



Experience sheet

WORKSHOP

for the SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Adolescents and young people as key agents of social change



A theatre performance by young people supported by IPTK

Background

The situation of violence against women in the Plurinational State of Bolivia is extremely alarming. Data shows that **7 out of 10 women** have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. Each year, between **80 and 90 femicides** are recorded, representing one of the highest rates in Latin America. Within the justice system, nearly **60% of reported offences** are related to violence against women, particularly domestic violence. In most cases, these **do not lead to a conviction**, mainly due to complaints being withdrawn or abandoned. This reality compels us to consider **structural alternatives** to address and challenge patriarchal violence.

In this context, given that **more than 30% of Bolivia's population** is made up of adolescents and young people—a group with significant influence on social dynamics in the country—and that they are at a

crucial stage in life, where personality, values, and the concepts that shape their integration into society are being formed, this group represents a **strategic audience** for efforts to dismantle the patriarchal system. This involves challenging the social and cultural norms that sustain machismo, violence, and patriarchy.

Art has proven to be an effective medium for reflecting on, confronting, and questioning issues that are culturally normalised yet harmful to healthy coexistence. For this reason, IPTK chose to use **art as a tool for social transformation**, as it offers approaches that can be adapted to the specific characteristics of this developing group. In particular, it:

- enables young people to explore their own realities through their interests and begin to question them.
- makes learning more engaging through hands-on, practical activities
- helps them express feelings and emotions connected to their lived experiences by working with their hands
- creates a space where they can express themselves freely and share their views without fear of judgement or criticism



Dance performance by girls supported by IPTK

Through these activities, a range of themes have been explored, including challenging the social norms that sustain the dominant system, questioning hegemonic masculinity in order to promote more equal and less violent forms of masculinity, fostering intergenerational dialogue, and strengthening the role of adolescents and young people as **agents of social change**.

IPTK has worked across **five artistic areas**, including:

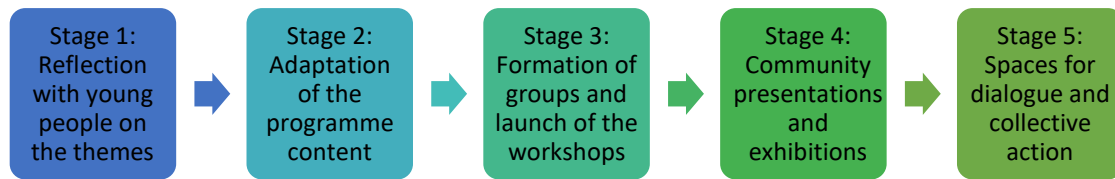
- critical literature
- drawing and painting
- classical and folk dance
- theatre and puppetry
- communication and radio

The young people who take part in these workshops are beneficiaries of the CERPI (Comprehensive Educational Resource Centres) in the urban area of Sucre as well as in other rural municipalities. They are free to choose the artistic disciplines that interest them, and the groups are mixed, bringing together both girls and boys.



Painting workshop at a CERPI centre

In terms of the methodology used in artistic activities with young people, a practical, constructivist approach grounded in the principles of emancipatory pedagogy is adopted. Depending on the nature of the topics addressed, the process is structured around **five main stages**:



- **Stage 1:** With the support of professionals, the themes are explored together with facilitators specialised in the different artistic disciplines—that is, educators trained in these issues. Individual reflection is also encouraged on how cultural practices and norms directly affect adolescents, with the aim of fostering their full engagement with the topic.
- **Stage 2:** Facilitators adapt the pedagogical content of each artistic discipline to the selected theme.
- **Stage 3:** Target groups are identified and formed. In most cases, children and adolescents choose the type of art they wish to pursue. Participants are generally divided into two mixed-age groups: one aged 10 to 13, and another aged 14 to 18. The workshops then begin.

As technical and specialised skills in each artistic discipline are developed, participants also reflect on the chosen theme and shape their creative work accordingly—for example, by developing a script in theatre, selecting themes in dance, or defining a style in critical writing.

A recent example illustrates this process: one of the key themes addressed was the transformation of hegemonic masculinity. Participants in the theatre workshop chose to explore the idea of “fragile masculinity” and created a play entitled *“Breaking the Silence Saves Lives.”* The piece questioned how society often suppresses boys’ emotional expression, particularly during adolescence, which can lead to depression and peer violence. This theme was chosen in response to the high rate of adolescent suicide in Bolivia—around 90% of cases involve boys. The aim was to encourage peers to reflect on the importance of expressing emotions freely, and to engage parents in recognising the need for supportive, non-judgemental guidance.

The entire creative process is geared towards producing a final performance or output that can be shared with a wider audience.

- **Stage 4:** This stage involves presenting or exhibiting the work to peers, adults, or the wider community. For example, in a recent drawing and painting workshop, participants explored the theme of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). They created artworks expressing their perspectives on sexuality, including pieces addressing sexual violence—particularly against children and adolescents—as well as the confusion some experience around identity and sexual orientation. A mural was also created to raise awareness about the importance of menstrual health.
- **Stage 5:** A space for dialogue is then created around the theme, concluding with the identification of specific actions to be taken both individually and collectively. For instance, following the theatre performance, adolescents engaged parents in discussion, asking questions and sharing their perspectives on the play. This opened up conversations on how

parents can better support their children—helping them grow up with greater confidence, less violence, and more inclusive understandings of masculinity, while challenging patriarchal and machista norms.

Although these stages are relatively simple, they have proven **highly effective** in addressing complex issues such as violence, human trafficking, hegemonic masculinity, comprehensive sexuality education, and other sensitive topics, making them more accessible for this specific group.

It is also worth highlighting that, within these spaces for reflection, **adolescents and young people take the lead in expressing their perspectives**. In doing so, they position themselves as key actors in driving social change, moving away from adult-centred approaches, where adults take on a purely facilitative role within the artistic creation process.

Link to the article: [Adolescents and young people as key agents of social change - El taller de transformación social](#)

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