

PROMISING PRACTICES IN **RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE** AGAINST GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE HISPANIC CARIBBEAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CREDITS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), within the framework of the Global Program on Essential Services, created the Community of Practice on Essential Services in 2018. This Community is made up of 18 countries in the region with the participation of government agencies, civil society organizations, and agencies of the United Nations System and international cooperation agencies.

The objective of this knowledge platform is to generate a space for the exchange of experiences, promising practices and technical guidelines, in addition to being a space for capacity building and the generation of evidence to guide public policies for multisectoral response and under the approaches of human rights, gender and intersectionality to the various forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

In 2020, the Community of Practice of Essential Services was strengthened with the support of the Regional Spotlight Program, an initiative promoted by the European Union and the United Nations System to eliminate VAWG and femicide/feminicide in Latin America, through the development of a series of systematizations of promising practices on challenging issues in the response to VAWG.

In this framework, UNFPA, in partnership with Humanity & Inclusion (HI), promoted this systematization, called: "Promising practices in the response to violence against girls and women with disabilities in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean", with the objective of systematizing experiences and issuing recommendations that contribute to prevent and address violence against women and girls with disabilities.



The image shows a woman in a service center, she is smiling and has a little girl sitting on her lap.

VIOLENCE

AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

In most countries of the region, there is no disaggregated national data showing how many girls and women with disabilities are survivors of violence. However, a study by UNFPA and *Management Science for Health (2016)* found that people with disabilities are three times more likely to experience physical violence, sexual violence, and emotional violence compared to people without disabilities.

This situation, already serious, is even more so when disaggregated by gender and by type of violence: for women with disabilities specifically, they are up to ten times more likely to experience sexual violence. Moreover, according to the same study, children with intellectual disabilities are particularly vulnerable, and estimates suggest that 40-68% of young women with disabilities will experience sexual violence before the age of 18 (UNFPA and Management Science for Health, 2016).

According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the types of violence against persons with disabilities are the following: psychological and emotional violence or abuse; negligence in care; physical violence or abuse; and sexual violence or abuse, which includes any unwanted sexual contact and denial of sexual information or education, as well as forced sterilization or forced abortion; and financial abuse or exploitation (IDB, 2019).¹

While it is generally acknowledged that violence against girls and women with disabilities can take different forms, this research focused on 1) physical **violence and abuse**, and 2) **sexual violence**

¹Inter-American Development Bank. *Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities Latin America and the Caribbean*. 2019. Available at: <https://publications.iadb.org/es/violencia-contra-las-mujeres-y-ninas-con-discapacidad-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

and abuse, since they remain invisible and are areas identified as priorities by women with disabilities.

In addition to these types of violence, there are other types of violence specific to women with disabilities, such as the lack of technical assistance and the physical, communication, attitudinal and economic barriers faced by women with disabilities. This hinders their access to gender-based violence services.





The image shows a woman in a service center with a little girl sitting on her lap.



METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out between March and July 2020 and used a participatory and inclusive methodology. More than sixty organizations and institutions from 14 countries in the region were interviewed. The project was guided and strengthened with the valuable contributions of an Advisory Committee that included women with and without disabilities from Latin America who are specialists in gender-based violence, human rights, inclusion, and gender and disability perspectives; as well as representatives of civil society organizations, government institutions, HI and UNFPA.



FINDINGS

The practices identified to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls with disabilities include:

- 1** **Training of women with disabilities** in rights, particularly in the right to live a life free from violence and in sexual and reproductive rights.
- 2** Creation of organizations, collectives or committees made up **only of women with disabilities** to promote their empowerment.
- 3** **Development of strategies** with a gender and disability perspective in organizations of people with disabilities, in order to adopt gender-transformative measures and practices in a cross-cutting, sustainable way; and with the necessary resources.
- 4** **Development of comprehensive strategies for the incorporation of the gender and disability perspectives** in health, social, police and judicial services for the general public, including formal training of support staff, mediators or facilitators for women with disabilities who require it.
- 5** **Use of technology** and different types of communication support (applications, websites, social networks) as one more tool that allows users with disabilities to be informed and can bring services closer to them.
- 6** **Creation of alliances** between authorities, services and women with disabilities through their representative organizations.
- 7** **Implementation of awareness activities** that challenge the social norms that perpetuate inequality based on gender and disability, aimed at the general public.

8 **Generation of evidence based on international standards**, both in national censuses and surveys, as well as through assessments and specific research on the different types of violence experienced by women with disabilities.

9 **Definition of a global strategy for the inclusion of women with disabilities** in National Councils or Commissions for Women; and **global gender strategies** in National Disability Councils or Commissions.

10 **Advocacy at the legislative level** so that girls and women with disabilities are clearly included in all legislation, in particular specific legislation on gender-based violence; and removing any legislation that violates the rights of girls and women with disabilities (such as those that allow forced sterilization).

11 Implementation of **awareness and rehabilitation activities for men with disabilities** that have committed gender-based violence.

12 In the case of **international cooperation**, the practices identified include: a) promoting and supporting girls and women with disabilities and their representative organizations, b) adjusting procedures to allow small associations to access financing, c) providing technical and financial support to carry out assessments on the situations of violence against women with disabilities, d) providing technical and financial support so that essential services begin to take measures to become fully accessible, and e) supporting the development of didactic materials and training.



MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

This publication includes both general recommendations, and recommendations for different types of stakeholders. The recommendations incorporate those provided by different organizations through interviews and the analysis carried out with the Advisory Committee.

To ensure effective support for girls and women with disabilities who are survivors of violence, a twin-track approach should be adopted, centred on, and led by, women with disabilities.

This is their right, and it helps ensure that the response is in line with their priorities and aims, to overcome the specific barriers they face.

TWIN-TRACK APPROACH

Measures to ensure the full participation of women with disabilities in all processes and to guarantee equal access to services.



Specific measures to strengthen autonomy and knowledge of rights of women with disabilities.

The image shows a circle consisting of a blue section and an orange section, joined with two arrows. The blue section reads "empowerment of women with disabilities" and the orange section reads "accessible environment and services".

Women with disabilities and their representative organizations:

Strengthen empowerment, autonomy and knowledge of the rights of girls and women with disabilities, specifically on issues of gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights; strengthen advocacy based on evidence and good practices.

Essential health, social, as well as police and justice services:

Ensure that services that provide support for survivors of gender-based violence are accessible. This includes physical, communication, attitudinal and economic aspects. It is also necessary to ensure that existing referral services include specific measures to include girls and women with disabilities on equal basis with others. To do this, consider the implementation of an "Accessibility Resource Service".²

Legislation: Guarantee that all national legislation, in different sectors, is in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In particular:

- Specifically include girls and women with disabilities in legislation on gender-based violence and ensure that they participate in all legislative processes.
- Acknowledge the legal capacity of women with disabilities by eliminating measures such as judicial interdiction, guardianships or similar mechanisms that substitute the decision-making of women with disabilities.
- Ensure forced sterilization and forced abortion are prohibited.

Public Policy: Ensure that all public policies, at the national and local levels, include a gender and disability perspective, in particular those on gender-based violence. This includes, among other actions:

²See section "Proposal" for more details

- Guarantee the full participation of women with disabilities and their representative organizations in all processes and stages of public policy.
- Collect clear and systematic data on the situations of violence experienced by girls and women with disabilities.
- Establish clear protocols and accessible mechanisms for participatory monitoring and evaluation of public policies against gender-based violence.
- Strengthen the capacities of institutions to implement a gender and disability perspective in a comprehensive and sustainable way.
- Assign human, technological, economic and infrastructure resources to achieve the implementation of public policies against gender-based violence with a disability perspective and an intersectional approach.
- Implement inclusive education programs throughout different stages in life so that women with disabilities can make informed decisions about their bodies and their lives.
- Comply with the obligations of transparency and access to information and be accountable for the accessibility of essential services, incorporating the assessments of women with disabilities.
- Guarantee coordination mechanisms so that support is multisectoral, effective and focused on the needs of women.

Social norms: Implement prevention strategies through different mechanisms that include, among others: mass media campaigns, social networks and innovative methodologies such

as cultural and participatory activities; mobilization of resources for educational centers to integrate and implement inclusive strategies for comprehensive sexuality education; and include men with disabilities in all gender-based violence prevention activities directed at men.

International cooperation: It is essential to apply the twin-track approach and strengthen international cooperation which has played a fundamental role in the implementation of initiatives in the region:

- 1) **Increase technical and financial support** specifically for women with disabilities and their representative organizations, and adapt procedures.
- 2) Require **all the public and private partners, in any sector,** and specifically on the issue of gender-based violence, to establish specific measures for the inclusion of women with disabilities in all programs supported by international cooperation.



An illustration at the top of the page shows a group of diverse people. On the left, a woman with long braids is smiling. In the center, a person is partially visible. On the right, a woman with glasses is looking towards the viewer with a slight smile. The entire illustration is rendered in a monochromatic orange color.

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR AN INCLUSIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

During the research, promising initiatives were identified in different sectors and countries. However, no systemic approach was found that provides an inclusive and sustainable response to violence against girls and women with disabilities. That is, one that involves the set of gender-based violence services in a coordinated manner and based on public policy, which effectively includes girls and women with disabilities in their diversity of conditions, such as indigenous communities, afro-descendants, migrants and the LGBTI community.

To contribute to the reflection, a proposal of guidelines was conceived with the Advisory Committee that could guide towards an inclusive system of services to provide an effective and sustainable response to women, young women and girls with disabilities in situations of violence.

It is hoped that these guidelines will contribute to disseminate the initiatives currently implemented at the regional level, mainly thanks to the impetus of women with disabilities. It is also expected to be a tool to identify concrete measures that can be implemented, starting today, so that girls and women with disabilities -in their diverse conditions- can live the life free of violence to which they are entitled.



FIFTEEN PROMISING PRACTICES

for the prevention and response to violence against girls and women with disabilities.



Organization or institution:

National Network for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (REDI).

Promising practice:

Development of the *Nuestra Decisión* app, a platform on sexual and reproductive health that facilitates access to information on rights and services for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, within the framework of a broad process of empowerment of women with disabilities.

Organization or institution:

Deaf Women Without Violence (*Sordas Sin Violencia*).

Promising practice:

Support services, access to information and referral mechanisms for Deaf women who are survivors of violence.

Organization or Institution:

CIES Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Promising practice:

Implementation of measures so that the response to survivors of gender-based violence is inclusive of adolescents and young people with disabilities, with an intersectional approach.





Organization or Institution:

ASDOWN Colombia, ProFamilia and Autism League.

Promising practice:

Research on sexual violence against people with disabilities; legislative advocacy; and alliance between health and human rights institutions, and organizations of people with disabilities and their families.

Organization or Institution:

National Council for Gender Equality CNIG.

Promising practice:

Research on gender-based violence and disabilities.

Organization or Institution:

Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of People with Disabilities and their Families RIADIS.

Promising practice:

Support in mental health through a telepsychology mechanism for girls and women with disabilities in the context of the health emergency due to COVID-19, including survivors of gender-based violence.





Organization or Institution:

Foundation Network of Survivors and Persons with Disabilities.

Promising practice:

Advice and accompaniment to survivors of gender-based violence in the framework of the implementation of sexual and reproductive health workshops for women with disabilities. Advocacy and alliances with different institutions, including the women's movement.

Organization or Institution:

The Attorney General's Office - PGR

Promising practice:

Development of inclusive policies, training for staff and improvement in physical and communication accessibility to facilitate support and access to justice for women with disabilities who are survivors of gender-based violence.

Organization or Institution:

Women with the Ability to Dream in Color.

Promising practice:

Violence prevention through theater, rights training and COVID-19 emergency response.





Organization or Institution:

Honduran Association of People with Spinal Cord and Similar Injuries (AHLMYS).

Promising practice:

Creation of the Women's Commission within the organization for people with disabilities. Awareness raising on gender-based violence. Assessment on gender-based violence among women with disabilities. Workshop with men with disabilities who have committed gender-based violence.

Organization or Institution:

Documenta.

Promising practice:

Training for federal and local judges and development of the figure of *'facilitators of justice'* to support people with disabilities in their legal proceedings. Training of women with disabilities on their right to access justice.



Organization or Institution:

Step by Step Foundation.

Promising practice:

Prevention of violence based on the implementation of rights in accordance with the vision of indigenous people's communities; with an intersectional approach.



Organization or Institution:

Spanish Confederation of People with Physical and Organic Disabilities (COCEMFE), Blind Women's Commission of Peru (CODIP), in collaboration with FRATER.

Promising practice:

Assessments of the situation of violence against women with disabilities; development of information and awareness manuals on gender and disability; implementation of training for police and judicial services on gender and disability perspectives.

Organization or Institution:

Circle of Women with Disabilities CIMUDIS.

Promising practice:

Assessments of violence against women with disabilities; training on sexual and reproductive health and awareness raising for actors in the judicial system.



Organization or Institution:

National Disability Program, Ministry of Social Development.

Promising practice:

Disability mainstreaming in national programs for the prevention and response to violence against girls and women; legislation advocacy; initiatives to create / generate services that respond to gender-based violence in an accessible way; training for women with disabilities.





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PROMISING PRACTICES IN RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE HISPANIC CARIBBEAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has as one of its three transformative outcomes: eliminating violence against women and harmful practices against girls and adolescents. To achieve this goal, it is promoting the implementation of the Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Suffering from Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As part of its actions at the regional level, it created the Community of Practice for Essential Services in 2018. The aim is to improve the quality, multi-sectoral response focused on the needs of survivors. This community is made up of 18 countries in the region with the participation of government bodies, civil society organizations, agencies of the United Nations System and international cooperation.

In 2020, the Regional Spotlight Program, an initiative driven by the European Union and the UN System to eliminate violence against women and girls and femicide/feminicide in Latin America, strengthened the Community of Practice of Essential Services, through the development of a series of systematizations of promising practices on challenging issues in the response to violence against women and girls, to generate technical guidance for countries to provide a differential, inclusive and intersectional response.

In this framework, UNFPA, in partnership with Humanity & Inclusion (HI), promoted this systematization, entitled: **"Promising practices in the response to violence against girls and women with disabilities in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean"**.

