



**A strong legal framework on
gender-based violence rooted in
international agreements:
the case of Mexico**

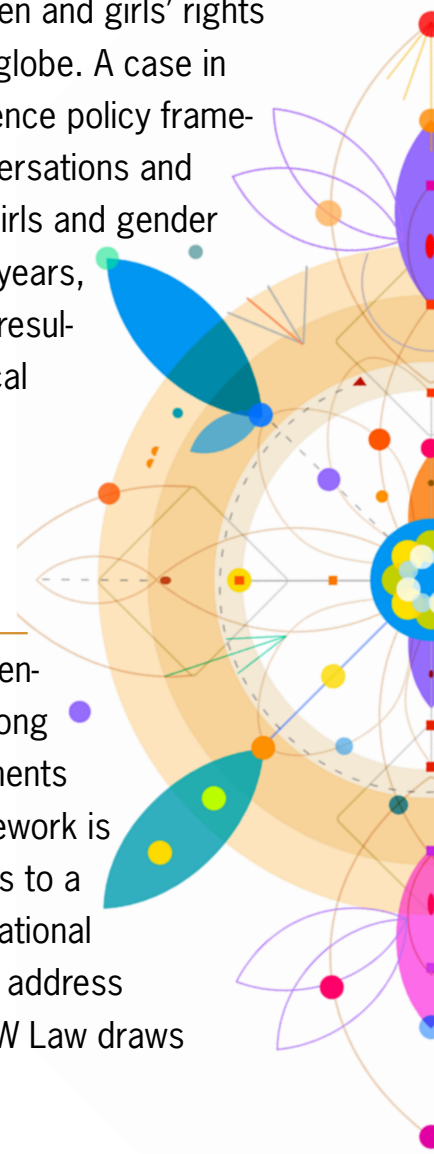
A strong legal framework on gender-based violence rooted in international agreements: the case of Mexico

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in 1947 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with the aim of supporting efforts to advance women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and education fields. Over time, the activities of the Commission have evolved from setting standards and international normative frameworks on women's rights, to exploring factors that have prevented women from enjoying them.¹

Over its 73 years of existence, CSW has laid much needed groundwork for the establishment of women and girls' rights legal frameworks in countries around the globe. A case in point is Mexico, whose gender-based violence policy framework offers a glimpse of how UN-led conversations and agreements on the rights of women and girls and gender equality shape national realities. Over the years, discussions and political debates at CSW resulted in resolutions that in turn seeded critical advancements on the ground.

Mutually reinforcing linkages: global and local efforts

Mexico's legal framework on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) reflects the strong influence of policy documents and agreements originating at the UN. Central to this framework is the 2007 General Law on Women's Access to a Life free of Violence (VAW Law), the first national policy to comprehensively and specifically address violence against women and girls. The VAW Law draws



from several global documents, including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1993 UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Of the Beijing Platform, María Consuelo Mejía Piñeros, a prominent Mexican feminist now working at Mexico's National Institute for Women, says, "The use of the term of gender in this platform was transformative. It recognized that women were the subject of violence because of their role in society. They were supposed to stay at home and be obedient. A new language was starting to be formulated."

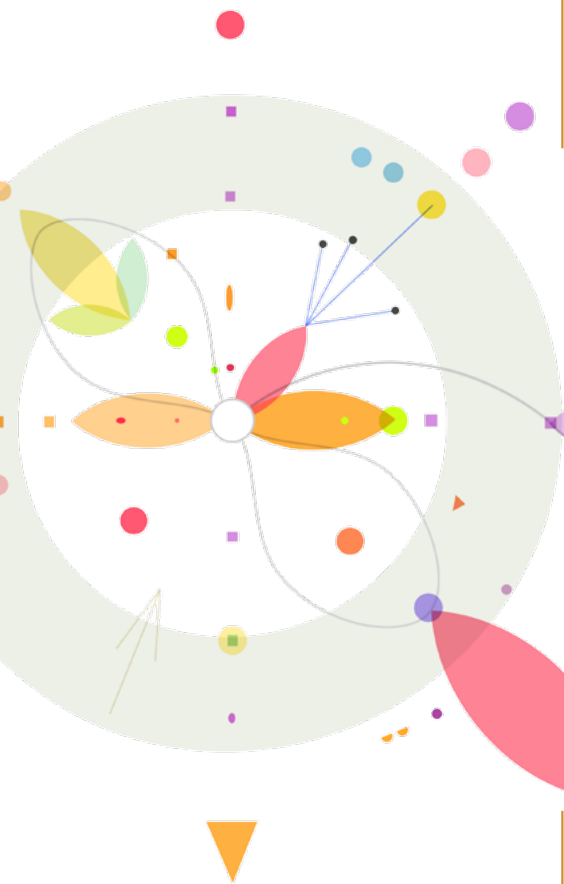
Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation and public health challenge. It constitutes a major impediment to the full, equal, and effective realization of the rights of women and girls and their participation in society. Women and girls who have been historically marginalized—in Mexico, this includes rural, and indigenous, Afro-descendant women, and those employed in domestic work—are most vulnerable position to SGBV. They also face the greatest barriers to access essential and life-saving services, including timely and comprehensive mental health support, legal aid services, counselling and psycho-social support, shelters, and sexual and reproductive health services, including emergency contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis against HIV.

Of the many manifestations of SGBV, the most notorious is femicide, the deliberate killing of women due to their gender. This term burst onto the scene in the 1990s and 2000s with the murder of thousands of women in Ciudad Juarez.ⁱⁱ

According to Mejía Piñeros, the victims were “poor women, young below 30, often migrants, and 95% of the crimes committed against them were unpunished with very few convictions. The murders were cruel, brutal and happened within a context of impunity, perceived mostly as a private matter.” The scourge continues today: between 2015 and 2019, there were 2,745 femicides recorded in Mexico, with just 709 cases with Court rulings (between 2011 and 2017), and of these, only 573 were convictions with 136 acquittals. Other sources rank Mexico as one of the region’s most dangerous countries for women, with a femicide rate of 1.4 per 100.000 women. **iii**

Global gender equality normative frameworks, including the Beijing Platform for Action, UN resolutions and CSW agreed conclusions, have been key for Mexican activists and advocates, to demand government action on violence against women and femicide in particular. Mexico’s 2007 VAW Law recognized “femicidal violence” as “the most extreme form of violence, comprised of a number of misogynistic behaviors that could imply social and State impunity and could culminate in homicide and other forms of violent death of women.” Later, in 2012, the Penal Code was reformed to include femicide as a crime.

The efforts of Mexican leaders and activists are now reverberating and shaping priorities at the global level. Thanks to the intense mobilization of feminist activists and advocates, the agreed conclusions from the 2013 CSW recognize femicide or gender-related killings as an emerging form of violence against women. **vi**



Legislation is not enough

For Mexican officials at Inmujeres, a strong legal framework is important but, as recognized by the 2013 CSW agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, SGBV must also be tackled at the root of social and cultural patterns. “The real issue in our country is cultural change. It is the basis of our work (at Inmujeres) today,” explains Mejia Piñeros. To that end, Inmujeres has included the promotion of cultural changes to enable women’s full enjoyment of their rights and leadership as one of three priority objectives of its [Institutional Program for 2020-2024](#).

Actions identified in the 2020-2024 Institutional Programme as part of the cultural change priority objective include awareness campaigns on the elimination of gender stereotypes and the use of social media tools to promote content about gender equality.

Civil society actors have also answered the call made by the 2013 CSW Agreed Conclusions to develop and implement educational materials aimed at modifying social and cultural patterns of violence. An example is Mexfam’s groundbreaking comprehensive sexuality education program for young people, which addresses the roots of sexual and gender-based violence and provides tools to prevent it. The course uses a “Violentometro” (violence meter), a teaching tool developed by the National Polytechnical Institute of Mexico in the form of a ruler with degrees of violence defined on a color scale.

According to Mexfam’s social programs, young people in this program are often surprised to learn how patterns of escalation can play out in their own lives. “Some men




recognize that they have been violent with their partner, or groups of men and women acknowledge that they had bullied classmates because of their sexual orientation,” says García. “We also have students ask for copies of the Violentometro to share with their mothers and other family members.”

Global conversations matter at the local level

The case of Mexico illustrates how UN resolutions and policy-oriented documents help shape the priorities, interventions, and programs of governments and civil society organizations alike. Language, concepts, and recommendations agreed at the global level matter as they inform national and local legal frameworks, policies, and programs. In turn, the consolidation of national priorities around sexual and gender-based violence, as has occurred in Mexico with the emergence of laws on femicide, influences discussions and resolutions at the global level. Ultimately, UN processes matter because they influence legislative decisions and provide a framework for accountability.

- i UN Department of Public Information. Basic Facts about the United Nations. New York, 1998, p. 236.
- ii Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI). Mexico. https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/aproposito/2019/Violencia2019_Nal.pdf
- iii CEPALSTAT, see <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/feminicidio>

- iv Elimination and Prevention of all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls. Agreed Conclusions. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 2013. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/57/csw57-agreedconclusions-a4-en.pdf?la=en&vs=700>



International Planned Parenthood Federation Western Hemisphere Region (IPPFWHR) is an intersectional feminist ecosystem centered around the rights and needs of women, girls, and gender non-conforming people. Together with 24 partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, we advocate for sexual and reproductive rights, ensure access to sexuality education for young people, promote law and policy change to guarantee access to safe and legal abortion, defend universal access to health care, and work to eliminate violence against women and girls and gender-based violence. We deliver more than 18 million sexual and reproductive health services each year, with a focus on reaching those people who are most vulnerable to marginalization and discrimination based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographic isolation, migrant status, poverty, race, or sexual orientation.

Acknowledgments:

IPPFWHR would like to acknowledge the following partners and collaborators: Ricardo Baruch; María Consuelo Mejía Piñeros; María de la Luz Estrada; Esperanza Delgado; and Eugenia López.



IPPFWHR

**International Planned Parenthood Federation
Western Hemisphere Region**

**125 Maiden Lane, 9th Floor New York,
NY 10038-4730 USA**

T: +1 212 248 6400

F: +1 212 248 4221

E: info@ippfwhr.org

www.ippfwhr.org