

Measures and actions promoted by the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean against COVID-19 in key areas for the autonomy of women and gender equality

Preliminary working document



February 2021

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DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has triggered economic, social and health crises and has revealed the structural nature of gender inequalities and the fragility of the progress achieved in the region.

The effects of this COVID-19 crisis are heterogeneous among countries in the region and among women in all their diversity. Gender gaps in the labor market, in access to health and social protection systems, technologies and financing, and in the use of time, as well as gender violence against women that were part of the structural knots of gender inequality prior to the pandemic, are key factors in understanding the magnitude of the distributional impacts between men and women.

Since the beginning of 2020, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have implemented different measures and actions to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments have promoted short-term responses to confront the health emergency and the most severe effects in relation to employment, income, poverty, and gender-based violence against women.

The hierarchical level of gender institutions in the State and their links with different emergency response agencies, the presence of government entities in the territories and the synergy with local governments, the existence of information systems with disaggregated data by sex, and the participation of women and civil society organizations are elements that are catalytic in the response capacity of governments to address the crisis from a gender equality perspective.

This document presents measures implemented by the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to address the situation of women during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information began to be collected a few days after the global pandemic was declared. Within the framework of the informative meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of the Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women convened by ECLAC in coordination with UN Women, the first document with the initial measures was presented, and a decision was made to set up a special tab to display the measures reported by the countries to address gender inequalities in the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report 'Measures and actions promoted by the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean against COVID-19 in key areas for the autonomy of women and gender equality' presents the information according to the dimensions established in the Regional Observatory and synthesizes the information submitted by governments until December 31, 2020.

The main source of information for this document is the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean. This Observatory created by ECLAC has a section with information on the measures and actions under way at the national level to address the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the information presented on gender equality, the Observatory compiles measures regarding restrictions on movement, economy, education, employment, social protection, and health. In the gender section, measures and actions adopted by the governments of the region are available in the areas of gender violence, care economy, protection of employment and income generation, benefits, transfers and other social protection measures, women's participation in the digital era, and other measures such as women's health, training and actions promoted by the Ministries and mechanisms for the advancement of women in their role as governing bodies of gender equality policies. The information comes from official government sources, in particular from the information provided by the Ministries and mechanisms for the advancement of women in Latin America and the Caribbean and from other government entities, publicly available on official government sites and official communications.

This document is a preliminary version prepared by the Division of Gender Affairs of ECLAC in coordination with UN Women as input for the 60 Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and will be updated with the contributions of the governments in the work of the 60th Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. The document will also serve for future analysis regarding the impact of the measures adopted and implemented in the countries of the region on the lives of women, as well as documents that delve on the gender approach in public policies addressing emergency responses, mitigation and actions for recovery after the crisis.

DRAFT

1. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, most governments in the region have adopted measures of confinement, physical distancing and mobility restrictions. The application of these measures has increased women's exposure to situations of violence in their homes, often forcing them to live with their aggressors, isolating them from their support networks and creating new barriers to access prevention and care services in situations of violence.

To address this situation, different governments have strengthened the channels for counseling, emergency care and reporting through telephone lines, digital media and sometimes in-person services. Some countries have ensured the continuity of social, psychological and legal services, declaring them essential, and have also tried to strengthen the capacity of specialized teams through shifts, training and expansion. New shelters have also been established with specific health protocols and protocols have been created for the detection and care of cases of gender-based violence against women in the specific context of the pandemic (ECLAC, 2020).

Some of the measures to prevent violence against women and to strengthen channels of assistance

- Declaration of essential services
- Actions to prevent violence against women
- Strengthening of emergency telephone lines/hotlines
- New channels of assistance and reporting through digital media
- New channels of assistance and reporting through pharmacies, stores, among others
- Strengthening capacity for provision of services
- Additional shelters
- Mobility and travel permits in the territory

Declaration of essential services: In some countries, gender-based violence services have been declared essential so that they continue to function during the emergency period, which has required securing financial resources, developing new modalities of care and specialized protocols that take into account the requirements of infection prevention.

In Mexico, shelters and care centers for women victims of violence and their children were considered essential activities. In Argentina, an exception was made for those who work in activities and establishments that provide care for victims of gender-based violence to be exempted from mandatory preventive social isolation. In Peru, temporary shelter homes, the 100 telephone hotline service, the urgent care service and the emergency mobile teams were declared essential. In the Dominican Republic, the Línea Mujer *212 and the Shelter Homes services were declared essential and are available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It should be noted that although the services were declared essential, not in all cases were additional financial resources allocated to ensure that they remained active, expeditious and provided timely and quality care. For example, in the case of Peru, it was established that the measures should be financed from the institutional budget, without additional resources from the Public Treasury¹.

¹ See Fifth Final Complementary Provisions of Legislative Decree No. 1470 that establishes measures to guarantee the care and protection of victims of violence against women and members of the family group during the Health Emergency declared by COVID-19. [on line]. http://www.congreso.gob.pe/Docs/comisiones2020/ConstitucionReglamento/files/d_l_com/dl_1470.pdf

Actions to prevent violence against women: Several countries have implemented large-scale violence prevention campaigns. In Uruguay, messages on gender-based violence were disseminated to teachers and students through an educational platform to which girls, boys and adolescents in primary and secondary public education have access. In Chile, information was disseminated in companies on the types of violence and warning signs to detect it, particularly in the context of teleworking during quarantine. In addition, campaigns have been launched in social networks and the media for the prevention of gender-based violence against women and the promotion of violence-free coexistence in families in times of confinement. Some campaigns targeted women directly, while others have sought to engage men (Dominica, Mexico) and communities (Brazil, Chile). In Brazil, graphic pieces were placed in buildings, public spaces, buses and health centers.

Several governments have expanded their dissemination channels to provide accessible information to women in all their diversity, particularly those who do not have access to digital media, live in rural areas or speak indigenous languages. Some countries have used physical means of dissemination such as pharmacies (Paraguay) or supermarkets (Peru). In Ecuador, material has been disseminated in indigenous languages, while in Mexico, the Institute of Indigenous Peoples has produced radio material on violence, threats or sexual abuse against indigenous girls and women in almost 50 languages, to be broadcast by the Indigenous Cultural Radio Broadcasting System (Sistema de Radiodifusoras Culturales Indígenas). In Belize, a bilingual campaign was developed in Spanish and English to reach as many people as possible. In Peru and Paraguay, actions were carried out to prevent human trafficking. In Paraguay, the campaign "Prevention of Human Trafficking in times of Coronavirus" was carried out, which also included awareness-raising and training for strategic stakeholders at the territorial level, with a strong focus on the indigenous population.

Strengthening of emergency telephone lines/hotlines: Most countries in the region have strengthened the dissemination of hotlines for counseling and assistance to women in situations of violence through radio, television and social networks. In Panama, partnerships were established with telephone companies to publicize the National Women's Institute (INAMU) hotline through instant messages to cell phone users. In some countries, alternative means have been used to disseminate information about telephone lines and services for women.

In several countries, preliminary information at the beginning of the confinement period showed a significant increase in the number of calls to emergency hotlines and specific hotlines for complaints or counseling for women in situations of gender-based violence. In several countries, the dissemination of these channels of communication and the uninterrupted operation of the emergency hotlines (911 lines) was increased, with the strengthening of the response to reports of violence against women, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day².

In Colombia, the 155 line registered an 86% growth between March 2020 and February 2021 in general calls compared to the same period in the previous year, while calls for domestic violence increased 98%¹. In Paraguay, calls to the 137 hotline increased by 78% during the quarantine period. In Argentina, communications for gender violence received on the 144 hotline increased between April and October 2020, compared to the same period the previous year¹.

² Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). See the gender tab of the section "Measures and actions at the national level" of the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean (Ibidem).

In most countries, the dissemination of hotlines for the prevention and counseling of women in situations of violence has been reinforced through social networks, radio, television and other public media.³ (ECLAC and UN Women, 2021). In some countries, these hotlines have not been limited to collecting reports or providing information, but have also offered free direct assistance services to women facing critical situation in some cases.

To this end, some governments report increased hiring of specialized personnel for assistance. In Argentina, for example, 51 people were added to the 144 hotline, while in Colombia, the number of National Police personnel was increased to attend to the 155 hotline of the Presidential Advisory Office on Gender Equity (Consejería Presidencial para la Equidad de la Mujer) and 20 professionals were hired to provide counseling to women in situations of violence. In Paraguay, service capacity was expanded through the acquisition of new cell phones and the provision of unlimited telephone and messaging lines enabled by the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL). In Peru, a mental health team was added to provide remote psychological support and monitoring of the operators of hotlines to ensure their well-being and mental health and guarantee comprehensive and empathetic care for the duration of the emergency⁴. In addition, in some countries, protocols or guidelines were established for telephone line workers to provide care under virtual modalities. For example, in Ecuador, a protocol was drawn up with the procedures to be followed for comprehensive assistance to victims of violence under the teleworking modality within the framework of the COVID-19 health emergency. Some countries also strengthened coordination between responses and links with other national hotlines for intervention in situations of violence. In Colombia, the Presidential Advisory Office on Gender Equity worked in coordination with the Attorney General's Office through line 122 to receive complaints and with the Prosecutor's Office and the Ombudsman's Office to support people affected by domestic violence. In Guatemala, Suriname and St. Kitts and Nevis, telephone lines were set up in other institutions, especially mental health institutions, to broaden the channels of access to support resources.

New channels of assistance and reporting through digital media: In several countries, the channels of communication, assistance and reporting have been expanded through e-mail, chat, instant messaging applications and mobile applications⁵, portals with geo-referenced services, among others. The 144 line' messaging channels, generated by Whatsapp in Argentina, for example, registered 25% of the queries, which is why it was declared a permanent service⁶. In Colombia, several digital channels (e-mail, chat, instant messaging applications, click to call, web service, portal and video call) were launched, with 16.8% of contacts made through these channels between March and July 2020⁷. In Chile, an immediate response chat has been set up on the website of the National Service for Women and Gender Equity (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género). This chat works discreetly and silently, deleting any record of the conversation once the chat window is closed, protecting the women who consult it⁸. In Honduras,

³ Countries that have disseminated their violence hotlines include Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). See the gender area of the section "Measures and actions at the national level" of the COVID-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean [online] <https://www.cepal.org/es/temas/covid-19>

⁴ <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/mimp/noticias/187783-profesionales-de-primera-linea-del-programa-aurora-reciben-acompanamiento-psicologico>

⁵ See the measures promoted by Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Suriname (Ibidem).

⁶ https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/210128-mgd-informegestion2020-maquetaweb_simples.pdf

⁷ <http://www.equidadmujer.gov.co/oag/Documents/linea-155-boletin-15.pdf>

⁸ See [online] <https://www.sernameg.gob.cl/?p=31210>

a digital platform of services for adult and adolescent women who have experienced any situation of violence has been set up to ensure comprehensive care through counseling services with professionals in psychology, social work and legal advice. These innovations have contributed to increasing the points of contact and safe consultation for women in situations of violence; however, there are important challenges in terms of dissemination, capacity building of officials who perform this service, protection of personal data and expansion of coverage to the population with limited access to internet and digital devices, either for economic reasons or because they live in rural areas.

New channels of assistance and reporting through pharmacies, stores, among others: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and the Dominican Republic have implemented alternative channels for counseling and reporting in conjunction with networks of pharmacies, supermarkets, service stations and stores with 24-hour service. This is intended to broaden the channels of access to information, guidance and assistance in situations of violence. On some occasions a code word has been established ("Barbijo rojo" in Argentina, "Mascarilla 19" in Chile, "Comprobante Fiscal 212" in the Dominican Republic, among others) as an indicator for requesting assistance and for activating protocols for personnel to provide guidance, support and referral to the corresponding services and institutions. Some reports have alerted about the challenges in the implementation of these initiatives. According to data from the Chilean Ministry of Women and Gender Equity, as of June 2020, 50% of the municipalities had support networks in pharmacies, however, these have had a low demand since the beginning of the measure in April 2020⁹. For this reason, clear protocols have been suggested on the procedures for action and referral after a request for assistance, training for the personnel who serve the public and who must activate the protocols, as well as the establishment of mechanisms to ensure compliance with these initiatives¹⁰. In Bogota, Colombia, information on counseling channels was provided to women through messages printed on the packaging of feminine pads handed out free of charge in pharmacies and neighborhood stores.

Strengthening capacity for provision of services: The tension caused by the crisis, mobility restrictions and the demands of the implementation of new protocols has required capacity building of staff of national machineries for the advancement of women and other public agencies, as well as staff of civil society organizations that in many cases work in coordination with the implementation of public policies on violence. Training and coordination between teams from different localities and sectors has been generated to ensure proper functioning and continuity in the context of the pandemic. Some countries (Chile, Ecuador and Brazil) developed contingency plans and protocols to face the first months of the emergency by expanding their teams, organizing mobile teams or extending shifts. In some cases, this has made it possible to have uninterrupted assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Additional shelters: In some countries, new centers or shelters have been set up for women in situations of violence. In Argentina, the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity coordinated with trade unions and university organizations to make hotels and other accommodation facilities available for use by people in situations of extreme gender-based violence. In addition, specific channels of contact were established for direct liaison with provincial and local governments and with civil society, community and territorial organizations in order to strengthen comprehensive protection homes. During the pandemic, Jamaica opened the first national shelters for women victims of gender-based violence and their children, while in Panama the National Women's Institute strengthened its presence at the national level by opening new Centers for Comprehensive Care for Women in East Panama. Moreover, some countries

⁹ See [online] https://www.camara.cl/verdoc.aspx?prmTIPO=OFICIO_FISCALIZACION_RESPUESTA&prmID=91450

¹⁰ See [online] <https://radio.uchile.cl/2020/05/27/falsas-expectativas-de-seguridad-solo-30-mujeres-han-acudido-a-mascarilla-19-en-todo-el-pais/>

have established conditions and standards of hygiene and sanitation necessary for the prevention of COVID-19 infection in shelters and safe houses. This not only reduces the risk of infection, but also helps women in situations of violence to consider shelters as safe places to turn to. In Paraguay, Mexico¹¹ and Costa Rica, biosafety protocols and recommendations have been established for the transfer, admission and stay of women and dependents in temporary shelters or reception centers to protect the health of staff and users. Measures such as the above are highly relevant to ensure the use of shelters.

Mobility and travel permits in the territory: During the pandemic, mobility and isolation possibilities decreased, and in the case of women living in situations of violence this has an impact on the support networks to which they often appeal. In Argentina, an exception to the restriction of movement was established for women or LGBTI persons, alone or with their children, who need to report violence or request assistance for violent situations. Likewise, Costa Rica exempts persons who must leave their homes for reasons of domestic violence from being fined. Given the restrictions on mobility and the fragmentation of the territory in terms of quarantines, curfews or the impossibility of leaving or entering certain areas, cities, departments or states, some machineries for the advancement of women (Argentina, Honduras, El Salvador, Paraguay) have strengthened the territorial work of their local assistance and prevention units, training their own teams and those of local public services; establishing links with networks of women's organizations, social leaders, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and emergency committees, among others. The aim is to promote awareness and support, and to enable the operation of mobile windows that travel through various localities to provide the public services available to address the problem of violence. In Peru, a protocol was drawn up to define the urgent mobile care route, in order to identify and respond to cases of violence in rural communities. The measure included special authorization for teams of professionals to travel to the places where women in situations of violence are found, especially in emergency cases, to assess the situation and eventually move them to safe places.

¹¹ See (online) https://coronavirus.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Recomendaciones_mitigacion_COVID-19_refugios_mujeres_violencia_extrema.pdf

Access to justice: extension of precautionary measures, expansion of channels of assistance and accessibility.

Physical isolation and other measures restricting movement have affected the functioning of public services, including those related to access to justice, restricting them to the most serious and flagrant situations. Some countries have shown a drop in complaints, despite an increase in calls and contacts to hotlines. In Chile, for example, there was a 14% decrease in domestic violence reports and a 20% decrease in reports to the Public Prosecutor's Office, both during March 2020.¹² Between 2019 and 2020, police home interventions have decreased in Argentina, reaching an 80% drop in the intervention of family violence cases¹³ and 81% in those of sexual violence in the period from April to December¹⁴.

This could indicate difficulties in the access to protection by police and judicial agencies, as well as a reduced capacity of response by them. In fact, in Argentina, the Ombudsman's Office of the Province of Buenos Aires has warned of complaints related to the difficulty in communicating or receiving attention in courts and prosecutors' offices, errors in the notification of judicial decisions by the police, as well as a lack of knowledge about some judicial measures.¹⁵ In view of this, measures to ensure access to justice and effective protection for women in situations of violence are indispensable.

Continuity of services: Some countries explicitly defined that judicial services related to violence against women should maintain continuity in their operation. In Ecuador, Guatemala and Honduras, continuity of services was established in specialized or competent courts dealing with violence against women. In Colombia, measures were taken to guarantee the uninterrupted provision of services by the Comisarías de Familia under the state of economic, social and ecological emergency. In Mexico, some women's justice centers remain operational during the health emergency, while in Nicaragua, police personnel responsible for women's affairs and the Public Prosecutor's Office continue to work on and investigate cases of violence against women in the context of the health crisis.

Accessibility: Taking into account the difficulties of traveling to judicial headquarters, innovative actions have been established, for example, the authorization for judges to travel to police stations for the immediate issuing of protective or precautionary measures (Peru). In Guatemala, different jurisdictional bodies have conducted hearings virtually to avoid exposure to the virus. In Argentina, the Specialized Prosecutor's Unit for Violence against Women (UFEM) has published a list of urgent measures suggested to prosecutors for cases of violence against women during isolation in their homes. These measures include deploying police to the home to stop the violence and remove the aggressor from the premises; receiving complaints and reports at home or remotely; and applying judicial protection measures. In El Salvador, the Supreme Court of Justice set up a free telephone line specialized in gender-based violence and violence against children, adolescents and the elderly, which allows the teleoperator to contact the relevant judicial headquarters directly, depending on the location and type of request, thus facilitating access to justice. In Colombia, the Attorney General's Office implemented an internal protocol for prosecutors to ensure the speed and effectiveness of investigations. This protocol includes the receiving of complaints through the 122 telephone line, the "ADenunciar" application or by e-mail¹⁶.

¹²<https://www.senado.cl/violencia-intrafamiliar-en-tiempos-de-cuarentena-comision-de-la-mujer/senado/2020-04-09/140406.html>

¹³ See <https://public.tableau.com/profile/justicia.abierta#!/vizhome/IntervencionesLinea137/Intervenciones137>

¹⁴ See <http://datos.jus.gob.ar/dataset/linea-137-victimas-de-violencia-sexual/archivo/56bbf24e-5dfd-41a4-806a-37a90e35d39a> y <http://datos.jus.gob.ar/dataset/linea-137-victimas-de-violencia-sexual/archivo/2a6614c7-b9df-4b9d-a062-13cbb9175c29>

¹⁵ <https://www.defensorba.org.ar/contenido/impacto-del-aislamiento-social-en-la-vida-de-las-mujeres-e-identidades-disidente>

¹⁶ Ibidem.

Protective measures: In the context of the pandemic, it is important to ensure that judicial protection measures continue to be available through automatic extension for measures already decreed and expiring in the quarantine period and by ensuring that the application is accessible for newly reported cases, for example, by allowing remote applications; admitting testimony and evidence through electronic means; or introducing special work shifts for lawyers, prosecutors and judges. In countries such as Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, ministries and machineries for the advancement of women have requested the Judiciary at the national and subnational levels to extend precautionary and protective measures to women in situations of violence whose term ends within the COVID-19 emergency period. Thus, in Uruguay, the Judiciary has urged its magistrates to be especially diligent in monitoring protection measures. In Argentina, provision has been made for the automatic extension for 60 days of judicial protection measures for victims of violence, and most of the provinces have adhered to the request for as long as the situation of social, preventive and mandatory isolation lasts, thus guaranteeing the protection of women's rights. In Brazil, Guatemala and Peru, the Judiciary has also extended protection measures.

The governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have established important initiatives to address violence against women in the context of the pandemic. Some of these initiatives are promising and could be incorporated into the daily supply of care services, improving accessibility by taking into account the multiple and interrelated forms of discrimination faced by women. This requires a training process for the people who operate these services, especially for new actors such as pharmacy and retail workers. Likewise, the installation of these new channels requires improving women's access to the internet and digital devices, while guaranteeing confidentiality in the service and the protection of their personal data. This is not an easy task. Preliminary assessments have shown that the adaptation of the civil service to remote service modalities has been very complex and limited in the justice sector, which increases the risk of impunity that traditionally affects these crimes. The large number of reports on remote hotlines and also in face-to-face services requires strengthening public action with an increase in fiscal resources and measures to ensure comprehensive attention in services for women in situations of violence, as well as access to justice through active, expeditious, timely and efficient channels (ECLAC, 2020). On the other hand, challenges persist in getting women to denounce their aggressors and thus gain access to justice. This is particularly important for women living in rural, isolated or conflict areas, migrant women, women who speak indigenous languages, women with disabilities who require specific means to ensure the delivery of information or access to quality, timely and expeditious services. This requires strengthening public supply in terms of coverage and quality, securing the resources to make this happen. Civil society organizations have played an important role in the protection and assistance for women and girls who have suffered violence, and have sought various ways to maintain active mobilization in order to comprehensively and decisively address this serious violation of the human rights of women and girls. Finally, it is important for governments to gather information and make visible other forms of gender-based violence in addition to intimate partner violence (cyber violence, violence in public spaces, obstetric violence, among others) that have been manifested during the crisis and that require new ways of dealing with them.

2. CARE ECONOMY

Care activities are essential for the sustainability of life, the functioning of societies and the economic system. Latin America and the Caribbean is characterized by an unjust social organization of care, in which unequally distributed responsibilities fall mainly on households and are mostly performed by women in an unpaid manner.

The concept of the "care economy" includes all unpaid work performed within households, as well as domestic and care work performed for pay in the labor market. This concept makes it possible to analyze care at its most micro scale, by observing the fundamental tasks for the reproduction of the labor force that are performed in households and communities. It also considers the dynamics of care situated in markets and employment or in the provision of public services, the provision of infrastructure and the formulation of public policy (ECLAC, 2019).

The crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the centrality of care work, while at the same time demonstrating the unsustainability of its current organization. In Latin America and the Caribbean, since before the pandemic, women spent three times as much time as men on unpaid and care work, a situation that has been exacerbated by the growing demand for care and the reduction in the supply of services caused by the containment measures imposed in most countries to curb the crisis. Ultimately, the crisis has intensified existing economic and gender inequalities, since it is the poorest women who bear the greatest burden of care and whose chances of earning a livelihood are most affected by the overload of care.

This section summarizes some of the measures implemented by the governments of the region to address the impacts of COVID-19 on caregiving. It highlights measures that recognize the right to be cared for in a situation of dependency, and the rights of caregivers through tools to carry out the work, social protection or employment benefits. In particular, it highlights initiatives with the potential to alleviate the burden of unpaid work that disproportionately falls on women, helping to challenge the sexual division of labor and the rigid construction of gender roles in caregiving. The document highlights measures that tend to redistribute care not only within the household but also among all actors in society, involving the State, the market, the community and diverse family and household structures.

Care services

Confinement and isolation measures adopted to contain the health crisis have implied the closure of educational and care centers for children and dependent persons, including the elderly. For example, the closure of schools and extracurricular activities for boys and girls has shifted the responsibility for monitoring of learning to the household, falling mainly on women. Contagion prevention measures have also required physical distancing and this in turn has made it difficult to count on the support of informal care arrangements, such as the support networks of relatives and neighbors, among others. At the same time, the pressure on health systems due to the health situation has also transferred several activities related to the health care of household members to the home. This has increased care work in households, which falls mainly on women.

It is interesting to note that regardless of the regulatory and institutional advances in relation to care policies and systems in the countries of the region, there are still great challenges to articulate a comprehensive response with a gender perspective to address this care crisis, even in countries that have made the most progress in recognizing the right to care or in establishing care systems. According to the

information gathered, no initiatives that promote the care sector as a strategic sector for a reactivation with equality have been identified. In general, countries have responded to the care challenges caused by confinement measures by focusing support on certain dependent populations such as the elderly and early childhood.

In almost all countries, educational and child care centers were temporarily closed, although not in the same way or for the same duration. One exception was the Costa Rican government's National Child Care and Development Network (REDCUDI), which decided to continue to provide care services and subsidies linked to the network. In this way, the government has made it possible for people to count on the service and thus avoid overloading care tasks on fathers, mothers or responsible persons, or their family support networks, particularly in the case of older adults who are at greater risk of COVID-19. This initiative is a measure that contributes to gender equality, since it is usually women who, in the absence of public care services and less involvement of men in this type of work, face an increased burden of care and face greater restrictions to participate in the labor market. In the context of the health crisis, the initiative to keep child care centers open also implies the need to safeguard the rights, safety and well-being of working people, mainly women who are overrepresented in the care sectors. One of REDCUDI's executing units, the National Directorate of Education Centers and Comprehensive Care Child Care Centers (CEN-CINAI) launched the "CEN-CINAI at Home" modality with the aim of integrating and developing preventive nutrition, health, growth and development strategies in the home. In those services that continued with direct attention to the public, CEN-CINAI developed mandatory guidelines on self-care and protection in the performance of their work, including guidelines for the protection of the mental health of employees.

In Colombia and Argentina, the governments acted to strengthen services for people with disabilities. In March 2020, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Colombia prepared guidelines for persons with disabilities, their families, caregivers and health sector actors (territorial health directorates, providers and insurers) on the implementation of differential measures for the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 infection. In Argentina, additional resources were established for programs for persons with disabilities, including subsidies to cover operating costs and inputs for the prevention of COVID-19 in the context of two existing programs, and additional inputs for the care of persons with disabilities in the provincial disability areas or in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (Provincial Bank Program). Recognizing the right of persons with disabilities to access services, including care services, a one-year extension of the Single Disability Certificates and International Access Symbols was also established, which facilitates the access of persons with disabilities to services and benefits in the areas of health, transportation and cash transfers.

In some countries, to compensate for the suspension of care services for the elderly, teleassistance channels have been reinforced. In Mexico, the Secretariat of Welfare promoted support networks for elderly women to monitor their emotional well-being and health, while in Costa Rica a line was set up for psychological support for the elderly. Meanwhile, in the City of Buenos Aires (Argentina), a programme was implemented in which volunteers provided support to older persons in preventive and mandatory isolation by providing telephone assistance, shopping in pharmacies and local shops, paying for services, walking pets and helping to use digital applications.

In some countries, given the pressure on health systems and the work overload, specific support was established for health sector workers, implicitly recognizing women who represent 72.8% of the total number of people employed in this sector in the region and who are on the front line of the response to the pandemic. In Cuba, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security established a monthly transfer for as long as the pandemic health care is maintained, to integral health service assistants who carry out food, linen

and hospital sanitation functions, and to laundry equipment operators in hospitals caring for confirmed COVID-19 patients and high-risk suspects¹⁷. In Argentina, an incentive allowance was granted to all health workers (professionals, technicians, assistants and assistants) in the public, private and social security systems for the months of April, May, June and July 2020¹⁸.

In the region, some measures have been promoted for the care of the child or adolescent population while educational establishments remain closed. In Cuba, a salary guarantee has been established for people employed in the labor market and in charge of the care of children whose classes (in primary, special and kindergarten education) have been suspended. In Bolivia, during the National Emergency, the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Welfare established an exceptional regulation on the granting of special paid leave that includes fathers, mothers or guardians of children under five years of age. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Government recommended that the public and private sector explore alternative measures to face-to-face work such as teleworking, flexible schedules and other care arrangements. In the absence of a care solution, the "Pandemic Leave" provisions suggest that busy parents without access to childcare support during school closures can stay at home with their dependents without being penalized with disciplinary action or payment of their wages. In addition, the legal framework of telework contracts in Argentina is highlighted, which establishes that persons working under this modality and who can prove that they are responsible, on a sole or shared basis, for the care of persons under thirteen years of age, persons with disabilities or elderly persons who live with the worker and who require specific assistance, shall be entitled to schedules compatible with the care tasks they are responsible for and/or to interrupting their working day¹⁹.

Mobility due to care responsibilities

During the period of confinement, some of the countries that imposed quarantines recognized care services as essential activities and therefore exempted them from movement restrictions. In El Salvador, Colombia and Peru, exceptions to movement restrictions have been established for the care of children, the elderly, persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses. In El Salvador this exception has been applied to travel to a place of emergency or periodic medical care, while in Colombia the exception has been applied more broadly for all assistance and care activities, including care of adolescents as well as children. Both countries included specialized care workers in the exception.

In Argentina, an exception to the restriction on movement was established for persons who must assist others with disabilities, family members in need of assistance, the elderly, or children and adolescents. In addition, this exception includes a) single trips for the child to return to his or her usual home; b) travel to the home of the other parent, relative or a figure of referential and emotional support when one of the parents, for work reasons or force majeure, must be absent from the home, thus recognizing the right of both parents to care for and work in a remunerated manner, and c) for health reasons or in the best interest of the child who moves to the home of the other parent, thus also recognizing the co-responsibility of both parents. (De la Cruz and Scuro, 2020).

Communication campaigns on co-responsibility

¹⁷ According to data from the Ministry of Public Health, as of July 2020, women represented 78% of the total number of workers benefiting from this measure.

¹⁸ It has been revealed that in one of the most feminized sectors of the economy, 71% of the people benefiting from this allowance have been women.

¹⁹ <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/233626/20200814>

Since the beginning of the pandemic and particularly during periods of confinement, several campaigns related to care have been implemented to promote co-responsibility within households. Communicational pieces and information on the importance of making visible and redistributing unpaid and care work performed mainly by women in households and on co-responsibility for care have been disseminated through social networks in El Salvador, Ecuador (#EnCasaCompartimosActividades), Peru (Vivamos el aislamiento con igualdad/ Let's live isolation with equality) and the Dominican Republic (En esta Casa somos Equipo/In this house we are a team).

The campaigns implemented are distinguished by their duration, scope and type of information shared. In addition to information, some initiatives disseminated tools to promote co-responsibility within households. In Mexico, for example, the national campaign "Hombres en sana convivencia: en esta contingencia, cuidar hace la diferencia" (Men in healthy coexistence: in this contingency, caring makes the difference) in collaboration with UN Women and the dissemination of a guide and materials aimed at men to encourage their commitment to care, stand out. In Costa Rica, the #YoMeApuntoaCuidarnos campaign, created with support from UNDP and UNFPA, offers tools on coexistence without violence and co-responsibility for household chores to men of all ages. In addition, support and counseling services for men were strengthened through a telephone support line.

In Argentina, the national campaign "Cuidar en Igualdad. Necesidad, derecho y trabajo" (Caring in Equality. Necessity, right and work), which is aimed not only at citizens but also at political, technical and administrative teams of state agencies, civil society social organizations, the early childhood education community, university departments, trade unions, companies, cooperatives and those who carry out community care services. This initiative contributes to the recognition of the co-responsibility of care among a broad group of public and private actors, and thus aims to contribute to the design of comprehensive public care policies that promote a more equal redistribution of these tasks²⁰. This campaign also stands out for its approach to territorializing the care response through the implementation of Territorial Care Parliaments with the objective of exchanging experiences and local strategies on care and its social organization, raising awareness on the distribution of care practices and the underlying problems, surveying local needs and demands and agreeing on joint actions to reverse the current feminization of the social organization of care.

Paid domestic workers

Despite the evidence on the fundamental role of care in the organization of social life and people's well-being, the paid domestic and care work sector has been one of the most affected by the pandemic. Characterized by being a feminized sector with high levels of informality, this sector has been particularly impacted by the destruction of a high number of jobs, without women workers being able to access employment and income protection mechanisms available to other salaried workers (Valenzuela, Scuro and Vaca Trigo, 2020). According to ECLAC and ILO estimates, between 11 million and 13 million people in the region in 2019 were employed in the paid domestic work sector, and in all countries, more than 90% were women (UN Women ILO, ECLAC, 2020). In this context, employment protection measures for paid domestic workers are fundamental. In Peru, it was established that paid domestic workers must have a written contract, and measures were designed for labor protection and protection against violence and harassment, recognizing the particularities and risks that could be involved for workers when staying in their places of employment during mandatory quarantine (Legislative Decree No. 1499). In Chile, paid domestic workers were not included in the unemployment subsidy when the pandemic began, thus

²⁰ <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/campananacionalcuidarenigualdad.pdf>

preventing them from accessing the Employment Protection Law on an equal footing with other salaried workers. As a measure to face the crisis, the use of the compensation fund was made more flexible in order to allow workers suspended under the Employment Protection Law to make monthly partial withdrawals equivalent to a decreasing proportion of salary (70%-55%-45%-40%-40%-35%) for a period of 5 months or until the funds were exhausted. Subsequently, Law No. 19.728, which establishes unemployment insurance, has been amended to incorporate paid domestic workers into unemployment insurance as of October 1, 2020. This allowed female workers to access the provisions of the Employment Protection Law.

Many paid domestic workers have maintained their jobs during the pandemic, playing a central role in the care of children, sick and dependent persons, as well as in the maintenance of households, including the prevention of virus infection through hygiene measures. The development of health and safety protocols that address the specificities of the paid domestic work sector has been fundamental in reducing the risk of contagion during their activities. In Barbados, the Ministry of Health and Welfare established guidelines aimed at protecting paid domestic workers to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Likewise, INAMU in Costa Rica has created the communication campaign *¡Seguimos estando aquí!* (We are still here!) and a website with information on the prevention of COVID-19 infection at work, the labor rights of domestic workers in the event of dismissal, and good practices for employers, among other messages. There are also telephone lines and e-mail addresses of the National Women's Institute and the Joint Institute for Social Assistance available for domestic workers to receive support and guidance on their rights.

In addition, some countries have launched awareness campaigns on the rights of domestic workers. In Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador, information campaigns on the prevention of COVID-19 infection and their rights in the context of the pandemic were disseminated to paid domestic workers and their employers. Likewise, Ecuador and Costa Rica have disseminated information on complaint mechanisms for cases in which the rights of workers are violated. However, it is still important to make progress in making information available in different formats and through different media, given the persistence of the gender digital divide.

Given the precarious working conditions and informality faced by this sector, measures that include paid domestic workers as a target population for cash transfers or social subsidies for the COVID-19 pandemic are important. In Argentina, the Emergency Family Income (IFE) establishes a non-contributory monetary benefit of an exceptional nature aimed at unemployed persons, informal workers and domestic workers (formal or informal). The inclusion of domestic workers in formal employment in this program is noteworthy, given the challenges regarding the quality of employment and the average income level of the sector. Likewise, the Family Protection Voucher for the Health Emergency in Ecuador, which was granted in two phases, included both people affiliated to the Unpaid Domestic Work regime and paid domestic workers.

In Mexico, the Financial Support Program for Family Microenterprises "Programa de Crédito a la Palabra" was created for micro-entrepreneurs, self-employed persons, service providers and paid domestic workers who are registered with the Mexican Social Security Institute.

The measures promoted in the countries of the region differ in nature and scope. Many of them reflect a growing commitment to ensuring access to care for dependent persons, promoting co-responsibility through communication campaigns and advancing towards the recognition of the rights of caregivers and paid domestic workers in a context of increasing burdens of domestic and care work in households.

3. SOCIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

The COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed multiple crises in the health, economic and social spheres with impacts on women's lives. The structural challenges of gender inequalities that characterize Latin America and the Caribbean are reinforced in this unprecedented crisis, with an impact and deterioration of women's living conditions.

In response to these challenges, many governments have expanded existing social protection programs, while in other cases new transfers have been implemented. In general, these have been short-term measures to alleviate the immediate effects of the emergency on the income of poor households and individuals. In general, women are not usually the subjects of public policy, but rather operational beneficiaries because they belong to poor households or are financially responsible for their households. In a few cases, such as Costa Rica and Brazil, measures were implemented that explicitly targeted women as the main income earners in single-parent households. In several countries, although the benefit is granted to the family or the household, priority is given to women with regard to payment, on the assumption that they are better and more efficient in terms of using the money for the well-being of all members of the household. It is important to note that prioritizing women in the payment of transfers is not necessarily based on the assertion of women's rights. (ECLAC, 2021b).

In some countries, emergency measures included both subsidies and protection for workers and for the unemployed or people without incomes (Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil), while in others, support for people affected in terms of employment was distinguished from support for households or people living in poverty (Costa Rica, Chile). Social protection measures aimed at protecting the employment or income of people in the labor market (formal or informal), such as those initiatives linked to unemployment insurance, cash transfers for informal workers, among others, are presented in the following section on employment and income generation for women.

For the purposes of this document, social protection measures that refer to monetary transfers (new or existing) and in-kind transfers are analyzed. The analysis focuses on measures with implicit or explicit potential to support women's rights and advancing gender equality, so an exhaustive analysis of all social protection measures is not carried out. In particular, it highlights those measures where women are the direct beneficiaries, compared to initiatives that, although not exclusively aimed at women, benefit them because they belong to households in poverty or form an important part of the population to which the support is directed. It also reflects on transfers involving conditionalities, which, for example, may have an impact on the additional burden of unpaid work that falls mainly on women, highlighting cases of suspension of these conditionalities in the context of the crisis.

Cash transfers

The most commonly used modality is emergency cash transfers, although there are differences in terms of eligibility criteria, amounts and duration. The most commonly used form is emergency income or vouchers, which are granted on a one-time basis or for a limited period of time. In some countries, measures have been extended in response to the permanence or second wave of the pandemic. These transfers can be distinguished between new transfers, which are the most frequent modality in the region, and expansion or increase of benefits through existing transfers.

Among the new transfers, those aimed explicitly at women living in poverty, women who are the main income earners in the household, pregnant women, nursing mothers or women with dependents are noteworthy. In Costa Rica, a new extraordinary subsidy was established for female-headed households with dependents, elderly or disabled persons, who were not covered by other government programmes. Unlike the Bono Proteger, this subsidy is not aimed at people affected in employment by COVID-19. In order to access the voucher, households were identified by the existing social information systems, prioritizing the presence of female heads of household, elderly people, people with disabilities or minors, implicitly recognizing the increase in the burden of unpaid work due to the crisis, especially for households living in poverty. The subsidy consisted of two payments in April and June 2020. The delivery process has been adapted to overcome the gaps in financial inclusion that affect mostly women²¹, by improving availability of banking services for people without an account to access the two transfers²².

In Brazil, the Emergency Assistance transfer was granted to informal workers or unemployed women and men who do not receive the conditional cash transfer of the Bolsa Familia and explicitly benefits women in single-parent households who receive double payment of the subsidy. This transfer was extended from its initial three-month period for two more months and then until December 2020. In Argentina, the Emergency Family Income (IFE) was created to compensate for the loss or serious decrease in income of people affected by the health emergency. It was paid automatically to all beneficiaries of the Universal Child Allowance or Pregnancy Allowance without the need to make a prior application. Jamaica also provided financial and in-kind support to pregnant teenage women as the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation was temporarily closed due to virus containment measures.

Colombia created the Solidarity Income Program, a new unconditional cash transfer that benefits individuals and households in situations of poverty and vulnerability, who are not beneficiaries of other social programs, identifying women as a priority group to receive the transfer. The transfer was initially granted for three months beginning in March 2020; however, in recognition of the long duration of the crisis, this benefit has been extended until June 2021. It should be noted that the Vice-Presidency of the Republic and the Presidential Council for Women's Equity, together with Women's Secretariats at the sub-national level and with the support of women's organizations, consolidated a database with information on mothers who are the main providers of the household and workers in the informal sector to be beneficiaries of the program. According to the first balance of the Solidarity Income as of April 24, 2020, in the first delivery of the program, 57% of the beneficiaries were women.

In Peru, an exceptional monetary subsidy is granted to households living in poverty or extreme poverty within the framework of the COVID-19 health emergency. This subsidy was granted to households included in the Household Targeting System in the geographic areas with the greatest health vulnerability defined by the Ministry of Health. In the second delivery of the subsidy, the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion incorporated new virtual payment methods: deposit in bank account, payment through the digital payment platform and mobile banking, in order to prevent people from crowding at bank agencies and to expand access to the subsidy for people who are not banked²³. This could particularly benefit women in the first income quintiles given the intersection between poverty, the digital divide and the gender inequality they face.

²¹ Initial reports on the implementation of Costa Rica's Bono Proteger assume that gender gaps in bankarization explain the lower awarding of the Bono to women despite the fact that there are more women applicants than men (see page X).

²² <https://www.presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2020/06/23-700-familias-en-vulnerabilidad-reciben-subsidio-extraordinario-de-100-mil-colones/>

²³ <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/midis/noticias/143602-mas-de-2-millones-de-hogares-cobrarán-a-partir-de-hoy-el-segundo-pago-del-subsidio-yo-me-queda-en-casa-de-manera-virtual>

Another group of transfers are those that, despite not explicitly targeting women, nor prioritizing them in the collection, result in a higher proportion of women among the recipient population. This is the case of the Emergency Family Income introduced in Chile implemented since May 2020, with a maximum of four contributions to individuals and households that are registered in the Social Registry of Households and have no formal income and to households with the presence of elderly people who are beneficiaries of social protection programs. The amount of the benefit is estimated according to the number of persons and the economic situation of the household during the state of emergency. According to data from the Ministry of Social Development and Family updated as of August 31, 2020, the four Emergency Family Income benefits had a percentage of more than 55% of women among its beneficiaries, and about 60% of the households benefiting were headed by women.²⁴

Several countries in the region have increased the amounts or established additional transfers within the framework of existing programs. It should be noted that in the case of Argentina, different measures have been promoted whose targeting criteria explicitly include women who receive universal child or pregnancy allowances. In addition to increasing the amount of the transfer and the AlimentAR Card, it is stipulated that the companies providing energy, water, telephone and internet services will not be able to suspend or cut off the respective services in the event of default or non-payment from March to December 2020. In Paraguay, close to 80% of those accessing the Tekoporã Program are women. In the context of the pandemic, an additional transfer to the beneficiaries of this program has been included. In Uruguay, the amount of the Plan de Equidad family allowance aimed at supplementing the income of households with dependent children was doubled. This income is paid in two equal instalments and was doubled on four occasions between April and December 2020. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Parto Humanizado and Lactancia Materna vouchers for women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period were continued.

One of the examples in the Caribbean is St. Lucia, which increased the number of households benefiting from the Public Assistance Cash Transfer Program as part of the Government's plan for economic recovery and resilience. Trinidad and Tobago also announced an increase in the coverage of the food card for families with children, to include families with children entitled to school meals who do not have the card or families that have been affected in terms of employment by the pandemic.

In Bolivia, a one-time emergency transfer equivalent to a family basket was granted to low-income households whose members include women who receive the Juana Azurduy benefit, which is aimed at pregnant women and mothers of children under two years of age. It should be noted that the Juana Azurduy benefit, which is granted to mothers who do not have short-term health insurance, requires as a condition to comply with the integral controls of the children, a task that may be difficult due to the confinement measures and epidemiological situation. In Chile, a single transfer "Bono de Emergencia COVID-19" (COVID-19 Emergency Voucher) was established, aimed, among others, at people who receive the Family Allowance, which corresponds to a conditional transfer aimed at people with dependents and with collection priority for the women of the household.

Due to the pandemic, existing conditional cash transfer programs have had to adapt their operations to the situation. In some countries, control or monitoring of compliance with the conditionalities associated with transfers has been temporarily suspended because families have been unable, to send their children

²⁴ Ministry of Social Development and Family, Emergency Family Income Pre-report, 2020 [online].
http://www.desarrollosocialyfamilia.gob.cl/storage/docs/2020.09.30_PREINFORME_INGRESO_FAMILIAR_DE_EMERGENCIA.pdf

to school, for example (ECLAC/UNICEF, 2020). In April 2020, in Colombia, the verification of compliance with the co-responsibilities in the delivery of transfers associated with the program Familias en Acción (Families in Action) was suspended. This program supports households with children and adolescents under 18 years of age through conditional cash transfers for health and education²⁵. In Costa Rica during March and April, following the temporary closure of schools, transfers from the Avancemos y Crecemos program were maintained²⁶, while in Guatemala in May 2020 it was announced that the Social Bonus Program aimed at families in poverty and extreme poverty, with children from zero to under 15 years of age and pregnant women, is granting transfers in an unconditional manner (ECLAC/UNICEF, 2020). In most countries, however, although it is to be expected that controls are not being implemented, no explicit measures have been established for the temporary suspension of these. Considering that conditionalities imply an additional burden of unpaid work and reinforce traditional gender roles, it would be important to consider maintaining the suspension of conditionalities beyond the current crisis context.

In-kind transfers

Several countries have adopted measures to ensure or facilitate basic services for households living in poverty. It should be noted that in the case of Argentina, essential services could not be suspended for users considered in a situation of vulnerability, including beneficiaries of the Universal Child Allowance (AUH) and Pregnancy Allowance.

Other measures to be noted have been the direct delivery of food and basic hygiene or medicine supplies. Most of this support was not explicitly aimed at women, yet it benefits women as they are over-represented in poor households.

In the Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda's COVID-19 Emergency Food Assistance Programme provides for the distribution of food packages and essential medicines to vulnerable populations, especially elderly people living alone, single-parent households, people with disabilities and unemployed people with dependent children. In St. Kitts and Nevis, hygiene and food packages have been given to different groups, including teenage mothers, women in single-parent households and the elderly. Jamaica delivered food, toiletries, diapers and nutrition for pregnant women and mothers who have been affected by the temporary closure of the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation in accordance with the measures taken by the Government to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In addition, menstrual hygiene products and contraceptive methods were distributed in several countries. In El Salvador, emergency kits for women have been distributed, including menstrual hygiene products. These kits have been distributed to women facing situations of violence, displaced women, women deported and returned from the United States to El Salvador, and women deprived of their freedom. In the Dominican Republic, menstrual hygiene products were included in the basic package of essential products provided through the "Quédate en Casa" program. Likewise, in Saint Lucia, as part of the Resilience and Economic Recovery Plan, COVID-19 care and hygiene packages were delivered to people in vulnerable situations, including sanitary towels for women. In Chile, the second stage of the Food for Chile program, which distributed basic necessities to citizens affected by the health crisis, included menstrual hygiene products and contraceptive methods.

²⁵ https://coronaviruscolombia.gov.co/Covid19/docs/decretos/minsalud/232_DECRETO_563_2020.pdf

²⁶ Directriz IMAS-GG-667-2020 of the Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social (IMAS).

In some countries, inputs have been distributed to improve food security. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Ministry of Agriculture has distributed free seeds to farmers and people growing food in their backyards, most of whom are women. Paraguay's Tekoporã Program has also promoted the "Mi Huerta" (My Garden) project, which aims to ensure food security while at the same time providing an opportunity to generate financial resources and promote women's economic autonomy as a measure to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The program provides support for the creation of family and community gardens by supplying inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, watering cans, among others.

The economic and social effects of the pandemic have had a significant impact on women's autonomy, among other reasons, because they are overrepresented in poor households, have limited access to basic services, have faced a greater burden of unpaid care work, and face gaps in access to financial and digital services. The measures implemented by governments have contributed to respond to the emergency and the loss of women's income and livelihoods. However, the challenge remains to promote actions to expand the coverage, amounts and duration of existing transfers, including in-kind transfers, or to create new social protection tools to address the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women in their diversity. In addition, the analysis of previous social programs shows that it is important to avoid making access to transfers subject to conditionalities that have an impact on women's care work burden or deepen gender inequalities.

DRAFT

4. EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the global and regional economy. According to estimates by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the strong economic contraction is negatively affecting employment and increasing the precariousness of working conditions in the region, which in the case of women represents a setback of more than ten years in their participation in the labor market. It is estimated that the unemployment rate for women will reach 22.2% in 2020 (assuming the same participation rate as in 2019), which implies a 12.6 percentage point year-on-year variation²⁷. A 7.7% fall in GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean, a sharp drop in the number of people leaving the labor force and an increase in unemployment would have a negative effect on household incomes (ECLAC, 2021a). Considering the overrepresentation of women in poor households, it is estimated that by 2020, around 118 million Latin American women were living in poverty. In addition, as a consequence of the measures adopted to curb contagion, a large impact is expected on economic activity and employment in highly feminized sectors, such as commerce, manufacturing, tourism and domestic service (ECLAC, 2021a). These sectors not only employ the majority of employed women in the region, but are also characterized by high rates of informality, low wages and low skill levels.

This section analyzes measures aimed at generating income for women or attempting to reduce gender gaps in access to productive resources, financing and financial services. It reflects on the focus of some of the measures promoted and identifies initiatives that contemplate affirmative criteria and actions for access to women in key sectors for reactivation.

Employment protection

In order to buffer and compensate for the effects of the crisis on employment and income, many countries have implemented exceptional measures such as subsidies, reductions in working hours, the possibility of suspending employment contracts with benefit entitlements, and leaves of absence targeted at specific populations, among others. Some of these measures have incorporated a gender approach in their design, while others have included women, pregnant women, mothers or main income earners in the household.

At the beginning of the pandemic, some countries suspended the requirement of attendance at the workplace, with full pay for workers belonging to a risk group as defined by the national health authority, among which priority was given to pregnant or breastfeeding women. In Argentina, while preventive and mandatory isolation is in force, attendance at the workplace is suspended, with full pay for workers over 60 years of age, pregnant women and people in risk groups²⁸. In El Salvador, it was established that employers in essential industries and services should send home workers at higher risk of contagion, including pregnant women, while in Mexico, the Ministry of Health recommended avoiding attendance at workplaces for populations that include pregnant and breastfeeding women on paid leave.²⁹

In Costa Rica, the law authorizing the reduction of working hours (and salaries in the same proportion) in order to preserve jobs in companies affected by the crisis includes protective provisions and gender parity measures. The law establishes as a specific protection measure for women workers that the temporary reduction of working hours and salaries does not apply to pregnant or breastfeeding workers. In addition,

²⁷ La CEPAL estima que la tasa de participación femenina en 2020 será de 46%, una disminución de 6 puntos porcentuales respecto de 2019. Con esta reducción de la participación de las mujeres en el mercado laboral, la tasa de desocupación femenina estimada disminuye al 12,0% en 2020.

²⁸ Véanse Resolución 207/2020 y Resolución 296/2020 del Ministerio de Trabajo, Empleo y Seguridad Social de la Argentina.

²⁹ Véase https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5590339&fecha=24/03/2020

it is decreed that the reduction of working hours must be made proportionally between men and women on the payroll for the same or equivalent positions (Article 6, Law No. 9832)³⁰. Meanwhile, in Costa Rica, the reform of the National Employment Program (PRONAE) established a Temporary Subsidy, aimed at people who are unemployed or who have seen their working hours or income reduced as a result of the national emergency. This measure prioritizes heads of household, or those with family responsibility, or people who are the sole breadwinners, with the implicit potential to benefit women in single-parent households.

In some countries, wage supplements have been established in order to maintain jobs or encourage hiring. In Colombia, the Formal Employment Support Program (PAEF), which establishes a monthly monetary contribution to support and protect formal employment during the COVID-19 pandemic, showed its capacity to adapt over time by integrating the gender perspective. The PAEF was implemented in May 2020 with a fixed contribution corresponding to 40% of a legal monthly minimum wage in force for individuals and companies that had a 20% decrease in their income, which can be granted up to three times. In October this measure was extended until March 2021 and modified to establish that employers with one or more women on their payrolls would receive an additional 10% state contribution per female worker. With this affirmative action, women receive 50% of the current legal monthly minimum wage, while men continue to receive 40%. As of November 2020, 41.9% of the total number of PAEF beneficiaries were women.³¹

With a vision towards a recovery with equality, Chile has established the Employment Subsidy to encourage the return of workers whose contracts were suspended during the crisis and the hiring of new people in companies, financing part of their salaries for up to 6 months. In particular, the "Regresa line" offers a higher subsidy (60% compared to the standard 50%) for young people between 18 and 23 years of age, women and people with disabilities in order to support the groups most affected by unemployment. Although this incentive is explicitly stated, between October 2020 and January 2021, only 39% of the beneficiaries have been women³².

In Argentina, as part of the Labor and Production Assistance Program (ATP), a supplementary salary payment has been established for male and female workers in the private sector equivalent to 50% of the worker's net salary (which cannot be less than one minimum, vital and mobile salary or more than two minimum salaries). Despite the fact that this payment is not addressed to women and that as of June 2020 only 35.8% of the complementary salaries were granted to women, it is expected that a significant number of women will be able to access this payment as they have lower average salaries than men.

Some of the countries in the region have established one-time or time-limited emergency benefits or incomes to assist the population affected as a result of the pandemic. Costa Rica's Bono Proteger, although not a measure explicitly targeted at women, has seen an increase in the number of women beneficiaries during its implementation. The Bono Proteger is an individual monthly transfer for three months (extendable for an equal period) aimed at informal workers and self-employed workers, as well as people who have been laid off, whose employment contract has been suspended or whose working

³⁰http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=90789&nValor3=119736&strTipM=TC

³¹ https://www.paef.ugpp.gov.co/anexos/Boletin_consolidado_mayo-noviembre-2020.pdf

³² See [online] <https://www.gob.cl/noticias/gobierno-llama-emprendas-contratar-mas-mujeres-bajo-la-modalidad-del-subsidio-al-empleo/>

hours have been reduced. According to the Second Execution Report of the Bono Proteger³³ According to the Second Execution Report of the Proteger Voucher, as of June 8, 2020, about 265,256 women had been benefited, which represents 49.8% of the total number of benefits granted. The report notes that despite the fact that more women had applied for the benefit and had been validated and even prioritized, more men had received it. This difference is partly explained by the bancarization rate of men compared to women (men are 15% more banked than women in Costa Rica). As the implementation of the benefit has progressed, progress has also been made in the digitalization and automation of the process, which has allowed for greater bankarization and inclusion of previously excluded people, such as women. As of December 8, 2020, women continue to be the largest applicants for the Bono (52.4% of applications have been made by women) and also the ones who benefit the most, representing 53.9% of the total number of bonds granted³⁴.

Some Latin American governments have promoted employment-related measures in sectors with a high presence of women, such as initiatives aimed at the accommodation and food service sector (61.5% of women) or the health sector (73.2% of women). In several Caribbean countries, employment and income protection measures have focused on the tourism sector, which has been hit hard as a result of restrictions on international travel. In the Caribbean, the tourism sector accounts for 11.9% of female employment and 5.7% of male employment (ECLAC 2021b), and in some countries the figure exceeds or equals that average for female employment, as is the case in St. Lucia (20.8%), Barbados (16.2%) and Jamaica (11.9%). Grenada established payroll support for company workers, temporary income support for self-employed workers and benefits for workers who lost their livelihoods, particularly benefiting workers with precarious jobs in call centers or the tourism sector. In the Bahamas, financial support was provided to self-employed persons in the tourism sector and other sectors whose sources of income have been interrupted by COVID-19. In Jamaica, the CARE Program contains several components with the potential to benefit women, such as temporary transfers for small businesses (COVID-19 Small Business Grants), self-employed workers (COVID-19 General Grants) and also businesses in the tourism sector (COVID-19 Tourism Grants).

Support for women in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises

Governments in the region have implemented different types of support for MSMEs and have also promoted initiatives aimed exclusively at women's entrepreneurship. New initiatives have been identified, as well as the strengthening of existing programs in areas such as training, marketing and financing.

Some countries have prioritized women in access to financing or programmes for the development of productive units. In Guatemala, new resources have been approved to support the financing needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for expansion and growth in June 2020, prioritizing women entrepreneurs and six rural areas of the country. In Chile, with the aim of recovery, the PAR-Impulsa Reactivation Support Program has launched calls for proposals for subsidies for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) led by women to reactivate, reconvert or digitize their businesses. This initiative was supported by resources provided by the Regional Governments and was available in eight regions of the country.

³³ See [online] http://www.mtss.go.cr/elministerio/despacho/covid-19-mtss/plan_proteger/archivos/segundo_informe_proteger.pdf

³⁴ See Eighth Monthly Report on Monitoring the Implementation of the Proteger Bond [online] http://www.mtss.go.cr/elministerio/despacho/covid-19-mtss/plan_proteger/archivos/octavo_informe_proteger.pdf

In Mexico, one million new microcredits have been granted to people enrolled in the Tandas para Bienestar programme. This programme offers productive loans at 0% interest rates to people between 30 and 67 years of age who have had a micro-business for more than 6 months and who are residents of a locality belonging to areas of medium, high or very high marginalization or with high rates of violence covered by the program. According to data from the National Women's Institute, 71% of the beneficiaries of this program are women. In addition, the programme gives priority access to women who live or have lived through gender violence and are in a situation of vulnerability, thus recognizing the link between physical and economic autonomy and the indivisibility of women's rights. In Argentina, people in situations of gender-based violence have also been included in the Potenciar Trabajo programme launched in June 2020, which seeks to contribute to generating new productive opportunities through the development of productive, community and socio-labor projects and the completion of educational trajectories. In addition, the programme ensures support from the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity to facilitate security and access to opportunities for women and LGBTI+ people who enter it. From May to December 30, 2020, there have been 4996 registrations of people in situations of violence incorporated to the Potenciar Trabajo programme³⁵.

Other countries have promoted training programs and expanded or created new lines of financing aimed explicitly at companies or organizations led by women. In Costa Rica, in order to support projects or productive activities led by women or groups of women and organizations that defend and promote women's rights, the law that creates the Fund for the Promotion of Productive Activities and Women's Organizations (FOMUJERES) was amended to make access to the fund more flexible in the 2020 call for proposals and during the following three calls for proposals. These modifications allow for the participation of de facto organizations and not only de jure organizations, organizations that face difficulties in complying with all the requirements, individual women's projects, and eliminated the restriction on the participation of women or women's organizations that benefited from the fund in the last 5 years.

In Costa Rica, within the framework of the National Program for Women Entrepreneurs "Women and Business 2020", training, technical assistance and support have been provided to companies led by women to improve their entrepreneurial management skills in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Honduras, the "Strategic Alliances for Women's Entrepreneurship" program has been launched virtually, linking the efforts of various sectors to support microenterprises led by women. The program provides support through training, improved access to markets and low-interest financing to promote the reactivation of micro and small enterprises as well as strengthening existing projects, such as Ciudad Mujer, which trains women in entrepreneurship through its economic autonomy module. With the aim of recovery with equality, this initiative will last for 18 months.

In Colombia, women's entrepreneurship has been prioritized as a key to reactivation with equality. The first autonomous patrimony has been created for "entrepreneurship, formalization and business strengthening of women, in order to mitigate the effects of the Social, Economic and Ecological Emergency" (Fondo Mujer Empeñe). The Fondo Mujer Empeñe was included in the new Entrepreneurship Law, approved in December 2020. This law ratifies and strengthens this initiative and establishes differential criteria to boost the participation of women's businesses in the public procurement system, thus recognizing the strategic role played by women in accelerating the country's

³⁵ https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/210128-mgd-informegestion2020-maquetaweb_simples.pdf

economic recovery³⁶. The Fund is an example of coordination from different sectors; its Board of Directors has the Council for Women's Equity as Technical Secretariat and includes representatives of the Ministries of Finance, Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Agriculture and Local Development, in addition to being administered by 'Fiduciaria Pública', while its financing comes from the National General Budget and territorial entities, international cooperation, multilateral banks and the private sector.

Digital media to boost women's entrepreneurship

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to mitigate its spread have accelerated the digital transformation of societies in the region and boosted the digital economy. While this acceleration brings opportunities, it also brings challenges for women's economic autonomy, especially for women with no or low incomes of their own. The intersection between poverty, the digital divide and gender inequality has an impact on who has access to and who is excluded from the digital economy (ECLAC, 2021b). Measures to restrict circulation and reduce demand have forced many companies to seek alternative ways to market their products and services.

In several countries, virtual training has enabled women to develop new skills that will allow them to launch and promote their enterprises online in the face of reduced marketing opportunities through traditional channels. In Colombia, virtual training has been promoted for women entrepreneurs in different regions of the country on digital marketing tools, financial inclusion and the institutional offer of technical and financial support for strengthening women's enterprises.

In Chile, several public institutions have designed virtual platforms offering training in administration, finance, marketing, innovation, leadership and personal development for women entrepreneurs. Training has also been provided to promote women's export entrepreneurship with information on logistics and business intelligence and business prospects in the current economic situation. In Peru, training has also been offered to women through the Regional Networks of Women Entrepreneurs and Businesswomen, with the aim of promoting the participation of women leaders of MSMEs and business associations in the national economic reactivation in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, some countries have promoted measures to support the marketing of products from women's enterprises. For example, in Chile, the virtual platform Mercado Mujer Online was launched to promote the sales of women's enterprises. Similarly, in Paraguay, the marketing of the products of women's microenterprises is promoted through home delivery in the context of the emergency and by disseminating this service through social networks and traditional media.

Affirmative measures for the participation of women in strategic economic recovery sectors

Some countries have promoted economic reactivation measures prioritizing sectors that have traditionally been considered as strategic to face crises. It should be noted that while some countries are moving towards recovery measures, others are facing new increases in the number of cases of infection and are implementing measures to respond to and contain the pandemic.

³⁶<http://www.equidadmujer.gov.co/prensa/2019/Paginas/Con-Ley-de-Emprendimiento-Gobierno-nacional-adopta-medidas-contundentes-para-potenciar-el-emprendimiento-de-las-mujeres.aspx>

Among the countries that are moving towards reactivation measures, the case of Costa Rica stands out. In this country, the campaign #JuntasConstruimosElFuturo (TogetherWeBuildTheFuture) was launched to break down sexist stereotypes and encourage the employability of women in jobs traditionally considered masculine, such as the construction sector. The Chilean Ministry of Women and Gender Equity promoted the creation of the "Women and Construction Working Group", a public-private alliance in collaboration with the Ministries of Economy, Labor, Public Works and Housing, with the purpose of reinserting women into the labor market by incorporating them into the reactivation of the construction sector. This roundtable has generated actions focused on improving the conditions for hiring women and the bidding processes with a gender perspective, as well as promoting good inclusive practices, increasing the supply of training and making the supply of the sector more visible. Along the same lines, Argentina launched a public works plan with a gender perspective that includes the construction of territorial centers for gender and diversity policies, and the prioritization of smaller work projects led by women's groups within the framework of the Argentina Makes plan, among other efforts to increase employment opportunities for women in public works.

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5. GENDER INSTITUTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges for gender mainstreaming in public policies and, in particular, in the coordination of State responses. This document identifies examples of collaboration between different sectors and State institutions.

In Colombia, the initiatives promoted by the Presidency and Vice-Presidency of the Republic to promote a recovery with gender equality are noteworthy. The gender approach has been included in the four axes of the "Commitment for Colombia" strategy that the Government is implementing for the economic reactivation of the country. Within this framework, the Presidential Directive³⁷, issued in October 2020, instructs the different ministries to establish programmes that guarantee the inclusion and generation of employment for women in Colombia, especially rural women and women mothers who head a household. The Directive recognizes that women have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of loss of employment and access to economic opportunities, recognizing also the overburden of unpaid and care work. Specific actions are stipulated in the four priority areas: commitment to employment generation, commitment to clean and sustainable growth, commitment to the poorest and most vulnerable in society, and commitment to the countryside and Peace with Legality, and explicit instructions are included for relevant ministries³⁸.

In Costa Rica, the commitment of the office of the first woman vice president of the Republic to promote a series of measures to ensure the incorporation of the gender perspective in the processes for dealing with the multiple crises triggered by the pandemic is noteworthy. In the first place, the incorporation of the National Women's Institute in the social institutional framework to respond to the COVID 19 pandemic was ensured since its beginning in March, as an integral part of the Social Protection Table of the Emergency Operations Center (COE). Additionally, the Vice President's initiative to form the Women's Council in April 2020 to formulate proposals with a gender perspective for social and economic intervention in Costa Rica was elaborated. The Women's Council has presented different initiatives such as the postponement of VAT application for basic food basket and medicines and exemption for hygiene and feminine health products, the promotion of access to credit under preferential conditions to enterprises led by women and promote, through technical and digital training and access to connectivity for labor reconversion in areas of greater employability and access to higher level positions.

Inclusion of the national machineries for the advancement of women in the institutional framework for pandemic response

The countries of the region have developed various institutional arrangements to deal with the health emergency, some of which have built on existing emergency institutions while others have established new structures focused on the current crisis. The following is a description of some cases in which the Machineries for the Advancement of Women have been incorporated into the institutional framework in charge of dealing with the pandemic.

³⁷ Presidential Directive No. 11 "Commitment for Colombia" of October 13, 2020

³⁸ Instructions are issued to: Ministry of Labor; Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism; Ministry of Housing, City and Territory; Ministry of Culture; National Agency of Public Procurement -Colombia Compra Eficiente; all entities of the executive branch of the national order that make up the General Budget of the Nation; Ministry of Mines and Energy; Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development; National Planning Department -DNP; Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; Presidential Advisory Office for Stabilization and Consolidation of the Administrative Department of the Presidency of the Republic.

In Chile, after recognizing the differential impact of the pandemic on men and women, the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity was formally integrated into the COVID-19 Social Roundtable that defines and promotes actions against the pandemic in July 2020. The Social Roundtable is made up of government authorities, municipalities, health specialists and academia. The participation of the Ministry of Women contributes to the incorporation of the gender approach in the actions to face the health crisis.

In Costa Rica, the National Women's Institute (INAMU) is one of the ten institutions that make up the Social Protection Board of the Emergency Operations Center of the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Emergency Response (COE), formed in March 2020. Since then, the Table has developed protocols, guidelines and other actions for the prevention and care of COVID-19 and the participation of INAMU has been key to making visible the specific needs of women in the context of the pandemic. INAMU is also part of the SME Support Table for COVID-19. In Cuba, the Federation of Cuban Women has been part of the national working group that promotes public policies in the context of COVID-19 and has participated in the elaboration of the plan of measures for the Prevention, Control and Care of persons infected by COVID-19, in order to ensure the inclusion in the plan of actions that take into account the impact on women and their families.

Initiatives promoted by the national machineries for the advancement of women for a response with a gender perspective

During the emergency, intersectoral collaboration emerged as a critical strategy for integrating the gender perspective into actions to respond to the health, economic and social crises. In the area of prevention and assistance for gender-based violence against women, in some countries, the institutional response has been strengthened with the aim of ensuring continuity of services and responding to demand through the coordination of various institutional sectors, especially the judicial, social and gender sectors. In Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, the machineries for the advancement of women made official requests to the judiciary, both at the national and subnational levels, to ensure the extension of precautionary and protective measures for women in situations of violence in cases where their deadlines were met during the period of the emergency caused by COVID-19. In some countries, the national machineries for the advancement of women played an important role in coordinating and strengthening the territorial response of municipal offices, units and mobile units for women in situations of gender-based violence, as in the cases of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras.

The machineries for the advancement of women also played a key role in mainstreaming the gender perspective in both targeted and universal actions in the national social protection matrix. In this regard, in Costa Rica, Colombia and Paraguay, the national machineries for the advancement of women have carried out coordination actions with the governing institutions in the area of social protection; for example, through the joint definition of criteria for access to government subsidies. Similarly, in Costa Rica, INAMU has promoted the mainstreaming of the gender approach in the diagnostic guide used for the Fideicomiso (Trust) of the Instituto Mixto de Asistencia Social programme, to ensure the inclusion of women living in poverty and extreme poverty. This initiative provides financing for additional and subsidiary guarantees, through loans at favorable interest rates to existing social assistance beneficiaries. For its part, Paraguay's Ministry of Women's Affairs sent recommendations to the main coordinators of emergency social programmes to incorporate principles of equality and non-discrimination in the selection of beneficiaries, prioritizing women heads of household. It also sent a directory of women in vulnerable situations to be included as potential beneficiaries of the "Ñangareko" Food Security Programme, with particular attention to women in situations of violence. Different Ministries and machineries for the advancement of women have also prepared and disseminated recommendations to

other State institutions on how to include a gender perspective in the response to the pandemic. For example, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations of Peru has circulated guidelines addressed to regional and local governments to carry out actions with a gender approach that respond to the needs of all people in their diversity in the face of the emergency situation. In Argentina, in April 2020, the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity issued a series of recommendations for provincial and municipal governments to safeguard the rights of women, LGBTI+ people and non-binary identities.

The National Council for Gender Equality of Ecuador has made two pioneering efforts to offer recommendations for integrating the gender approach in the implementation of measures linked to the health crisis. In the first of these, dated May 2020, it offers a brief diagnosis of the situation of women and LGBTI people in the face of the health crisis and presents recommendations addressed to institutions at the national and local levels for the implementation of policies from a gender equality and non-discrimination approach. These recommendations are structured along eight axes: poverty alleviation; production; employment sustainability; care economy and unpaid work; education and access to ICTs; gender-based violence; health, sexual and reproductive rights; participation and communication. The second document, presented in September 2020, offers a vision towards a recovery with equality and provides a series of recommendations to promote strategic actions with a gender focus once the COVID-19 state of emergency is over, to be implemented by public sector institutions during 2020-2021, following the same eight axes of the first document.

Efforts are also being made in the region to promote the participation of women's networks and organizations in the response to the health crisis. In Chile, in July 2020, the COVID-19 Women's Council was established, convened by the Minister of Women and Gender Equity and made up of women from academia, civil society, the private sector, trade organizations, parliamentarians and relevant government agencies, with the aim of incorporating a gender perspective in the Chilean government's response to the crisis in three key areas: violence against women and health, economic recovery and care. In Argentina, the Mesa Federal de Políticas Económicas con Perspectiva de Género (Federal Table of Economic Policies with a Gender Perspective) was created with the mission of creating a provincial network of women in the management of the Ministries of Economy and other provincial economic portfolios, with the aim of building tools for the analysis and design of policies aimed at advancing gender equality. Specific actions aimed at gender equality have been designed within the framework of the health emergency. In addition, since the beginning of the pandemic, the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity has coordinated a series of joint actions with the gender and diversity areas of the provincial governments through the Federal Council of the Ministry, with the purpose of articulating resources and tools within the framework of the health emergency.

The centrality of gender statistics for a better response and recovery from the crisis

Information systems: transforming data into information, information into knowledge and knowledge into policy decisions.

Montevideo Strategy, (ECLAC, 2016)

Despite the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic put the continuity of several statistical operations at risk and led to the postponement of data collection relevant to decision-making on gender issues, the countries of the region have carried out several initiatives to guarantee the continuous production of information necessary to provide effective responses and implement transformative gender policies in times of COVID-19. In this regard, several statistical offices and other members of the national statistical system found it necessary to optimize and adapt information collection instruments in strategic areas without sacrificing the disaggregations necessary for gender analysis; and to respond to new information needs by adapting existing operations, generating new statistical operations or improving alternative sources and administrative records.

Among strategic issues, the efforts made by the countries to continue operations to obtain information on the labor market and maintain designs that allow for the disaggregation by sex of data on labor participation, employment levels, unemployment rates and the concentration of women in the economic sectors most affected by the crisis are noteworthy.

Latin America and the Caribbean (14 countries) Sources of information for gender analysis of the labor market 2020.

Argentina	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC) de la Argentina, "Labor market: rates and socioeconomic indicators"(Mercado de trabajo: tasas e indicadores socioeconómicos (EPH))
Bolivia	National Institute of Statistics of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Continuous Employment Survey (Encuesta Continua de Empleo)
Brasil	Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), "Continuous National Household Sample Survey - Continuous PNAD" (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua – PNAD Contínua)
Chile	National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Chile, National Employment Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Empleo)
Colombia	National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia, "Large Integrated Household Survey (GEIH): Labor Market" (Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH): Mercado Laboral)
Costa Rica	National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) of Costa Rica, Continuous Employment Survey (Encuesta Continua de Empleo)
Ecuador	National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) of Ecuador, "National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment"(Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo (ENEMDU))
Jamaica	Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), Labour Force Survey
México	National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico, "New National Survey of Occupation and Employment"(Nueva Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOEN))
Nicaragua	National Institute for Development Information (INIDE) of Nicaragua, Continuous Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares)
Paraguay	General Directorate of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses (DGEEC) of Paraguay, "Permanent Permanent Household Survey EPHC" (Encuesta Permanente de Hogares Continua EPHC)
Peru	National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) of Peru, National Household Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Hogares (ENAHO))
Dominican Republic	Central Bank of the Dominican Republic, "Labor Market: Continuous Survey" (Mercado de trabajo: Encuesta continua (ENCFT))
Uruguay	National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Uruguay, Continuous Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares (ECH))

In addition to the collection of information, its timely dissemination and the production of analytical materials based on the data are important. Thus, for example, the Colombian Women's Observatory produced the Women in times of COVID-19 Series which, through the publication of 13 bulletins, analyzes specific impacts and problems faced by women during the pandemic, and produces public policy recommendations based on official statistical information and contributions from international organizations such as ECLAC, UN Women and the World Bank.

New statistical operations were also generated to determine the differential impact of the pandemic on the population. In Argentina, the coordinated effort between the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation and the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina (CONICET) together with the Institutional Network Oriented to the Solution of Problems in Human Rights of the CONICET to raise new information on how the context of COVID-19 and social isolation has reorganized the lives of women through two online surveys is noteworthy. These surveys, which were implemented between May and June 2020, allowed the elaboration of a report that presented the results of the surveys, making visible the specific impacts on women in vulnerable situations in terms of socioeconomic, health, environmental, gender and ethnic-racial inequality, as well as providing elements for the planning of public policies with a gender perspective for the post-quarantine period in Argentina.

On the other hand, the effort of the countries of the region to collect information on the overload of care work in households as a result of confinement measures and variations in employment and the persistence of the unfair distribution of time allocated to domestic and care work within households is also noteworthy.

In some cases, data have been collected as an initiative of the National Statistical Offices, as is the case in Colombia, where the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), with technical support from UNICEF, has published two rounds of the Social Pulse Survey, which seeks to produce information on the impact of the situation generated by COVID-19 on society. In turn, DANE also collects information on the increase of women engaged in household occupations in the pandemic through a large-scale integrated household survey (GEIH) and despite operational difficulties did not suspend the survey of its National Survey on Time Use that began in September 2020.

In Mexico, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) conducted the COVID-19 and Labour Market Telephone Survey (ECOVIM-ML) from April to July 2020 to supplement the information obtained from the Employment Telephone Survey (ETOE) that it carried out at the height of the pandemic. The 2020 ETOE also gathered information on gender-differentiated time use in April, May and June of that year. In Chile, a COVID-19 social survey has been carried out as part of an initiative undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in conjunction with the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and the Ministry for Social Development and the Family. The results of that survey provide information on how caregiving tasks have been distributed since the outbreak of this health crisis. Finally, the Catholic University Longitudinal Studies and Surveys Centre has conducted a longitudinal study on employment and COVID-19 to collect real-time employment data that include information on participation in domestic and caregiving tasks and on the number of hours per week devoted to such tasks.

In other countries, at the initiative of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, information relevant to the issue of care has been generated. In Argentina, UNICEF undertook a rapid assessment of the changes that COVID-19 has brought about in household activities, access to social transfers, household income, domestic violence and other areas. In Uruguay, UN-Women and UNICEF have published the findings of a survey on children, gender and time use which shed light on changes in the country's households brought about by the social distancing measures put in place by the government, particularly with regards to gender relations and the situation of children and adolescents. In addition, UN Women has led efforts to conduct rapid assessment surveys on the impact of COVID-19 in Chile, Mexico and Colombia.

The pandemic has revealed, as stated in the Montevideo Strategy, that high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data are critical for evidence-based policymaking. In order for countries to respond to and recover from the impacts of the pandemic and in turn advance in the implementation of global, regional and national commitments to gender equality and women's rights, the region's statistical systems have had to innovate and implement initiatives that allow them to continue producing relevant information without sacrificing the incorporation of a gender perspective.

6. TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE RECOVERY WITH GENDER EQUALITY

The Latin American and Caribbean region has been a pioneer in the construction of a Gender Agenda since 1975 when the first World Conference on Women was held in Mexico, and for more than 40 years in the Regional Gender Agenda. However, progress is slow, equality in law and the talent and potential that women have has not yet translated into real equality in fact. The time for substantive equality is still valid and more urgently needed than ever. The year 2020 has been marked by the health and socioeconomic crisis that COVID-19 has produced. Latin America and the Caribbean is the region hardest hit by the pandemic in the world, and it faces its worst economic crisis in years, with enormous health, economic, environmental, social and political consequences.

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 disease has highlighted and magnified the structural problems of the development model in the region characterized by intersecting inequalities, low growth, low productivity, insufficient export diversification, little fiscal space, and growing environmental deterioration.

Women are being severely affected by increasing poverty, unemployment and the closure of businesses, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises. It is necessary to strengthen and extend over time measures that cushion and compensate for the loss of employment and the fall in income of women affected by the crisis, especially those living in poverty. Furthermore, for companies led by women or those with a high proportion of female employees to survive the effects of the crisis, it is important to design policies to close digital gaps and measures to sustain liquidity and thus protect employment.

On the other hand, it is essential to strengthen the participation of women, in all their diversity, in leadership roles and in decision-making spaces for a transformative socioeconomic recovery. In this context, States should promote plural and diverse spaces for participation that also include the voices of organized women, academics and feminists. For these spaces to be a reality and for women to participate in a democratic way, it is essential to implement measures to prevent and eradicate violence against women in the public sphere, and to adopt affirmative actions that promote their presence in decision-making areas.

There are some essential elements in the process of designing policies both during the crisis and in their implementation, monitoring and redesigning for recovery that guarantee a gender focus in actions.

In the first place, the reference framework must continue to be what has been advanced and agreed so far in terms of global and regional agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Gender Agenda, which marks a route and provides tools for the design of national policies and actions for both crisis mitigation and reactivation. Here clearly the Santiago Commitment, the last agreement reached in the region, stands out for its accuracy and validity in the face of the impact experienced by Latin American and Caribbean women.

Added to this is the importance of the State having a strong institutional framework for gender equality, provided with budgetary resources and capacities for the design of policies focused on women, but also to accompany the process of mainstreaming the gender perspective across the breadth of the package for crisis response.

This implies, among other things, guaranteeing resources aimed at women and advocating for a redistributive tax system that has equality at the center. It also implies political, social, and economic pacts aimed at achieving a style of sustainable development with equality.

Last but not least, a State that produces information and integrates evidence based on quality, timely and systematic data in its public policy. Strengthening information systems and data production generates efficiency in the mobilization of resources and contributes to the monitoring of policies, allowing actions to be taken.

In terms of public policies, it is necessary to expand the coverage of employment programs to address the situation of women in their diversity, including workers with precarious jobs, migrant women, informal workers, domestic workers, women without their own income, women who live in poor households and those who have dependents. It is important to promote reactivation policies that incorporate gender criteria in the strategic selection of fiscal sectors, mechanisms and instruments, and the reorientation of incentives so that inequality gaps do not deepen. Investing in the care economy and turning it into a dynamic sector for a transformative, sustainable, and equitable recovery is a clear example of this approach.

At the same time, establishing fiscal policies with gender perspectives that expand the fiscal space and increase the progressiveness of tax systems and ensure genuine and sufficient resources for equality policies is essential. In addition, one of the main proposals to achieve gender equality is to transform the sexual division of labor through the visibility and valuing of care for the sustainability of life, and the promotion of the care economy as a revitalizing sector of the economy as a whole.

Another aspect to prioritize in the implementation of transformative and sustainable recovery actions is linked to the closing of the digital divide, and more precisely, to the lack of connectivity, access and use of digital devices. For this, most of the countries in the region have good basic conditions to close the digital gender gaps by promoting measures for the growth of the sectors of technology innovation and ensuring a basic digital basket, mainly for women from lower income households.

It is necessary to avoid setbacks and to advance synergistically in guaranteeing the rights and autonomy of women in their economic, physical, and decision-making dimensions to achieve a more just and sustainable society throughout the region.

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