

Developing localized, gender-transformative surveys on SGBV risk and protective factors in Latin America for enhanced gender equality and inclusion

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE: Fòs Feminista and five local partners in Mexico, Ecuador, and Paraguay co-developed localized, gender-transformative surveys for Latin American contexts to evaluate risk and protective factors for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) related to gender equality.

METHODS: A literature review identified existing validated surveys measuring SGBV risk and protective factors that are linked to gender equality, which were adapted into three surveys that align with three populations: 1) participants in SGBV prevention activities, 2) people receiving SGBV services, and 3) members of civil society organizations conducting SGBV advocacy. A pilot was then conducted with partners to validate and localize the surveys to respond to specific country contexts in Latin America. Through five focus group discussions, local partners from Mexico, Ecuador, and Paraguay evaluated the surveys' appropriateness, acceptability, feasibility, and effectiveness.

RESULTS: Changes were made to each survey through the validation and localization process. Partners recommended changes to survey language to make it more feminist and gender-inclusive. This is important for the contexts of Mexico, Ecuador, and Paraguay, as existing SGBV survey tools in Spanish often utilize gender-binary or masculine language forms. Other gender-transformative changes were made to survey questions, such as adding clear references to gender-diverse people and adjusting wording to challenge local inequitable gender norms.

Local partners also adapted survey items to ensure inclusion of the most marginalized populations. This included simplifying survey language and removing less relevant survey items. Flipped scales were also removed for scaled rating questions, as consistent scales facilitate more meaningful responses among young people, people with low literacy levels, and people whose first language is an indigenous dialect.

CONCLUSIONS: Many surveys measuring risk and protective factors for SGBV have not been contextualized for Latin American countries. These surveys often employ language that is gender-binary, can reinforce inequitable gender norms, and perpetuate exclusion of the most marginalized. We can and should be gender-transformative, inclusive, and feminist in our evaluation methodologies for Latin American contexts. By localizing these surveys to embrace gender diversity, shift gender norms, and ensure meaningful participation of marginalized populations, we are using evaluation to advance gender equality and inclusiveness.

Impact of Study:

This pilot study revealed the existing gender equality and inclusion gaps among validated surveys measuring risk and protective factors for SGBV for Latin American contexts. By localizing surveys with qualitative feedback from local partners and communities in Latin America, the tools to assess SGBV risk and protective factors can adequately include the experiences and perspectives of marginalized populations. This ensures that the findings of these tools are representative and usable for responding to violence affecting groups at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression and discrimination.

Evaluation and research tools – not just programming – also have the power to advance gender equality. Localization is required to ensure that these tools are gender-transformative, as shifting local harmful gender norms is context-specific. In Latin American contexts, gender-inclusive language and overt acknowledgement of gender-diverse people are key aspects of building gender-transformative and feminist survey tools for SGBV.