. Oxfam America, Boston. (Unpublished) [available from HEI]
- Hume, Mo (2008) *Cambios en las percepciones de las mujeres sobre la violencia de género en Ahuachapan y San Marcos*. Project Report. Oxfam America, Boston. (Unpublished) [available from HEI]
- Supporting email from US-based immigration attorney (available from HEI), confirming importance of research expertise in advising on asylum case with gender violence aspect
- Letter from Salvadoran ambassador to the UK (available from HEI), confirming value of Hume's research-based expertise

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Case study ID	C21_03
Title	Documenting, understanding and addressing gender violence in El Salvador
Requires redaction	Not redacted
Conflicted Panel Members	NA
Cross referral UoA	NA
People to contact	
People who have provided statements	<p>Jenny Wyeth (Attorney) Immigrants First 9117 Church St. Manassas, VA, 94117 Corroboration of the value of Hume's expertise in political asylum cases</p> <p>Allison Davis, Research and Evaluation Advisor, Oxfam America Boston, MA adavis@oxfamamerica.org Confirming value of research to gender violence campaign</p> <p>Werner Matias Romero Salvadorian Ambassador to the UK 8 Dorset Square London NW1 6PU (020)72249800 (on Sharepoint) Value of Hume insights on violence in ES</p>