

Feminist Futures Free from Violence



February 2024

Introduction

The Feminist Futures Free from Violence (FFFV) project funded by Global Affairs Canada is a three-year, comprehensive and ambitious approach to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Latin America.

It is coordinated by Fòs Feminista in collaboration with global partner Equimundo and implemented by Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir/México (CDD), Red Nacional de Refugios (RNR) and Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional de Femicidio (OCNF) in Mexico, the Centro Ecuatoriano para la Promoción y Acción de la Mujer (CEPAM – Guayaquil) in Ecuador and the Centro Paraguayo de Estudios de Población (CEPEP) in Paraguay, with the objective to incorporate a comprehensive approach to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Latin America, with a regional focus (Ecuador, Mexico, and Paraguay).

The target population is women, girls, and

people with other gender identities, with an emphasis on reaching young people and poor and marginalized groups, as well as an innovative component focused on the positive participation of men. The use of participatory feminist methodologies, South-South exchanges, and gender-transformative, intersectional, and human rights-based approaches in all phases of project design, implementation, and evaluation will be critical to its success.

The reach of FFFV is both broad and deep. Partners will reach over 890,000 direct beneficiaries and more than 2.6 million indirect beneficiaries through grassroots networks, community leaders, clinics, and schools, while also closely collaborating with

public decision makers, activist networks, civil society groups, and opinion leaders with the capacity to enable wide-reaching change at the national level. At the same time, Fòs Feminista's international alliance will allow this project to have an impact beyond the focus countries through regional advocacy, communications, and alliance-building strategies, combined with the possibility of knowledge transfer and replication by their 170 partners and allies in over 40 countries around the world.

This publication summarizes some of the impacts achieved and challenging contexts that the local partners are facing while advocating and promoting gender equality across all areas of this intervention.

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Summary of context

Over the year 2023, Latin America has gone through substantial and complex shifts with changes in government, weaknesses in the rule of law, high inflation, rampant gender-based violence, migration, economic crisis, and increase of anti-rights movement actions, among others.

For instance, **Ecuador** is currently experiencing strong political and social instability. The Ecuadorian population faces uncertainty amidst the disarray surrounding the presidential elections held in October 2023. Never had a president decreed the so-called “muerte cruzada”, a constitutional figure to call early elections and dissolve the Assembly, as Guillermo Lasso did in May 2023 to avoid an impeachment trial against him. This added to the chaos faced by the Ecuadorian population due to the security crisis and the escalation in violence that had already been affecting the country.

In January 2024 it was officially declared a 60-day state of emergency as the country descended into chaos amid an eruption of violence by gangs and criminal networks. At a national level, there's a growing concern that the the government declaration on “internal armed conflict” could potentially lead to an erosion of democratic values, sparking fears of a “democratic dictatorship.” While maintain full confidence in the CEPAM-G team's ability to navigate these challenging circumstances safety protocols are been prioritized.

Similarly, in **Mexico** political actions aimed at the 2024 presidential elections have been initiated. At the state level, elections were held in June 2023 in the State of Mexico and Coahuila. In the case of Mexico City, there was a change in the head of the local government, after the former head of government resigned to run for president.

Many of the actions are carried out for electoral purposes, including promises related to the prevention and elimination of SGBV, such as the measures within the AVGM. The absence of real political will to guarantee citizen security and a life free of violence for women and girls exacerbates the human rights crisis. Despite the continuous rise in SGBV cases and the obstacles in accessing comprehensive justice and guaranteeing women's rights, non-progressive budgets, in the face of inflation, have defunded the SGBV shelters. Although on September 6, 2023, abortion was decriminalized through judicial channels throughout the country, the patriarchal system and social constructs

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continue to prevent women from making decisions about their bodies. While in **Paraguay**, the country had changes in the national government on April 30th, 2023. The elected president has rejected the use of language related to gender or feminism in any public institution and, has rarely mentioned key issues such as, child marriages, access to CSE for adolescents, ensuring rights of women, indigenous people, and people with disabilities. In a political context marked by gender-based misinformation, the new government has announced that it will seek to repeal a social aid agreement for children funded by the European Union. It also announced the merger of some ministries and opposition to what is considered gender ideology. This generates social uncertainty in addition to other key social and economic challenges in Paraguay such as the high levels of poverty and inequality, the concentration of productive resources, low levels of formal employment and real wages, and access to health and education services, especially for poor and vulnerable populations.

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Gender Equality and Human Rights

In **Ecuador**, gender equality continues to be an urgent challenge amidst rising discrimination, exclusion, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The lack of public policies related to responding to essential needs such as education, health, and care, among others, has generated stagnation in terms of reducing the UNDP Gender Inequality Index, which, just over a decade ago, Ecuador maintained good progress in its reduction. Nevertheless, since in May 2023, the Public Security Council and the Ecuadorian State declared the criminal gangs operating in the country to be terrorists and issued a decree ordering the Joint Command of the Armed Forces to confront terrorism "with all available means" and in coordination with the National Police and military operations to confront and counteract terrorist individuals and organizations. Such tensed political situation is creating a higher risk for individuals, activists, and organizations working for human and women's rights of being criminalized and persecuted as a new expression of state repression.

In **Mexico**, murder of journalists, persistent illegal and arbitrary detention practices, among other human rights violations, are creating a severe crisis for survivors seeking justice and reparation. The federal government's 2020-2025 gender equality strategy is based on

an institutional commitment to reduce poverty, inequality and exclusion, and support the empowerment of women. However, violence against women, girls and adolescents has intensified in recent

✦ **HOWEVER, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS HAS INTENSIFIED IN RECENT TIMES, WITH 10 WOMEN BEING MURDERED EVERY DAY AND 70% OF WOMEN FACING SOME TYPE OF VIOLENCE IN THEIR LIFETIME.**

times, with 10 women being murdered every day and 70% of women facing some type of violence in their lifetime. It is also observed that the population in Mexico has naturalized a whole system of social norms and customs based on the oppression of various social groups. Such oppression is institutionalized, which is visible through the glaring presence of inequality in all spaces and systems, including implementation of laws, budgets and programs. The systems and processes that are supposed to promote equal opportunities between women and

men, care and domestic work, decent jobs, and so on, continue to disadvantage women in all their diversities and stages of life. Mexico has a structural system permeated by colonialism and patriarchy combined with a culture of impunity and lack of structural actions to address the long-standing causes of social violence that hinders women from accessing all their rights: education, housing, access to justice, employment, safe spaces free of violence, among others.

In **Paraguay**, gender equality has been refused by the national government. A political decision was made not to allow the use of the word gender in public policies and institutional documents generated by the state. However, Paraguay has a Ministry of Women's Affairs that is guided by a Plan for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, which in turn is supported by the 2030 Agenda and other international commitments assumed by Paraguay. Human rights are recognized by the National Constitution, however, the practice of stigma and discrimination based on gender, cultural identity, social and economic identity continues to be an obstacle to the effective exercise of human rights.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights continues to be a major challenge in the Latin American region with persisting maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, neonatal mortality, lack of CSE, lack of access to abortion and modern contraceptive methods, among other issues.

This year is the commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Montevideo Consensus, the strongest political declaration that summarize commitments from Governments in the LAC region around SRHR, specifically for marginalized populations such as adolescent and youth, Afrodescendants, LGBTIQ+ people and more. After 10 years, the evidence (as the one from the social monitoring platform *Mira Que Te Miro*) has shown that advances in terms of laws and regulatory frameworks have been achieved, but the local implementation of the commitments is still pending in many cases. Additionally, the changing political systems in the region has also impacted the advances, especially in reduction of political will.

In general terms, **Ecuador** reports 67% compliance with the commitments made by the government on SRHR in the Montevideo Consensus and scored 66.5% in the CP-ATLAS-LAC ranking scale. Although this percentage seems reasonable for a first measurement, it should be remembered that this social monitoring evaluates the legal, political, and programmatic framework and does not

measure their implementation. Some of the progress made include progress in sexual and reproductive rights issues with the recognition of equal marriage in 2018 and progress in prevention of maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS, and pending challenges continue to be in comprehensive sexuality education, accountability, and abortion. Ecuador still has enormous disparities in access to health care, one of the most documented is the lack of contraceptives, which considerably affects adolescents and girls and diminishes the possibilities to to reduce unplanned and unwanted pregnancies despite the existence of a national public policy for the prevention of new pregnancies in adolescents and children.

On the other hand, **Mexico** with 81% is among the first 5 countries regarding compliance with the commitments assumed by the government in matters of SRHR in the Montevideo Consensus and the country also scored 66.5% in the CP-ATLAS-LAC ranking scale. Some of the key progress made include progress on abortion issues based on the expansion of the right to terminate pregnancy, advances in comprehensive sexuality education, and the creation of a committee to monitor

accountability regarding the Montevideo Consensus. The areas with room for improvement are linked to humanized childbirth, HIV, and specialized care for survivors of gender-based violence. In some cases, the lack of resources and the excess of bureaucracy have slowed down the implementation processes of regulatory frameworks and development of public policies. With women's access to SRHR not being a priority, the lack of information on prevention and care has a significant impact in the number of requests for accompaniment contemplated in the comprehensive package of essential services in sexual and reproductive health. Although Mexico's Supreme Court decided in 2021 that abortion is no longer a federal crime, it is not automatically the law of the entire nation. Twenty of Mexico's 32 states have laws classifying abortion as a crime that allow exceptions only in cases of rape. Some also include exceptions if the mother's life is in danger, or if there are severe fetal anomalies.

Local implementing partners continue employing strategies through their content, creativity, and engagement of youth and decision-makers to realize the objectives of the project. The following examples stood out:

CDD Mexico

CDD (Mexico) has developed an innovative methodology for using digital resources (specifically, their animated series "Catholicadas") as complementary resources in community interventions. This methodology provides didactic guidelines on the design of activities and training workshops using digital content to generate conversations and reflections among adolescents and young people, including in this case religious and intersectional approaches, focused on the impact of gender norms, attitudes, and other practices that lead to sexual and gender-based violence, specifically against women with disabilities, indigenous and racialized women, and gender diverse people.



As a result of the training processes, community leaders and CDD (Mexico) has created local partnerships to generate actions with the shared knowledge. In Guerrero, the articulation will work in prevention and elimination of violence against women, and based on the training, they will add the intersection with trans people and LGBTIQ+ community to their work. They will also incorporate a strong component on racism and classism, which strongly affect their communities because of the lack of security and militarization. In Oaxaca, based on a strong participation of trans and non-binary people in the Training of Trainers, they will work on the intersection between gender-diverse people and indigenous and Afromexican people, framed in changing social norms and harmful practices and identification of violence. In Quintana Roo, they will work in the intersection between political and public participation of indigenous women, SGBV, defense of territory, and the climate crisis.



CEPAM-G Ecuador

CEPAM-G (Ecuador) develops a model of care for victims of SGBV that has two main focuses: It seeks to question and modify the representations associated with gender differences, based on the visibility of harmful norms and attitudes that perpetuate SGBV; and It addresses the consequences of trauma in life (at the physical and mental level) in the victims of SGBV and also in the professionals, as they are victims of GBV and are exposed to the experience of trauma.

FFV SUPPORTS SPECIALIZED CARE SPACES AND TRAINED PERSONNEL FOR THE OPERATION OF COMMUNITY SAFE SPACES, THE IDENTIFICATION OF GBV, THE APPROACH OF THE POPULATION TO PRIORITY SERVICES AND COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SERVICES



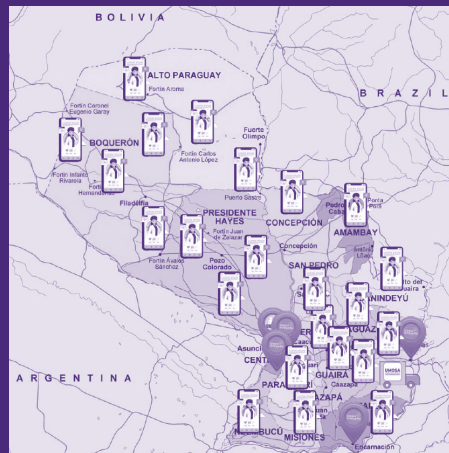
To this end, FFFV supports specialized care spaces and trained personnel for the operation of community safe spaces, the identification of GBV, the approach of the population to priority services and comprehensive and integrated services, both face-to-face and telematic, and provides psychological, social work and legal support. In addition, it carries out coordination and sustained articulation and consolidation of networks to strengthen multisectoral responses.

Among the main achievements are the strengthening and formalization of relations with local governments and United Nations agencies; the continuity of actions in contexts of high uncertainty and vulnerability; the positioning of the focus on masculinities to strengthen local CSOs; the strengthening of data management and protection; the revision of its Comprehensive Care model and CSE curriculum, the creation of a methodology for working with families on CSE, and the updating of the guide for the training of CSE counselors in the area of human rights.

CEPEP

Paraguay

CEPEP (Paraguay) has scaled the violence prevention model from CSE in virtual mode since the pandemic and now continues to implement it at the hybrid level.



It provides thousands of SGBV services in the Centers for Specialized Support both in Asuncion and Ciudad del Este. The majority of services provided at these clinics is specialized counseling. CEPEP also ensured access to psychosocial support for SGBV survivors through the provision of counseling sessions, legal support consults, and 1 counseling session focused on empowerment, autonomy, and decision-making.

CEPEP also acquired the health mobile clinic, providing care and medical services, applied contraceptive methods, and took Papanicolaou samples. They apply an adapted training initiative protocol and process for SGBV services to every user. CEPEP serves women, girls and people with other gender identities by offering responses to SGBV from the health sector.

They have also updated their manual for the integration of SGBV screening, developed manual application workshops and trained health professionals from both the public and private sectors; and developed training with a transformative gender approach for populations in vulnerable contexts (women, youth, indigenous communities, migrants, transgender people, etc.).

Equimundo



With the implementation of the National Training Initiative (NTI) in Ecuador and Paraguay Equimundo is making it possible to:

Deepen knowledge on the construction of harmful hegemonic masculinities and how they relate to gender-based violence; Know and analyze approaches, strategies, logical frameworks and methodologies for the effective and successful involvement of men in programmatic and advocacy actions that promote gender equality, with particular emphasis on the role of men in the prevention of gender-based violence, and active and involved fatherhoods; Know tools for research on masculinities and for the monitoring and evaluation of

programs with gender transformative approaches. To critically analyze the work with men and the importance of integrating a feminist approach and accountability towards women's organizations and to know guidelines and tools for their integration in projects that seek to integrate men; and To learn about and put into practice tools to motivate men to be allies (in society, at work, at home) for gender equality and the prevention of violence and to contribute to the prevention of violence.

OCNF Mexico

OCNF (Mexico) implements public activities with local organizations, legislators, health authorities, academics, and civil society organizations to reflect on the prevention and response to SGBV and makes visible not only general aspects of the SGBV crisis but also the intersections of the impact experienced by indigenous women and women living on the streets in Mexico.

The OCNF has presented a series of recommendations to reform the state's Penal Code to address sexual violence and protect rights and access to legal abortion for minors who are rape survivors; has promoted spaces for reflection on progress and challenges of the reform of the Gender Violence Alert mechanism; monitors national and international standards on sexual violence, with the aim that organizations pressure health authorities and prosecutors' offices to update their protocols for the care of victims of sexual violence; elaborates and presents alternative reports and inputs for the Universal Periodic Review and the CEDAW Committee; and has developed a diagnosis of the situation of sexual violence; and continually promotes social and communication campaigns for the prevention, response and eradication of SGBV.



RNR Mexico

RNR (Mexico) provides specialized accompaniment in SGBV, sexual and reproductive rights; access to free menstrual management products; and access to a comprehensive package of essential sexual and reproductive health services.

✦ **THIS HAS RESULTED IN THE GENERATION OF ALLIANCES AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF LEADERS WEAVING A COMMUNITY THAT AGREES AND PROVIDES INFORMATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY, FEMINISM, AND INTERSECTIONALITY**

It implements a unique feminist accompaniment workshop through art, recovering physical spaces for women, girls, and adolescents, through murals, which are intervened by women generating a sense of belonging and capturing messages of support for others.

This has resulted in the generation of alliances and the identification of leaders weaving a community that agrees and

provides information on human rights, equality, feminism, and intersectionality, materializing with the SRR booklet. In addition, RNR launched the pilot phase of the chatbot for provision of SGBV services to gather access to psychological, legal, and medical support by women and girls who are or might be experiencing violence.

Some highlighted achievements are the integration of the "Violet Networks", which are an organizational structure made up of women participants in the workshops that were held for the project; and the habilitation and equipping of the "Green Spaces", which are physical, warm, dignified places with aromatherapy, within the facilities of an External Care Center of Refugio, a member of the RNR. In these spaces, women receive information, care and services with a human rights and feminist approach, related to Sexual and Reproductive Rights and the prevention of SGBV.



Fòs Feminista

Fòs Feminista works closely with local implementing partners through regular check-ins, face-to-face accompaniments, meetings, and training to improve project planning, management, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms.

Additionally, Fòs Feminista worked to ensure the participation of project partners and allies in key regional and global decision-making spaces relevant to SCBV prevention and response, such as CSW68, ICPD+30, and Montevideo's Consensus.

In addition, through Fòs Feminista's Center for Capacity Sharing on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, a cycle of four thematic webinars was held: the first on the impact



of gender norms and traditions on women's lives held in July 2023; the second on the role of masculinities in the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence, held in September 2023; the third on good experiences in accompanying survivors of gender-based violence held in November 2023; and the fourth on February 20, 2024 on how Youth experience and contribute to preventing gender-based violence. The partners of this project played the role of prominent panelists during the webinars and shared their experience in the topics addressed.

