

NGO FUNDING

Just 23 percent of Spaniards die having prepared a will, and hardly any leave anything from their estate to an NGO. Following the example of charities in other countries, several Spanish NGOs are encouraging people to leave a lasting legacy. Meanwhile, the plot thickens over allegedly corrupt charities that have aroused the suspicion of authorities and donors alike.

The will to help others live

Belén Cebrián looks at the charitable options when deciding the destination of your estate

Spain's leading charities are asking the country a simple question: "Would you make a will to leave a better world behind?" The thought-provoking question is part of new campaign jointly organized by seven of Spain's leading charities: Aldeas Infantiles, Unicef, Médicos del Mundo, Intermon/Oxfam, WWF/Adena, Plan-España, and Amnesty International. Its aim is to get people to think about preparing a will, and leaving behind some of their worldly possessions to an NGO when they die.

"Spain is a modern and mature society able to adapt to change. We think that the idea will take root," predicts Juan Carlos del Olmo, general secretary of WWF/Adena.

The challenge Spanish NGOs face is considerable. First up, they need to get people to face up to the subject of their own mortality—a subject still taboo here. Secondly, they need to persuade them to leave money to a charity in their will. But most important of all, they need to inform the public of the need for a will in the first place. According to a study by Daryl Upsall Consulting International, which has considerable experience of supporting the fundraising activities of NGOs in the United Kingdom, just 23 percent of Spaniards die having made a will. Of the 800 people the company surveyed throughout the Spain, not one person had even considered leaving anything behind to an NGO.

But in other parts of the world, NGOs have long derived a significant part of their income



A demonstration by NGO Amnesty International, a popular choice for those who decide to leave some of their estate to charity. / JOAN SANCHEZ

thanks to a more common-sense approach to the realities of death. In the United States, for example, seven percent of the

funds raised by charities already derive from inheritances. In Canada, the figure is four percent. And in the United Kingdom,

one in seven people choose to leave something to an NGO in their will, making up 33 percent of charitable income—a figure

close to €2 billion, according to Daryl Upsall.

A visit to the notary to prepare your will is a rational act,

and should not—as it seems to at the moment—instill fear in most Spaniards, says Andrés Krakenberger. He is an active member of Amnesty International, and was president of the Spanish branch between 1997 and 2001. For him, leaving money to an NGO is simply another way of continuing his activities while alive.

"In the same way that when we buy a house we register the property by filling in forms, people need to understand that it is important to think about preparing a last will and testament before they die," says Francisco Cuadrado, head of sales and funding at Unicef. "What we are doing with this campaign is simply planting ideas in people's minds, and suggesting that preparing a will is a sensible idea," he concludes.

The €25,000 jointly funded campaign directs people to a website (www.legadosolidario.org) and a public information line (902 010 609).

Daryl Upsall is behind the initiative in Spain, and originally approached some 20 charities, of which just seven agreed to take part. It says that the aim of the campaign is simple: to make people aware of the need to arrange a will, inform them of how to do so, and tell them that part of their inheritance can be left to a charity without prejudicing or infringing the rights of other family members. Around 50 percent of those surveyed by the compa-

in the campaign do occasionally receive money or property from wills. One well-known and very visible example is a palace in Seville that is now Unicef's headquarters in the city. The UN children's organization says that it received around €1 million in donations that had been bequeathed to them. But most charities say that inheritances make up a tiny amount of the money they receive from the living.

Daryl Upsall says that his research shows that 20 percent of those it questioned who had prepared a will would be willing to change it to include an amount destined to a charity—the sums involved need not be huge, as any amount can help. Aldeas Infantiles, for example, points out that €3,000 is enough to meet the needs of a child in a village in rural Latin America. A further €840 would allow Intermon/Oxfam to run four mobile health clinics that can care for 7,200 people in the Indian region of Pune.

According to Daryl Upsall's survey, which was carried out last winter, Spaniards lag behind their European cousins when it comes to preparing a will—regardless of their age or income. In short, they are still very reluctant to face up to the taboo subject of death, and put off making a will until it is too late. So, which Spaniards are best informed about wills, and most inclined to leave something to an NGO when they die?

The survey took its sample from throughout the country with the exception of the North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. In total, 800 people aged between 30 and 75 were questioned, of whom 42 percent were middle-class and 37 percent lower or lower-middle class.

The results showed that widowers were most aware over the need to make a will. Some 42 percent of men whose wives had died had already prepared theirs, compared to 26 percent of married men. Among the single, just three percent had prepared a will.

The results show that a visit to the notary is way down on the list of most Spaniards' priorities—just under 23 percent of those surveyed had prepared a will. Some 618 respondents didn't have a will, and of those, 471 had no intention of making one in the next 18 months. Those that didn't know or wouldn't answer numbered 105, while just 42 said that they thought making a will now was a good idea, the majority of whom were aged between 50 and 64. Around 20 percent of those surveyed who said that they had already prepared a will said they were prepared to change it now that they knew they could leave money to an NGO.

If the survey's results can be applied to Spaniards in general, then NGOs will not be seeing a significant increase in contributions in the near future via this method. Of those surveyed that had still not prepared their last will and testament, a whopping 77 percent said that if and when they prepared one, they would not leave anything to either an NGO or the Church. Only two percent said that they would leave something to either. Just eight percent said that they would leave money to a charity, while one percent said that they would give part of their inheritance to the Church.

The NGO's job is to inform the public of the need to make a will in the first place

Of those surveyed, over half had no intention of making a will in the next 18 months

ny last year were unaware of how the law regarding inheritances works.

The awareness campaign's organizers have highlighted the need to assure people that their will respects the rights of their legitimate heirs. This issue is particularly important in a country such as Spain, where the law states that if the deceased has children, one third of their inheritance must be distributed equally among them. Another third is distributed, although not necessarily in equal parts, among children and other family members, while a final third can be left to non-family members and organizations.

"We don't want to tell anybody what they should or shouldn't do, and we aren't trying to win them over to our ideas. Our aim is simply to let people know that it is a good idea to make a will, and that an inheritance is a popular way to continue contributing to a cause they might believe in," says Macarena Céspedes, head of communication at charity Plan-España. "We also want people to know that leaving an inheritance is compatible with family interests and obligations," she says.

And in fact, despite the low figures suggested by the survey, some of the charities taking part

Setting an example

EL PAÍS spoke to several Spaniards who have taken the decision to leave money or property to an NGO in their will.

Actress María Galiana is the mother of five children, and has chosen to leave part of her estate to Médicos del Mundo.

"My family lives according to the principles of solidarity—it didn't even cross mine or my husband's minds that our children would question my decision," she says. "I don't think that material things are important."

Despite having previously donated her wedding ring to the Church, she says that she has chosen the health charity Médicos del Mundo for her will "because it is a transparent and serious organization, and is independent of gov-

ernments. I don't like the Church as an institution."

Civil servant Fernando Gómez (not his real surname) says that when his mother died recently, his life changed. The 34-year-old's father had already died in a work-related accident, and he lost his mother soon after she was diagnosed with cancer. He was left with a mortgage and few assets. "I realized that you can go very quickly, and that you have to organize things," he says. The small amount of money he inherited from his mother will go to Amnesty International.

Fernando, who is a volunteer worker with the Red Cross and already contributes to Doctors Without Borders and Greenpeace, chose the NGO "as a dedication to my mother" because of its work

with women. He describes the amount he will leave the organization as "symbolic." His wife and children do not know about his decision, but says that they would support it. "It is a way to continue to help others, even after you are gone," he says.

At 75, and with no children, Juan Antonio Rojo says that he has "more than enough money," and will be leaving his house to the charity Aldeas Infantiles. He says that he was deeply impressed by the organization's work with children in rural Latin America. The pensioner has 11 nephews and nieces, and says that some of them are not happy with his decision. "But I don't care, they are all better off than I am. It makes me wonder what more they want."



The actress María Galiana. / J. ROJAS

Teresa Barbero is one of three sisters, none of whom have any children. All three of them have made a will that benefits the others, as well as leaving a proportion of their

estate to a charity. Teresa says that she will probably choose Unicef, "because it is non-religious and solid—although there is a political aspect to it that I don't really like. The

54-year-old is already a member of the Red Cross and Aldeas Infantiles. She says that her parents were always prepared to help people, often putting up strangers in the house. "Leaving something behind is a vital part of my life," she says.

Former President of Amnesty International Spain Andrés Krakenberger has no children, but says that even if he did, he would have left the third of his worldly goods that the law allows for to Amnesty International. He has not told his nephews of his decision, but is sure that when they learn of it, they will be more than happy. They shouldn't be surprised—aside from the work he has done with Amnesty International since 1982, he is also a member of Aldeas Infantiles, the Association of Cystic Fibrosis sufferers, and is an organ donor.