

# LATIN AMERICA 2020 Regional Programme Results

Total Budget Phase I	EU Contribution	UN Agency Contributions	Duration
 USD 4,218,686	 USD 3,500,000	 USD 718,686	Jun 2019 - Dec 2022

**Recipient UN organizations:** UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA

**Other partners:** ECLAC, UNICEF, OHCHR, UNODC, IOM, ILO, WHO, PAHO, National Counterparts, Regional Intergovernmental Bodies, International Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Networks

## Context

Alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, Latin America is undergoing a socioeconomic crisis that is generating greater gender inequalities, affecting mainly girls, boys, adolescents, and women, who are more vulnerable and at-risk to situations of violence, including in their homes. Latin America and the Caribbean house 14 of the 25 countries with the highest number of femicides/feminicides in the world, and the alarming situation of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the region has been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Data from many countries revealed an increase in the number of calls made to hotlines to report cases of violence and an increase in requests for support and remote assistance services in 2020. Government regulations to prevent the spread of the virus such as quarantines, social isolation and mobility restrictions have generated additional barriers for women to access support networks and essential services that are necessary to prevent and address gender-based violence, protect women and girls, and prosecute perpetrators. These restrictions have also affected the capacities of civil society organizations and networks of human rights defenders, who have also suffered increasing threats, intimidation, and criminalization to discourage their advocacy and defense of human rights.

## Spotlight Initiative's Response

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the spirit of UN Reform, the implementing agencies of the Spotlight Initiative Latin America Regional Programme worked together with the interagency coordination unit, implementing partners (including regional and subregional organizations) and associated agencies to analyze the emerging situation in the region and its impact on women and girls, using the most relevant data. The European Union and the Civil Society Reference Group provided advice and strategic direction to develop focused lines of action adapted to the new reality. Strategies were designed and implemented that guaranteed the participation and leadership of women in addressing the increased gender-based violence and femicide/feminicides, with differential approaches and intersectoral analyses, prioritizing the needs of the most marginalized groups. Likewise, support to CSOs was prioritized so that they could maintain their actions on the ground and generate new protection mechanisms in the face of crisis.

## Key Results

- ✓ **Cutting-edge research on the intersections between VAWG and femicides in the region** (Pillar 1: Policies and Legislation and Pillar 5: Data). The programme has carried out a complex, multi-dimensional research framework to generate evidence on the intersections between VAWG and femicides and new scenarios of high risk and social vulnerability in 18 countries, in order to fill critical knowledge gaps on these issues. The programme's research proposal consists of eight studies under a common conceptual framework. The work covers, inter alia, the effects and consequences of migratory processes on VAWG and femicides; the access to livelihoods and the exposure to sexual violence of women in human mobility contexts; organized crime and VAWG in the context of those facing multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion; regional diagnosis of the availability and quality of data on disappearances and trafficking of women; criminal regulations and public policy instruments to adjust the legislation according to the Palermo Protocols; and the quality of the measurement of femicide. An example of meaningful interagency coordination, the research effort to fill knowledge gaps is strengthened with the contributions of the Technical Advisory Committee, which is composed of both recipient UN organizations and associated agencies. The results of

these studies aim to provide resources for local and regional women's rights organizations, decision and policymakers and academics to strengthen existing programmes, legislations and policies, and to contribute to political advocacy on the matter.

- ✓ **An innovative regional Community of Practice to foster greater knowledge exchange** (Pillar 1: Policies and Legislation). The regional Community of Practice of essential services is a knowledge platform for the exchange of good practices and the generation of evidence and technical guidance to strengthen the response to VAWG in the region. The Spotlight Initiative Latin America Regional Programme held two cycles of seminars on the virtual platform with the participation of more than 5,000 people from 18 countries. In addition, a virtual course has been adapted to the regional context and aims to strengthen essential health, social, police and judicial services, through a coordinated, comprehensive and multisectoral response. In addition, virtual training on essential services for survivors of violence was launched with more than 7,000 participants, mostly public servants. These exchanges not only allowed for an immediate adaptation of the countries' response to the spike of VAWG during lockdowns but also provided practical recommendations and tools for different stakeholders to improve their response to increased cases of VAWG.
- ✓ **Networks of shelters strengthened to ensure their resilience during crises** (Pillar 1: Legislation and Policies and Pillar 3: Prevention). In the context of the pandemic and the spike of VAWG, the Spotlight Initiative programme partnered with the Inter-American Shelters Network to support the adaptation and resilience of shelters in the region so that they could continue providing adequate services to survivors of violence. As a result of this partnership, a practical guide providing recommendations for comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures in shelters in the context of COVID-19 was shared. Additionally, a study providing an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on the emerging needs of shelters was conducted to inform policy-making and advocacy in the region, and a training programme for service providers within shelters was launched to equip providers with the adequate tools and skills to swiftly adapt to the emergency context. The study, where progressive feminization in the private, domestic, or intrafamily sphere is observed, focused on the presence of organized crime, chronic violence and multidimensional poverty, among others. These have increased public insecurity, which mainly affects groups in vulnerable situations, such as women and, among them, those who suffer multiple forms of discrimination and oppression.

### **One Story of Impact: Innovative Coordination Practices in Service of UN Reform**

In the spirit of the UN Reform, a Technical Advisory Committee which comprises UN agencies and 13 regional experts, including former government officials, academics, and representatives of civil society and the women's and feminist movement from ten countries, has been put in place to support the programme's multi-dimensional research framework. The committee provides robust technical support to all the studies carried out under both Pillar 1 (Policies and Legislation) and Pillar 5 (Data). This innovative collaboration aims at leveraging the different stakeholders' expertise to fill critical knowledge gaps on a range of issues related to femicides and VAWG in the region.

### **In their own words...**

"With the Spotlight Initiative, we are innovating to eliminate barriers and perceived notions about gender discrimination, ethnic/racial origin, in short, intersectional discrimination, in order to identify initiatives between actors and countries that empower women in their diversity for enforceability of your rights." - Waldistrudis Hurtado Minotta, Gender and Public Policy Consultant with a Differential Focus and Civil Society Reference Group Member of the Latin America Regional Programme, Colombia

## **Innovative, Promising or Good Practices**

The programme has forged a strategic alliance with a feminist organization to generate evidence of what works and what doesn't work with a view to map and identify VAWG prevention experiences from 2010-2020. The collected experiences are being systematized to draw out lessons learned for a multi-stakeholder and multi-level political dialogue with decision-makers in the region to strengthen primary prevention strategies and public policies. Another innovative practice is the development and testing of a model campaign with key messages based on evidence constructed and compiled through behavioral sciences and existing literature on masculinities to strengthen approaches in the response of men and young people in the prevention of VAWG. A behavioral science approach allows studying how humans make decisions and the factors that influence their behavior, thus offering a series of powerful tools to identify or influence critical decision-making. Currently, the Spotlight Initiative is developing a model communication campaign that can be replicated by actors across the region. Finally, the programme forged a strategic alliance with the [Gender Equality Seal for Public and Private Companies](#), that promotes gender equality in the private sector. The partnership seeks to prevent VAWG in the workplace and aims at ensuring that adequate referral pathways are in place. The companies' highest levels of leadership are involved, ensuring that there is a systematic diagnosis and action plan to tackle any existing or future cases of violence against women in all companies.