





Committee: Social and Humanitarian Committee

Issue: Taking measures to eradicate gender-based violence

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## I. Introduction

Gender-based violence is a human rights violation, a health and protection issue that affects 1 in 3 women in the world (Worldbank). Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to any type of violence committed against someone based on their gender. GBV has many causes such as gender inequality, social norms, and abuse of position and economical power by the perpetrator against the victims. Due to the majority of the GBV being directed towards women, this chair report will mainly focus on violence towards women. Nonetheless, other communities that experience GBV will also be mentioned in the report.

Types of gender-based violence include intimate partner violence, institutional violence, trafficking, sexual violence, and femicide. GBV is an extensive and rooted issue that does not have a single solution. There are historical, cultural, and social roots that go beyond a century which makes it harder to change the mindset of people and it becomes more difficult to eradicate GBV. Lack of education and awareness on the subject also has an important role in the continuity of GBV.

There have been many endeavors towards taking measures to eradicate GBV such as revisiting city plans to ensure citizens feel secure, programs specializing in victim support, and prevention of GBV. Laws and regulations enforced by the government also aid in the prevention of GBV. The Domestic Violence Law, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, differentiating femicide from homicide in some countries are all examples of some of the aforementioned laws and regulations

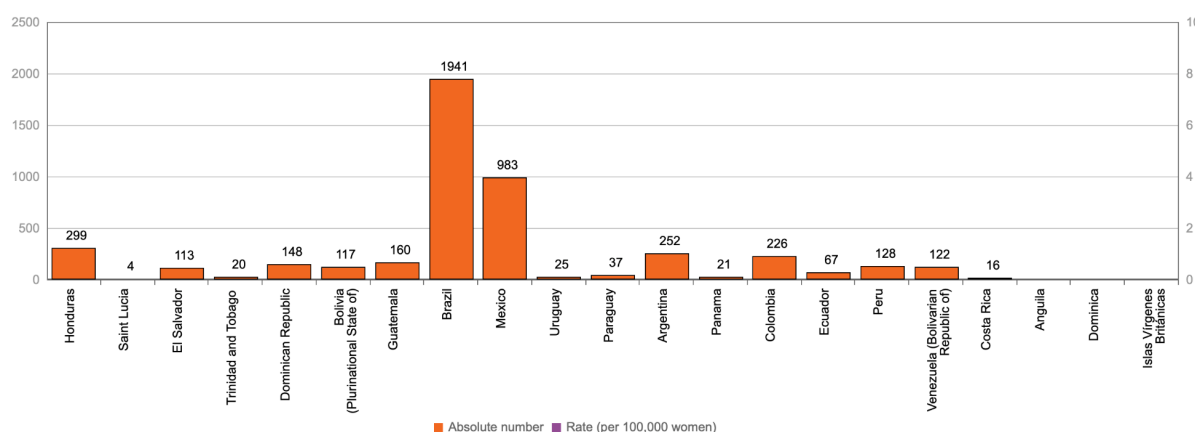
In the region of Latin America, GBV rates are significantly higher compared to other countries; in 12 countries between 17% and 53% of women have been victims of physical and sexual violence committed by their partners. Additionally, 14 of the 25 countries with the highest mortality rates from femicide are from the Latin American region (ELLA))

The ongoing pandemic of Covid-19 has also affected victims of GBV in a negative way : As the lockdowns started to be implemented in the region, victims of GBV have been forced to be imprisoned at home with their abusers, causing the already high GBV rates to increase.



Overall, the eradication of GBV can be ensured by increasing awareness of the issue, challenging norms and traditional social stereotypes regarding gender inequality, and government input on both the prevention of GBV and the treatment of GBV (prosecution of criminals/victim support).

## II. Involved Countries and Organizations



"Picture 1: The absolute number of recorded femicides in selected Latin American countries"

### 1. Brazil

Brazil has the highest number of femicide cases in the Latin American region with at least 7,000 women thought to have been a victim of lethal violence due to their genders. The country has the fifth-highest rate of femicide in the region. Domestic violence is the most common type of violence in the country. However, as domestic violence cases go unreported, they constantly escalate resulting in more serious and brutal crimes such as femicide. Despite the achievements of Brazil as a step to eradicating GBV, such as the legislation of the Domestic Violence Law of 2006, the establishment of help centers targeting specific types of GBV hence providing more specialized care, and the differentiation of femicide from homicide in the 2015 Femicide Law.

However, the addressing of the issue by the president of Brazil has been problematic. Bolsonaro is known to be disrespectful towards women which undermines efforts to reduce the severity of GBV. Examples of such include Bolsonaro making international headlines in 2016 when he was running for president and told Maria da Rosário, a former human rights minister that "I wouldn't rape you, because you aren't worthy of it" (CNBC). Another example of his sexist comments include "I have five children. I had four boys, and in the fifth, I weakened and a girl came"(CNBC). His attitude and remarks have not



changed after he was elected for the presidency as seen in the case of Patrícia Campos Mello. Bolsonaro accused Mello of making sexual suggestions to one of Bolsonaro's informers in order to get a story. Mello was allegedly targeted because she had found and exposed "unregulated Whatsapp communication strategies" during Bolsonaro's electoral campaign (Opendemocracy).

Another obstacle in effectively combating GBV is the lack of funding. Federal funding for eradicating GBV has decreased by 27% and the funding for the Women's Secretariat was cut from \$25 million in 2015 to \$1.1 million from \$25 million in 2019 (Global voice). Bolsonaro explained the reason behind the cut by saying "a change in attitude and behavior" is needed to decrease rates of GBV, not money (Global voice). However, this is not the case as, without adequate funding, programs and help centers cannot increase, thus leaving women in isolated areas unable to reach out for help. The training of health professionals and police officers will also decrease due to inadequate funding, which will lead to further wrongful handling of cases (eg. insufficient attention, the same type of care for different aspects of GBV), thus lowering the effectiveness of laws and regulations already in place.

The government's stance on the issue with the president asserting male dominance by making sexist remarks in politics, and showing indifference to GBV, directly correlates with the spike in femicide cases. In 2019, 1310 women were killed, which is a 7.3% increase from the number of women killed in Brazil in 2018 (Global voice). With the pandemic, an increase of 56% percent of GBV rates was reported in six Brazilian states (Reliefweb). Lockdowns put women at greater risk of abuse, as the abuser and the victim are confined in a space together. Additionally, in order to request a restraining order, protocol demands that women have to go to police stations, which is almost impossible during periods of lockdown. Despite many protests, such as the March of the Margaridas, held every four years in memory of the murdered Brazilian woman, Margarida Maria Alves, the president's views on the issue have not wavered, the government's agenda list has not been updated, and the notion of machismo still regulates life for the citizens of Brazil.

## 2. Mexico

As one of the countries with the highest rates of femicide in the world (1.5 in 100,000 women have been killed because of their gender in 2019) and second after Brazil in the highest absolute number of femicide cases, Mexico is a country where 77% of women report feeling unsafe (CSIS). At least two-thirds of women in Mexico over the age of 15 have experienced abuse (CSIS). Rates of femicide have risen by a minimum of 145%, from 400 cases in 2015 to more than a hundred thousand cases in 2019 (CSIS).

Impunity rates have reached 93% in the country (CSIS). Many women see reporting cases as a waste of time as only 1 in every 10 cases results in jail time for the offender. The presence of laws, yet the





inability of the authorities to enforce them leads to abusers repeatedly offending. Moreover, some figures of authority such as police officers have been found responsible for GBV.

Several high-profile cases include the alleged rape of a teenage girl by a group of police officers north of Mexico City, which triggered the 'glitter revolution'. Many activists, feminists, and protesters rallied on the streets, covering Mexico's security chief in pink glitter and smashing some windows at the attorney's general office. Another two cases that triggered mass demonstrations took place in February 2020. On 9 February, Ingrid Escamilla, 25 years of age was skinned and killed by her alleged partner. A few days later, Fatima Aldrighetti, a 7-year-old girl was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered (Cfr.org). Dozens of protestors took to the streets where they splashed red paint and graffiti on the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City. On International Women's Day, March 8, a nationwide rally took place, protesting against the increase in femicide cases and calling for social reforms. On March 9, after the nation-wide demonstration, a movement called #UnDiaSinNosotras ("a day without us") took place, in which women and girls all over the nation participated in a national walkout, leaving their workplaces and school to protest against indifference and lack of protection from the government.

Even though the president of Mexico, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, has accused his political rivals of staging the protests, he took action. After a few days, a bill that recognized femicide as a crime separate from homicide and with more severe repercussions was passed. AMLO also stated that a national plan to fight against the rising rates was in action. However, the effectiveness of the systems is being questioned by both officials and the public as rates have not only declined but are steadily increasing.

### 3. UN Women

UN Women is the branch of the United Nations for gender equality, promoting the empowerment of women. UN Women works with governments, NGOs, and other civil services in order to prevent incidents of violence in the long term by establishing programs and education centers for men, women, and children alike as UN Women believes prevention is the key to stopping GBV. Strategies they have employed for combating GBV in the region include providing large funding and investments, such as the Spotlight Initiative, forming partnerships with local and regional help centers, and initiatives to end violence such as 'Creating safe and empowering public spaces with women and girls.

The Spotlight Initiative is "a EUR 500 million program that deploys targeted, large-scale investments in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific" (UN Women). In Latin America, the initiative focuses on ending femicide, and in Honduras, UN Women is working closely with OXFAM for community





building to reach the most marginalized groups which are women, young women and girls, Afro-Latin American, trans women, and disabled women.

For the initiative ‘Creating safe and empowering public places for women and girls’ in Latin America, UN Women has helped a local regulation to be adopted in Quito, Ecuador with the aim of including a special provision for sexual violence in urban settings. This regulation resulted in fewer cases of sexual violence in cities hence setting an example for a national-level response to deal with the issue thoroughly.

As the Covid -19 pandemic reached Latin America and the Caribbean, a surge in domestic violence cases could be observed throughout the region. UN Women pursues to provide up-to-date information, to fund vital programs and collaborate with other branches of the UN such as UNODA to extensively and efficiently deal with the issue.

#### 4. The World Bank

The World Bank is a group of partnerships with the aim of producing sustainable solutions to fight poverty, encouraging the development of less economically developed countries (LEDCs) through means of financial aid, programs, and technical assistance. The World Bank addresses GBV through “investment, research and learning, and collaboration with stakeholders around the world” (Worldbank). The Bank supports “over \$300 million in development projects” aimed at eradicating GBV both through standalone projects that focus on a specific part of a sector such as transportation (Worldbank).

Examples of standalone projects in the region of Latin America and the Caribbeans are :

- Supporting the capacity for telephone, hotline assistance, victim protection, case monitoring, and observing possible aggregators as a part of the collaboration between Worldbank and the government of Uruguay
- The development of a platform for victims of GBV in Chile
- The creation of an application for the protection of victims with community support and information on shelters and care services in Peru

These collaborations, projects, and funds are essential for extensively eradicating GBV. However, not enough projects exist that continuously strive to challenge old stereotypes which result in low product yields. Moreover, collaborations with the government are vital for national-level responses to increase the productivity of local or regional programs by spreading the program to more citizens.





## 5. International-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR)

The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights is an autonomous branch of the Organisation of American States with the aim of protecting the human rights of the citizens of the Americas. IACHR “receives and investigates individual claims of human rights violation within a member state” (ELLA). After the investigations, IACHR publishes a report entailing recommendations to the state in which the violation was made. If the state does not acknowledge the recommendations but has allowed the jurisdiction of the IAHR Court to be eligible in the state, the IAHR Commission can submit the case to the IAHR Court for a ruling. The Court is an autonomous judicial institution based in San Jose, Costa Rica. The Commission and the Court have played an important role in combating GBV in the Latin American region with two decisive cases.

The case of Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes vs the state of Brazil was a very important step on the road to eradicating GBV in Latin America. Maria was a victim of intimate partner violence and as a result of continuous abuse became paraplegic and contracted several diseases (ELLA). In her petition to the IAHR Commission, she accused the Brazilian state of not undertaking the necessary actions. After the investigations on behalf of the IAHR Commission, IAHR Commission came to the conclusion that the state was could not prevent domestic violence, the legal rights of Maria were ignored, and that tolerance towards GBV played an important part in the judicial ineffectiveness in rulings against perpetrators and the inadequate redress for the victims. This marked the first time that a state had been found guilty of being responsible for domestic violence in Latin America. The conclusions were prominent in the course of action Brazil took, its manifestations seen in the enactment of the Domestic Violence Law (known as the Maria da Penha Law).

The case of Ana, Beatriz & Celia Gonzalez Perez vs Mexico is the second landmark case brought before the IAHR Commission (ELLA). The three sisters belonging to the Tzeltal indigeneous community were illegally detained and questioned along with their mother (ELLA). They were held captive because they were suspected of belonging to the Zapatista, a group with which Mexico was in an armed conflict with. The girls were separated from their mother, interrogated and raped by soldiers of the military. Even though they filed a petition to both the Attorney General's Office and the Public Prosecutor for Military Justice's Office, they failed to have the crimes they have been subjected to investigated. In 1994, the IAHR Commission took the case after a petition made to the Commission by the sisters and their mother. The IAHR Commission found the state to be guilty of “violating women's right to personal liberty, humane treatment, privacy, fair trial, judicial protection as well as children's right (in the case of the youngest sister)” (ELLA). The Commission also detected that the state “had not fulfilled its responsibility to prevent and punish torture and to respect indigenous rights” (ELLA). This case is important for several reasons. First of all, the state was responsible





for the inadequacies in the justice system and the actions of the military. Secondly, it was made obvious that the military justice system was incapable of handling GBV cases that have military personnel as the perpetrators impartially and independently. Thirdly, the Commission set the precedent, in line with the international law that rape by the military in a conflict context is categorized as a form of torture. Finally, the Commission recognized the fact that as the women were part of an indigenous group, not only were they affected as individuals, their relationship with their community had also been affected in the sense that they have experienced social stigmatization and humiliation.

## 6. El Salvador

El Salvador is considered to have the highest rate of femicide, with a woman being killed at the hands of a man every 24 hours. Statistics show that 67.4% of women have reported experiencing at least one incident of GBV in their lifetime with 45.8% of women aged under 30 have experienced sexual abuse in the last 12 months (Yris). Even though there are laws in place to combat GBV such as Article 45 of the 2011 Salvadoran Law which distinguishes femicide from homicide, the number of femicide cases has more than doubled in the region between 2011 and 2017, from 218 reported cases a year to 516 (Yris). The reasons behind the seemingly impossible decline of femicide cases are high impunity rates, corruption, and inadequate training in law enforcement, continuity of 'machismo', gang activity, and normalization of violence against women.

The region has an impunity rate of 95% which means only 5% of cases are reported - a study found that only 5% of the cases brought to court ended in a sentence with only 3% resulting in a guilty verdict (Yris). However, due to high impunity rates in the region, this report probably does not entail the extent of impunity in the region. A report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women confirms that many incidents are not reported and if reported brought to court. The report found that out of the 164 femicide incidents featured in major national newspapers, "perpetrators were only identified in 14 of the above cases, despite the presence of witnesses at the crime scene in at least 41% of cases" (Yris).

Normalization of violence against women is a commonality between Latin American countries. However, the civil war that lasted for 12 years in El Salvador was an important contributor to the normalization of violence against women in the region. The civil war was between the leftist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the government. One of the causes of the war included the failure to improve living standards. To combat the FMLN, the government with the US as its ally, used violence against women in the form of torture and rape. During the period, systematic rape of women and brutal execution was common which can be linked to the persistent ideology of machismo, women's inferiority to men which lead to the normalization of violence against women which in turn leads to high impunity rates.





Corruption in the police force and judicial bodies also aids the increase in GBV rates. Corruption includes bribing police officers to remove the files or evidence of a case, the perpetrator using his position as a part of the country's law enforcement to protect himself from facing the consequences, and members of the law enforcement being under the influence of social norms to make decisions about the cases. As corruption in the system is well known by the public, perpetrators use this to their advantage, as the system 'protects them from punishment whilst women believe it is futile to report domestic abuse incidents.

Machismo is described as the "exaggerated pride in masculinity, perceived as power which is often coupled with a minimal sense of responsibility and disregard of consequences" (Britannica). Prevalence of machismo in the region can be observed through military dictators, male dominance in the parliament, as only 32.10% of the parliament is made up of women, increasing rates of femicide and domestic/sexual abuse (Worldbank). Machismo impliedly prompts women to stay quiet about the abuse they receive, believing it's a normal part of everyday life. When a Salvadoran woman was asked if she ever thought about calling the police, she responded "The police? Who would think of calling the police back there [El Salvador]?...Everyone will laugh if a woman calls for help if her husband is beating her" (Yale). Also considering, in 2012, at least 6 femicides were committed by police officers, it is not difficult to understand why women are unwilling to call for help (Yris)

Last of all, harmful ideologies continue to shape society. A survey by the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) revealed that more than half of young male adults aged 15-19 believed that "women endure violent relationships because they believe violence in a relationship with a man is normal" and 85% agreed that "a decent woman should not dress provocatively, nor be out on the streets late at night"(Yris).

## 7. Colombia

Colombia is a country that also suffers from high rates of intimate partner violence (sexual and physical) reaching 33.3% (UN Women). However, Colombia also suffers from conflict-related sexual violence. The ICRC recognizes at least 5 non-international conflicts still on-going in Colombia. Even though the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) was successful to a point, it was not enough to achieve sustainable and inclusive peace as social issues such as gender inequality still remain unresolved. In 2020, the National Victims Unit documented 239 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (UN). 197 cases were committed against women, 15 against girls, 13 against men, 6 against boys (UN). 8 victims identified as lesbian, gay, transgender,





queer or intersex (UN). As the pandemic progressed, conflicts escalated, leaving the abovementioned groups vulnerable to more sexual abuse.

Indigenous groups are also at risk of being victims of sexual abuse by military personnel. As reserves and stations are common throughout the nation due to ongoing conflicts, the presence of military forces is a common part of many people's lives. The government's reluctance to address the involvement of military personnel in sexual/physical abuse is a serious problem as it decreases the effectiveness of programs, laws, and any other forms of help centers constructed to tackle GBV. Evidence of the indifference of the state can be observed in the case of an indigenous girl of the Nukak ethnic group. The girl was kidnapped and taken to a military base in Guaviare. This took place in September 2019. During her abduction, she was raped and deprived of her basic needs such as food and water. News of this case was made public on 30 June 2020, and during the nine months that the state was aware of the infringement of the girl's human rights, it had not taken any action to punish the personnel. As the state's lack of action in the area persists, high rates of impunity will not waver, instead, they will increase. High rates of impunity will cause statistical reports to be flawed and inaccurate, hence preventing the implementation of effective programs.

### III. Focused Overview of the Issue

In the region of Latin America, GBV rates are relatively high within 12 countries between 17% and 53% of women have been victims of physical and sexual violence committed by their partners (ELLA). Stereotypes about genders encourage GBV as these stereotypes undermine the value and dignity of women, portraying them as subservient to their partners. Men justify their act of violence with claims like these, believing they have done nothing wrong. Wide-spread and rooted stereotypes are dangerous as it is more difficult to change the mindsets of perpetrators and the public, especially if there are no education services or programs that encourage gender equality. Social norms, rules that govern society, are also menacing to the health and well-being of victims of GBV. According to these norms which are quite prevalent in some regions of Latin America, men have the right to abuse their wife or daughter if they're not content and it is expected for a woman to not talk about family relations or inter family-abuse and be quiet. These norms prevent help and care from being delivered to a victim, thus protecting the abuser and encouraging further violence as the issue is not reported, causing the victim to be in a constant state of fear and helplessness.





## 1. GBV and Health Problems

Abuse often leaves the victims vulnerable to a vast majority of health problems including chronic diseases, injuries and psychological stress. Continuous abuse heightens the problems and may even lead to the death of the victim. Women who are pregnant are more vulnerable than other women as there is also an additional risk of giving birth to an underweight baby or miscarriage.

Domestic violence is the most common type of violence in Latin America, especially in Brazil, Peru, Argentina, and El Salvador; however, sexual abuse and sex trafficking are also prevalent in the region. Up to 30% of women in the region have experienced some sort of sexual abuse. A UNFPA study found that 18% of girls under the age of 16 in the Caribbean have been raped or exposed to some type of sexual violence. This poses another threat to the health of women: HIV. Women who are abused are more likely to contract HIV because it is harder for them to encourage their partners to use protection. In some Caribbean and Central American countries, women are thought to make up around 50% of all HIV infections. Another factor in the likelihood of contracting HIV is background and education levels. Women who are coming from low-income families that support the belief that a woman's place is her home are more prone to contracting the disease as they cannot access the information about HIV/AIDS or the protection they need. Healthcare officials and community groups actively work to spread information on HIV/AIDS including prevention and to reduce the discrimination and stigmatization of HIV-positive women from society. Community groups have also worked with television stations in order to raise awareness of the disease and its links with gender-based violence.

## 2. Gender-Based Violence in the wake of Covid-19

With Covid-19 forcing countries to go under quarantine and declare lockdown, alarm bells have started ringing. The safety of women and girls is seriously in question, as they have been cut off from education, protection services, and social networks as well as being locked up in the same house as their abusers. In Colombia, there was an increase of 175% in domestic violence cases during lockdown compared with the same period last year. In the Dominican Republic, the violence service of the Ministry of Women's Affairs received 619 calls in the first 25 days of quarantine (Reliefweb). According to the UN Reports, 18 million people will lose access to modern contraceptives, greatly increasing chances of unwanted pregnancies as well as teenage pregnancies. Though lockdowns and quarantine are needed to combat Covid-19, effective measures against GBV during quarantine are imperative to ensure the safety of women and girls. Another negative impact of Covid-19 is the news coverage. As the pandemic became the first agenda item on many of the governments, GBV coverage lessened, resulting in inadequate awareness and attention on the issue. Government funds also shifted focus towards Covid-19, leaving fewer funds to invest in programs, community groups, NGOs, and government housing plans (The New Humanitarian). In





Bolivia, police training to better recognize signs of GBV has increased and in Argentina, Chile, and Peru an emergency app called “You are not alone” has been launched, alerting close contacts of the victim when the victim shakes their phone (The New Humanitarian). Even though some states have persevered in the wake of Covid-19 to continue fighting against GBV, not enough states are not taking part in these measures or creating solutions to address the surge in domestic violence cases which puts thousands of women and girls at risk.

### 3. Trafficking

Human trafficking, especially sex trafficking, is a major issue in the region. Migration is quite common in the region due to economic crises, safety issues such as domestic violence, and high levels of gang activity. According to the Walk Free Foundation, the Dominican Republic and Haiti are the two countries with the largest percentage of their population subjected to modern slavery. A 2016 report by the United Nations Children Fund estimated that a combination of gangs, crime families, and drug trafficking organizations, crime families, and drug trafficking organizations run sex trafficking rings in Guatemala that may involve 48,400 victims (Sgp. fas).

There are many reasons why human trafficking is prevalent in the region: economic difficulties which force women and other vulnerable groups to prostitute themselves, lack of border control (due to lack of assets stationed at the borders which lead to gangs to claim borders as their territory) which facilitates human trafficking in the region, the global demand for sex workers and factory workers also increasing possible profits for traffickers.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic difficulties faced by many families increased as did rates of poverty which created reasons for more women and other vulnerable groups to engage in Trafficking in Persons (TIP). As social distancing rules started to take effect, many factories and workplaces were shut down, leaving millions of Latin American workers in need of employment. With this loss of income, poverty rates in the region are estimated to have risen sharply by 45 million to a total of 230 million. The number of people living in extreme poverty rose by 28 million (Worldmind). Economic crises have led many desperate women to prostitute themselves or get involved in sex trafficking. Due to the lockdowns in the region, many women have been confined with their abusers, forcing them to leave their homes and migrate. However, due to a lack of border control and high levels of gang activity, many women are at risk of TIP. Refugees and immigrants are at a higher risk of trafficking, which is the case for Venezuelan refugees that make up most of the sex industry in Colombia. The pandemic also made webcam pornography to be more in demand, with an alleged increase of 30% (Worldmind). According to Carmen Ugarte Garcia, coordinator of Red Rahamim, a Mexican community of religious people that provide victim care and work on the prevention of





GBV, “fake modeling agencies that required girls to expose themselves through a webcam” for as little as 5 minutes is enough for traffickers to coerce or force girls into their demands (America).

The US’ enactment of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 has encouraged many Latin American countries to take action. The reason being that TVPA established minimum standards that each country had to meet to be in the highest tier (highest tier being 1 and lowest being 4) for the maximum amount of US funding and humanitarian assistance. TVPA requested the US to withhold any funding and humanitarian aid to countries placed in Tier 3 unless it was in the US' best interest to do so. National laws such as the Colombian Anti-Trafficking Law and the 2003 Law on Human Smuggling (Law 137-03) passed in the Dominican Republic have resulted in traffickers prosecuted for a minimum sentence of 15 years, saving hundreds of victims. However, even though these laws are in place, due to many economic crises, lack of attention from authorities to the issue, and poor border control, rates of human trafficking are not decreasing.

#### 4. Vulnerable groups for GBV excluding women

LGBTI/Q people, children, disabled people, people from indigenous communities, and Afro-Latin American citizens are after women, at the highest risk of facing GBV.

In the Latin American region, where heteronormativity (heterosexuality is considered the ‘correct’ sexuality according to social norms) is prevalent in the region, many LGBTI/Q individuals face psychological and physical abuse, such as being thrown out of their homes because their family members think they are “sinners” or brutally murdered due to their sexuality (Reliefweb). Problematic countries with high levels of GBV against LGBTQ/I people are El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Camila Díaz Córdova, a 29-year-old transgender woman, was deported to El Salvador after a short stay in a US asylum after she tried for years to escape the violence that had characterized her life in El Salvador. She was murdered after her deportation back to El Salvador in 2017. On July 27, 2020, the court found three police officers guilty of the murder of Camila Diaz Cordova, marking the first time someone was convicted for killing a transgender person in El Salvador, making the case extremely important as it is one of the first steps taken to eradicate GBV against LGBTQ/I individuals in El Salvador and the Latin American region.

Afro-Latin American citizens suffer not only from GBV but also from racism and pay inequities. In Brazil, there was an increase of 29.9% of murder rates of Black women between 2007 and 2015 compared to an increase of 4.7% of murder rates for White women (Globalvoices). Black women are one of the most financially vulnerable groups in the region, as their average earning is around 300 dollars a month which is less than half of the average of what white men earn (679\$) (Globalvoices).





## 5. Impunity

Another obstacle to eradicating GBV is high impunity rates. In Mexico, 93% of GBV crimes were either not reported nor thoroughly investigated in 2018 (CSIS). The acceptance of violence in the region prompts victims to stay quiet, and the judicial and investigative bodies to pay less attention to cases of domestic violence. This also undermines the severity of the issue which causes governments to divert their time, money, and resources to other pressing issues, thus procrastinating on the issue. Corruption in the region allows the abuser to hide information, get rid of the evidence, have his prison sentence shortened or even go unpunished using rank and money. Therefore, even though there are comprehensive rules, regulations, and laws concerning GBV, such as the revised 2012 General Law to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Crimes Related to Trafficking in Persons in Mexico, the Palermo Convention and domestic violence laws that have been passed in nearly 30 countries in the region, they are not often practiced effectively, leaving the abusers to roam freely in the streets. Due to these inefficiencies on the part of the judicial and police force, progress in the prevention and treatment of GBV is slow. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) also contributes to fighting GBV during lockdown by supporting an initiative that sends government workers to houses, giving domestic violence hotlines whilst delivering food baskets to help the victims unable to leave their system, women do not alert the authorities as, in many cases, after a number of countless judicial papers the offender is often released due “to lack of evidence” or other reasons. Apart from the reason that victims distrust the law enforcement, there are several more reasons: fear of abuse after the reporting, social stigmatization, ignorance and lack of belief from the authorities, blame, pressure from the outside to stay silent, desire to protect the abuser, and believe there is not enough evidence. However, silence from the victims only encourages the abusers to carry on, with the degree of abuse steadily increasing the more silent the women become which is why it is vital for the impunity rates to go down and the rate of reports of domestic violence to rise.

## 6. Eradicating GBV

There have been many regional and country-level responses against the silent pandemic of GBV. Two regional responses from the Organisation of American States are the IACHR Commission and the IACHR Court. As mentioned earlier in the report, these institutions have contributed a lot to eradicating GBV by writing reports and issuing rulings to any country found responsible for any type of GBV. Since the 1900s IACHR Commissions and Court have helped to identify, condemn and set legal precedents for cases of gender violence during a period where most states were indifferent to any cases of GBV.

In 1994, Latin American states signed the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women in the city of Belem do Para, in Brazil (ELLA). This convention, also known as the Belem do Para Convention, establishes women’s right to be free of violence





and affirms that gender violence is a violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also defines gender violence as “any act that generates death or physical, sexual or psychological harm to women and that can be perpetuated within the private sphere or in public spaces or by the state” (ELLA). The convention also correlates the high rates of GBV in the region with the subordination and domination of women in the region. The ratification of this convention has strengthened the IAHR System, IAHR Commission, and IAHR Court’s presence and influence in the region as well as leading to the implementations of national laws and policies that “acknowledge gender violence in private, public and institutional dimensions” in most Latin American countries. It is the only regional mechanism in the region that has the power to mandate states to implement measures to “prevent, eradicate and punish acts of violence against women” (ELLA).

Country-level responses by governments have also helped GBV victims. Public places are considered dangerous places for women as the planning of the city resulted in a segregating environment for women, putting women into a vulnerable position. Inadequate lighting, unsafe public transportation, lack of CCTV cameras all add up to cases of urban violence. Several approaches have been taken to address this issue such as upgrading the city planning, increasing awareness on the issue through radio and television stations as well as including women’s opinions in the reconstruction of public places. Domestic Violence Laws have been passed in 18 countries in the region, with the definition of GBV more or less in alignment with the international definition. Laws are important not only because they provide legal footing for an abuser to be put behind bars, but the government is also held responsible to create helplines, programs, institutions that aim to prevent GBV, deliver psychological support to victims, and also help victims file petitions against their abusive partners to a judicial institution.

Latin American countries have often focused on treatment rather than the prevention of GBV. This causes the government to only address the crime side of the issue whilst the roots of the problems are not addressed. However there have been preventative measure attempts by several countries including El Salvador, the country with the second highest femicide rate in the region, that launched a domestic violence prevention program in schools. The program targeted 42 schools and included a wide array of activities all with the aim of relaying the idea of gender equality and preventing domestic violence in the future (ELLA).

Lastly, several observations have been established to provide for the lack of analytics and data to properly analyze the rate and extent of GBV in the region. Data and statistics are extremely essential as the best course of action can be derived from what the numbers say about the situation. After a request by the member states in 2007, a regional observatory called the Latin American and Caribbean Gender Equality Observatory (ECLAC). Observatories like ECLAC have the aim of providing qualitative and quantitative data,





pointing out state deficiencies in dealing with the problem, and recommending solutions and action courses to governments in order to tackle the issue more effectively.

## IV. Key Vocabulary

**Gender Inequality:** “Legal, social and cultural situation in which sex and/or gender determine different rights and dignity for women and men, which are reflected in their unequal access to or enjoyment of rights, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles.”(European Institute for Gender Inequality). Gender inequality forms the basis for GBV and to thoroughly and effectively eliminate GBV, gender inequality must also be challenged and eradicated.

**Norm:** The unwritten and informal rules that govern the behavior of citizens in society. Harmful norms such as stereotypes increase the likelihood of GBV.

**Stereotype:** A fixed and over-generalized belief about a particular group or class of people. Stereotypes can sometimes be accurate but most of the time they are inaccurate, largely generalized, and oversimplified expectations/beliefs which fuel prejudice and a biased mindset. Stereotypes about women being the “weaking” and “inferior” to men also increase gender inequality, indirectly increasing GBV rates.

**Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence:** Violence within families or partners. May include emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. This type of GBV became far more common during the quarantine with reported cases of intimate partner violence shooting up by 175% in Colombia in comparison with last year’s data.

**Institutionalized Violence:** Implicit or explicit approval for GBV by the government or other public administration through organizations, procedures, and governance systems.

**Trafficking:** Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of people through force, fraud, or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. (UNODC). Trafficking is a serious and quickly growing crime affecting millions of innocent individuals all around the world. Trafficking in women includes exploitation for sex, entertainment, and hospitality industries as well as domestic labor and forced marriages. Victims are often unable to reach out for help for numerous reasons, some of them being, in the case of illegal immigrants, fear of removal from the country they reside in, fear of death, or abuse to themselves or their cared ones.

**Sexual Violence:** “Sexual violence means that someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity without their consent”(NSVRC). There are many forms of sexual violence such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, watching someone in a private act without their knowledge. Gender inequalities





heighten the risk of girls and women facing sexual violence at one point in their lives. According to the report Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis & Smith, 1990, by age 18, 1 in 4 girls will be sexually assaulted.

**Femicide:** The killing of a woman or girl, in particular by a man and on account of her gender (Oxford). Among the 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide in the world 14 are in the Latin American regions and 6 are in the Caribbeans with an estimate of 12 women killed every day (UN Women).

**Impunity:** Impunity is the freedom from punishment or other unpleasant things of something that has been done (Cambridge). Latin America and the Caribbean have high rates of impunity in GBV cases due to several reasons such as normalization of violence, victim-blaming attitudes, and inadequate care/help/attention from the authorities.

## V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
25th of February 1948	Founding of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
30th of April 1948	Adoption of the OAS Charter (founding of OAS)
1959	Formation of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission
22nd of May 1979	Establishment of the Inter-American Human Rights Court
9th of June 1994	Ratification of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (The Belem do Para Convention)
2007	The setup of the Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean under ECLAC
2020	UN Funding of 25 million dollars from its emergency fund to be distributed to women-led organizations to combat GBV during the pandemic. 18 million went to UNFPA and 7 million went to UN Women

## VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- [Adopted by the United Nations Security Council, 31st of October 2000. \(S/RES/1325\):](#)

This resolution was the first formal and legally binding document that required parties involved in a conflict to protect women's and girls' rights. It also reaffirmed the importance of the active participation of women in resolutions of conflicts, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping affairs. This





resolution was one of the most important steps in increasing the status of women around the globe as Member States were now responsible for the violence against women and women's significance in achieving internal and complete peace was highlighted by the only legally binding organ of the UN.

- [Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 21st of December 2000. \(A/RES/65/228\):](#)

This resolution had the aim of "strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women" (undocs). This resolution entailed ways of strengthening responses from law enforcement and the governments. Additionally, this resolution brought attention to GBV against women, requiring Member States to recognize GBV against women as one of their priority agenda items.

- [Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 21st of December 2000. \(A/RES/65/187\):](#)

This resolution had the aim of intensifying all efforts to eradicate all forms of violence against women. This resolution further encouraged Member States to ramp up their efforts on combating GBV such as increasing their funds towards mechanisms that help the prevention and treatment of GBV. However, this resolution has not had a long-lasting significant effect on Latin American countries, which can be observed from the non-faltering figures of femicide and domestic violence cases.

- [Report by the Economic and Social Council, 12th of April, 2021. \(E/2021/52\):](#)

This report by the Secretary-General is about mainstreaming a gender perspective into all operations of the UN, also taking the Covid-19 pandemic into consideration. This resolution is important as it strengthens the resolve of the UN Women's global campaign which is empowering women.

- [Report by the Economic and Social Council, 15-26 March, 2021. \(E/2021/27\):](#)

This report was a review of some of the things achieved on the road to empowering women in society. It summarised all that has been done to achieve gender equality whilst recognizing what more needs to be done according to statistics and failed solution attempts.

Ratification of the Bolen do Para Convention by 32 states (out of 33 in the region) was a huge milestone. Its success was due to the large number of states taking part in it hence allowing the convention to reach its fullest potential. As the convention also mandates the establishment of domestic violence laws, programs for men and women, national services for victims of domestic violence (hotlines, institutions, etc), there has been a surge of these services throughout the region all leading to increased awareness and help for the victims of abuse. Increased awareness





encourages more victims to petition and reach out for help which is back to decrease the impunity rates.

Ratification of the Palermo Convention by 147 countries was also an important step in combating Trafficking in Persons. It not only showed that the Member States were willing to take part in the fight against transnational human trafficking, but also that they were aware of the severity of the issue. The Protocols that made up the convention targeted different aspects and types of human trafficking which resulted in more systematic approaches to deal with the issue. However, even though many countries in the region signed the Palermo Convention, the governments' and law enforcements' lack of putting these laws into practice have slowed the progress against ending TIP.

## VII. Failed Solution Attempts

Even though all of the aforementioned actions are in place such as the programs and initiatives led by UN Women and other NGOs, national laws on femicide, domestic violence, and trafficking, signing of the Palermo and Belém do Pará Convention, rates of GBV are not going down. This is because the government bodies are not in coordination - different branches of the government have different ideas on how to deal with the pandemic of GBV. There are not enough prevention programs in the region to effectively address the roots of the issue such as gender inequality.

Secondly, women who are abused often do not report minor cases in time, believing that it was a one-time thing or wanting to protect the abusers. The reluctance of reporting incidents causes the violence to worsen over time, leading to femicides at which point it is too late to report the case.

Last of all, male dominance in politics and the indifference shown by the leaders of the countries inexplicitly encourages violence and women's subservience to men.

## VIII. Possible Solutions

Firstly, governments should work closely with private institutions and organizations to deliver high-quality, extensive programs. Rehabilitation centers and educational programs for men need to become more prevalent in the region to teach gender equality and hinder the concept of "machismo". Machismo is the idea of the ownership of women by men. Schools should also host as many awareness programs as possible to shape future generations into mindful citizens who put the idea of gender equality into action. Programs for victims should also have a greater presence in regions with high rates of GBV to





accommodate the victims' transition to their normal lives. These programs should also guarantee the safety of the victims after the completion of the treatment period.

Secondly, women should be encouraged to be more active in society in terms of jobs. Male dominance in politics should be challenged and women's opinions on governmental agenda such as urban planning, transportation mechanisms should be included more frequently and extensively.

Local police should have special training to identify cases of any type of GBV to further increase the effectiveness of the national laws that are already in place. Moreover, an adequate police force will ultimately create a safer place for women, as offenders are less likely to abuse freely when there is a special force. However, the local police must not be corrupted for the training to reach its full source and therefore mechanisms instituted by the government are in order to prevent corruption from taking place to an extent. Such mechanisms could be investigations led by officials, requirements for monthly reports that entail the number of cases, and information on the current cases.

## IX. Useful Links

- Resolutions on achieving gender equality:

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/ecosoc7050.doc.htm>

- OAS - IACHR website - verdicts, cases and information on what the Commission has achieved so far:

<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/>

- A detailed guide to GBV in Latin America and the Caribbean:

[http://ella.practicalaction.org/wp-content/uploads/files/143001\\_GOV\\_GenVio\\_GUIDE.pdf](http://ella.practicalaction.org/wp-content/uploads/files/143001_GOV_GenVio_GUIDE.pdf)

- UN Women policies to eradicate GBV:

<https://lac.unwomen.org/en/digiteca/publicaciones/2017/11/politicas-para-erradicar-la-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

- UNDP report (analysis) of policies to end GBV in Latin America and the Caribbeans:

<https://www1.undp.org/content/dam/rblac/docs/Research%20and%20Publications/Empoderamiento%20de%20la%20Mujer/UNDP-RBLAC-ReportVCMEnglish.pdf>

- Resources of UN Women (resolutions, reports, analysis):

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs?Region=754859072ef244a89fc7e09a4451dad6>





- Programme on eradicating GBV in Ecuador:

<https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/development-blog/women-organisations-and-government-fighting-gbv-in-ecuador>

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