

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

### MIDTERM EVALUATION OF THE *FEMINIST FUTURES FREE FROM VIOLENCE* PROJECT

#### Purpose

A midterm evaluation of *Feminist Futures Free from Violence* was conducted with all project partners at the midpoint of project implementation in January 2024. Its objectives were to:

1. **Collectively harvest and analyze positive outcomes** that have already been generated during the first half of project implementation – without restricting this assessment to the assumptions of the Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework – to better understand the full real-life impact of the project to date in local contexts.
2. **Identify and share important learnings** from the first year and a half of the project so that they can be applied by project partners to enhance their positive impact on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and gender equality through the project.

#### Methods

The midterm evaluation was carried out during an in-person meeting with the participation of 23 multidisciplinary representatives from all project partners (CEPAM-G in Ecuador, CEPEP in Paraguay, CDD, OCNF, RNR in Mexico, and international partners Equimundo and Fòs Feminista). Participatory mixed methods were utilized in order to facilitate exchange and triangulate experiences, interpretations, knowledge, and learning among the partners implementing the project.

This participatory process was further enriched by the intersectional, gender-transformative, and rights-based evaluation approaches underlying all aspects of this midterm evaluation. Other approaches used include appreciative inquiry, which focuses on identifying successes, strengths, and promising practices as the most effective way to promote progress. Due to our utilization-focused approach, we also identified external factors affecting our work on the project and the actions we can take to achieve our goals.

## Results

### Process outcomes

The process of conducting the midterm evaluation itself generated important results for the project. The post-meeting evaluation of the midterm review revealed that this process strengthened the project and its SGBV programming by:

- **Recognizing and valuing the people who drive the project.** 94% of the participants in the midterm evaluation reported that they felt very or completely included and valued in this participatory process. As one partner representative mentioned, "I felt included and recognized, and I was able to verify that my work is of great importance for the success of the project, which inspires me."
- **Providing a meaningful learning space for sharing knowledge and experiences.** Multiple participants expressed that the sharing of lessons learned through the midterm evaluation was incredibly valuable and allowed them to improve their ability to address SGBV and advance gender equality. For example, one partner representative said: "the exchange of experiences with other project partners helped us to adjust our programming and strengthen our work on this project."
- **Cultivating solidarity and synergies across project partners.** Participants also shared that the midterm evaluation of the project "allowed us to jointly develop powerful strategies with colleagues," and "this meeting helps to create synergies between partners and allows us to better understand our achievements, challenges, and opportunities." This shows that the midterm evaluation helped to solidify project partners as a community that effectively collaborates and creatively takes collective action so that their positive impact is enhanced.

### Most significant outcomes generated by project midterm

This midterm evaluation revealed that the changes generated during the first half of the project are very diverse and multilevel. Most outcomes to date are positive changes in practices, capacities, knowledge, and attitudes of social actors at different levels, which reflects what is expected at this stage given that more long-term changes in conditions and policies typically require more time to transform. The most significant outcomes generated during the initial 1.5 years of the project include:

- **2 positive outcomes among beneficiaries of the project.** In Mexico, women and girls who participated in workshops conducted by RNR experienced an improvement in their bodily autonomy, agency, and their expression of emotions thanks to the integration of a trauma-informed approach, the creation of a space for cultivating community with other women, and the application of art therapy. In Paraguay, people who participated in workshops conducted by CEPEP, where

gender-transformative messaging and information on SGBV prevention and mitigation were shared, increased their knowledge of the legal frameworks related to SGBV, such as how to report violence to legal authorities as well as legally entitled services and rights for SGBV survivors.

- Project partners have also contributed to **6 outcomes at the organizational level**. These organizational results demonstrate that various institutions and organizations – including the very partners of this project – have been strengthened through the implementation of project activities. The results generated at the organizational level include the strengthening of the incorporation of men into programming for SGBV and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across CEPEP in Paraguay and CEPAM-G in Ecuador through the gender-transformative approach utilized in the National Training Initiative led by Equimundo. In Mexico, CDD conducted a mapping activity to identify new allies. This resulted in the construction of new strategic alliances and the cultivation of spaces to discuss and apply intersectional approaches for the first time among these newly affiliated organizations.
- **2 changes were also produced at the community level** thanks to the contribution of the Feminist Futures Free from Violence project. In Ecuador, community leaders who provide SGBV care in their communities with the support of CEPAM-G have improved their capacities to provide community-based SGBV counseling and increased their commitment to providing SGBV outreach within their local community. There was also a formal commitment from several local municipal authorities in Ecuador to work to eliminate SGBV in their communities through CEPAM-G's incorporation of young people and their families in SGBV capacity building activities.
- There was **1 outcome at the public policy level**. In Mexico, various state authorities took actions to improve their SGBV monitoring mechanism, further integrate civil society organizations into the creation of public policies, and implement important policies related to SGBV (such as policies that provide access to legal abortions, particularly for SGBV survivors). OCNF substantially contributed to this change through its contextualized advocacy for each Mexican State, which utilizes an intersectional feminist lens, is based in evidence, is supported by a wide range of local civil society organizations, and involves persistent follow up.

### Most important learnings

The midterm review also generated many rich learnings for this project, all of which are documented in greater detail in the full midterm evaluation report. At the end of the midterm evaluation, project participants identified their most important learnings from the meeting. They are:

- 1. Prioritize the localization of SGBV actions to the local context and population.** Localization includes forging close partnerships with local communities, groups, and institutions, understanding their needs and their attitudes towards gender concepts, and adjusting content and methodologies to these local perspectives.



The use of an intersectional feminist approach that takes into account local intersecting systems of power that marginalize some people more than others was also a critical practice that was underscored across all SGBV programming. The application of diverse and differentiated gender-transformative strategies tailored to local contexts were also highlighted as important methods of generating inclusive and large-scale positive change related to SGBV.

- 2. Further expand and enhance self-care.** Another critical learning that surfaced from the midterm evaluation was the need to continue strengthening self-care approaches. This includes the most essential self-care needs of ensuring safety and security while working on SGBV and gender equality, which is currently a top concern of project partners because of high levels of violent conflict in their countries. Work in SGBV also involves substantial emotional, social, and psychological labor, and the wellbeing of staff and volunteers who do this challenging work needs to be ensured through various collective care actions. Only by intentionally embedding self-care across teams are they able to sustain their work on this challenging topic so that there are truly transformative impacts on SGBV in their communities.
- 3. Identify more opportunities for flexibility so that project activities can be adjusted to local realities.** Project partners all recognized that there are challenging contexts and common obstacles in the countries where they implement this project. They identified high levels of insecurity and violence, political instability or transition, natural disasters, detrimental changes in exchange rates, powerful opposition movements, and economic issues as important external factors affecting the effectiveness of their work on the project. To be resilient and effective in these contexts, they recommended finding ways to rapidly adapt project activities to changes in local contexts. This could include having conversations about options for innovation and adjustment with Global Affairs Canada to understand what degree of flexibility is possible, engaging with the project's learning community to understand more about the different intervention approaches of other project partners so that they can be applied when adjustment is needed, and accepting support from Fòs Feminista and other project partners for the identification of new or creative solutions to challenges in local contexts.
- 4. Find alternative or new methods of demonstrating the impact of SGBV advocacy activities on political, legal, and normative frameworks.** Recent data has shown that most changes in public policies, laws, and initiatives will not occur quickly, and they will likely take place after the 3 years of the project. Additionally, there are many intervening external factors that can limit or slow down the impact of advocacy on policies that need to be considered. Partners emphasized that it is important to be able to use alternative methods of understanding and highlighting positive policy outcomes, such as including incremental

advancements in policy change and utilizing more qualitative data to describe important shifts in policymaking.

- 5. Mobilize funding opportunities to sustain key SGBV outcomes and activities** generated through support of this project, so that the essential programming and advancements established this project do not cease when the project ends. They recommended exploring additional financing opportunities in order to ensure that the critical approaches they have built can continue to operate, as funding is required for paying staff to continue implementing activities and covering other core expenses.

