THE HIDDEN SIDE OF INSECURITY:
Violence against women in Central America and the Dominican Republic
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Violence against women in Central America and the Dominican Republic

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Reflections on the context of COVID-19 and its consequent implications on violence against women in Central America and the Dominican Republic

This report was prepared prior to the worldwide surge in the COVID-19 crisis, in order to shed light on progress achieved and challenges to be met in reaching SDG 16 and SDG 5 toward eliminating all forms of violence against women, with concrete efforts by the Countries to guarantee a Woman’s right to live a Life Free of Violence.

The COVID-19 health crisis presents the world with one of its greatest challenges today. It is remarkably complex to estimate the impact of this crisis on human lives, and the consequences stemming from the economic downturn that is affecting the population worldwide.

The alarming downturn raises fears that the crisis will lead to one of the largest declines in GDP in Latin America, leaving almost 100 million people in extreme poverty in 2020. Forecasts are increasingly pessimistic regarding the time it will take for the region’s economy to recover to its pre-COVID-19 state. Lockdown has had negative effects on the labor market, with the rise in unemployment and the loss of livelihoods and deepening of already eroded social inequalities, while increasing the risk factors that these events pose in people’s lives and in particular women.

Although we currently have only a rough idea of the total impact that the health crisis is having on social well-being and development indicators, experiences of previous humanitarian and economic crises show that the impact tends to be different for men than women. It is women who are usually subjected to disproportionately greater effects. This is mainly due to the structural inequalities that are rooted in gender inequalities, and the inadequate social protection mechanisms, or the lack thereof in the Latin American context. Women are at a severe disadvantaged in terms of economic autonomy in the region, where the very livelihood of one in three women is determined by someone else.

The weighted average of women with no income for Latin America in 2017 was 28.1%, while the equivalent indicator for men was 13.2%. In El Salvador, this figure stands at 41.6% and higher in Guatemala at 51% (ECLAC 2019). During the 2007/08 food security crisis, for example, women-headed households were more likely to be food insecure than those headed by men (Compton, Wiggins, and Keats, 2011). Crises in general, and particularly

3 2014 figures, last available data.
the circumstances of the current public health crisis, constitute risk factors for women, as they are exposed to different types of violence, serious human rights confrontations that have severe and lasting repercussions on the lives of the survivors. For this reason, it is essential that governments incorporate the prevention and reparation of acts of violence against women and girls into their national response plans, as called for in the inter-agency declaration of COVID-19.

This report notes that institutions engaged in citizen security and justice have been struggling with addressing and overcoming the multiple difficulties inherent in managing information on violence against women. Correctly estimating these types of events, including domestic violence, intrafamily violence, sexual crimes, trafficking, disappearances of women, economic and psychological violence, child abuse, violent deaths and femicide/feminicide, has been one of the most complex measurement challenges for public policy. This is due to many factors. Complaints resulting from violence are overwhelming scarce, there is an unfathomable amount of underreporting.

Society is itself considerably tolerant of this type of incident, contributing to its lack of visibility and the structural deficiencies in addressing it. The lack of trust in institutions stems from the high rates of impunity, which is one of the main things that contributes to this outrage.

On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge citizen security institutions’ recent efforts and advances in information management enabling them to better address the problem. However, it must be taken into account that the records of violence against women and girls (VAWG) already presented significant deficiencies in many countries of the region prior to the pandemic, as noted in this report in greater detail. One of these main shortcomings observed is the scarcity or total lack of disaggregated variables in the administrative records. This information on victims, perpetrators and incidents should be systematically collected in order to be able to quantifiably establish the characteristics of the women who are subjected to violence in the different vulnerable groups. This information is also decisive in specifying details about the conditions under which the victims were attacked. The information provided by the disaggregated data should be the central to evidence-based public policy to design effective interventions and ways to address VAWG.

It is estimated that less than 40% of women who are subjected to violence seek any kind of assistance, and when they do, they mainly turn to family and friends.

Less than 10% of women turn to justice or health institutions, according to the World’s Women report (UNDS, 2015).

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Variables such as time and place of the incident, victim relation to perpetrator, identifying whether it took place in private or public, history of violence, ethno-racial identity, belonging to the LGBTI+ community, disabilities, pregnancy, nationality, type of weapon, perpetrator ties to criminal organizations, among others. Disaggregation of information is essential, so is the existence of decision makers who propose regulations on the basis of equality, justice and gender-sensitive evidence. In order to reduce the levels of impunity, it is also essential to have information on the effectiveness of the processes of accessing justice, in order to identify obstacles.

The current public health crisis is exacerbating the lack of records on incidents of VAWG. In many instances, legal systems and institutions that produce and process administrative data have experienced operational difficulties or their work has been completely interrupted due to government-imposed lockdown measures and restrictions in mobility. In addition, these measures make it difficult for women to access institutions in charge of security, justice and health. Even in cases where they are able to go to a health care facility, these are crowded, and efforts are focused on addressing the pandemic, and not on providing differentiated care to victims of gender-based violence. This situation deepens the indifference towards the victims of VAWG. The urgency demanded by these challenges, and the need to understand the evolution of the phenomenon at this juncture, has led authorities, women’s organizations and civil society to seek alternative means and non-traditional sources of information as a way to approach this disconcerting situation. In an effort to correct the difficulties in collecting information on VAWG, innovative alternatives have also been encouraged, such as the use of mobile applications or specialized telephone surveys. These alternative means have their own challenges in ensuring the victims are included and their information protected in the collection mechanisms themselves, as women are often in close proximity to their aggressors. Likewise, these tools require that protocols be established to balance the demand for care with government institutions’ capacity to respond.
At present, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are concrete indications of surges in violence against women in Latin America.

**In Guatemala,** for instance, in May, calls to the National Civil Police hotline for help with intrafamily violence rose **43%** compared to calls during the same month in 2019.\(^5\)

**In Colombia,** the Colombian Observatory for Women estimated that the number of reports of family violence had risen **162%**.\(^6\)

**In México,** the Special Prosecutor for Feminicide and Offenses against Women in the state of Nuevo León reported an increase of more than **35%** in reports of intrafamily violence.\(^7\)

**In Brasil,** the figure rose **50%** according to the Domestic Violence Division of Court of Justice of Rio de Janeiro.\(^8\)

These outbreaks of violence are raging in a region that was already known for being at the top of the indicators of violence against women worldwide.

**Among the mechanisms that contribute to explaining these patterns is increased alcohol consumption, a known risk factor for domestic violence** (WHO, 2006). COVID-19 has overwhelmingly disrupted all aspects of everyday life, with strict isolation, loss of perceptions of personal security, loss of employment and livelihoods, financial stress and political uncertainty. These situations can trigger conflicts. On the other hand, we know that violence is not a new issue, it was already within the individual. Confinement also means the victim is far from any woman’s support networks, hiding these violent incidents from the social censure that they might provoke.

**It is imperative to work to acknowledge and address the different ways in which this challenge affects the most vulnerable groups, in order for public policy to provide a comprehensive and inclusive response, so women victims of violence are not left behind.**

As articulated in this report, violence against women takes on various forms depending on the living contexts and the range of conditions of vulnerability that they experience. Using gender as a lens to examine the complex contexts that emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible to more closely approach the sum of circumstances and intersectionality of discrimination experienced by women.

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5 Calculated by UNDP Infosegura with official data provided by Guatemala National Civil Police-Statistics Section, validation by INE pending.
Women in rural areas

Rural settings present their own challenges, as they are more susceptible to income variations due to the dependence on seasonal sources of income. The current context and restrictions in mobility make it difficult to both hire and provide labor for harvesting and planting, making it difficult to transfer crops to processing centers and markets for commercialization. In general, shocks to the economy result in fluctuations in food prices, loss of crops, jobs and even livelihoods. In particular, women find it more difficult than men to face and absorb the shocks that emerge in a situation like this. The gender gaps characteristic of rural areas consist of abysmal differences in access to land, production goods, access to financial services and education, coupled with the traditional roles that make women responsible for domestic work, limit their access to the labor market and increase their vulnerability to situations of food insecurity, especially when they are the head of the households. In addition, they find themselves having to resort to negative adaptation mechanisms such as: Opting for less nutritious and more affordable food, prioritizing the feeding of male members of the family, prioritizing food expenses over other family expenses such as those related to health care or education, especially for girls, or the sale of their own assets (FAO 2014).

These measures have negative repercussions on their wellbeing, resilience and self-reliance, both in the short and long term, because older women are more prone than men to be living in poverty, particularly when they are at the head of monoparental families. (UNDS, 2015).

The perspective of citizen security indicates that in rural settings, people tend to be even more tolerant towards situations of domestic violence, as they consider physical or sexual violence as an everyday circumstance of relationships. (Ilika Amobi, 2006). Cultural and social norms can have a strong influence on the formation and acceptance of behaviors that can promote violence (WHO, 2009). Women in rural contexts, particularly young women, are more exposed to becoming victims of violence, but they are at a greater disadvantage because they have to travel long distances to find a family member or a health care facility, and have less access to mobile phones or the internet to report incidents.
This same approach would show that the conditions and dimensions of inequalities are equally challenging and disproportionate when considering women with different characteristics and social experiences. There is also the fact that women are overwhelmingly overrepresented in low-paid and temporary jobs, such as domestic work.

According to International Labor Organization estimates, there are over 55 million people in the world in this line of work, most of them women who are at risk of losing their jobs.

For these women, working in this sector already represented a risk and a situation of vulnerability before the crisis, given that there are few or no laws regulating their labor rights. In addition, domestic workers are frequently beset by situations of exploitation, discrimination and violence. Similar challenges are faced by women first responders in this crisis. The increasing disadvantages of these situations remain outside the scope of governmental responses.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATIC</td>
<td>Technical Criminal Investigation Agency (Honduras)</td>
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<td>AyHS</td>
<td>Sexual harassment and abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Central American Agricultural Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAWN</td>
<td>Central America Women’s Network (Network of Solidarity with Women in Central America)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDCP</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>IACHR</td>
<td>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLAIS</td>
<td>Local First Response and Monitoring Committees for high risk cases of violence against women</td>
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<td>CNTC</td>
<td>Central Farmworker’s Union (Honduras)</td>
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<td>CONAPLUVI</td>
<td>National Commission on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (Dominican Republic)</td>
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<td>CONAPRED</td>
<td>National Council to Prevent Discrimination (Mexico)</td>
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<td>CONAPREVI</td>
<td>National Coordinator for the Prevention of Intrafamily Violence and Violence against Women (Guatemala)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONVIMU</td>
<td>National Committee against Violence against Women (Panama)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHR Court</td>
<td>Inter-American Court of Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSJ</td>
<td>Supreme Court of Justice (Guatemala)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTE</td>
<td>Specialized Technical Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIA</td>
<td>Directorate of Information and Analysis (El Salvador)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIEP</td>
<td>Police Information and Statistics Department (El Salvador)</td>
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<td>DIGESTYC</td>
<td>General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses (El Salvador)</td>
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<td>DINAF</td>
<td>Directorate of Children, Adolescents and Family (Honduras)</td>
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<td>ESCA</td>
<td>Central American Security Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEHMUC</td>
<td>Honduran Federation of Farm Women</td>
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<td>FGR</td>
<td>Prosecutor General of the Republic (El Salvador)</td>
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<td>FNRP</td>
<td>National People’s Resistance Front (Honduras)</td>
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<td>GAM</td>
<td>Mutual Support Group (Guatemala)</td>
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IDHUCA
UCA Human Rights Institute

IDMC
Internal Displacement Monitoring Center
(Observatory of Internal Displacement)

IEEPP
Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies

IMAS
Mixed Institute of Social Assistance (Costa Rica)

INA
National Agrarian Institute

INACIF
National Institute of Forensic Science (Guatemala)

INAM
National Women’s Institute (Honduras)

INAMU
National Women’s Institute (Costa Rica)

INE
Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Guatemala)

INE
National Statistics Institute (Honduras)

INFOP
National Institute of Vocational Training (Guatemala)

Infosegura
Evidence-Based Information Management Project

INMUJERES
National Institute of Women (Mexico)

ISDEMU
Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women

IUDPAS
University Institute for Democracy, Peace and Security

Las Dignas
Association of Women for Dignity and Life (El Salvador)

LEIV
Special Comprehensive Law for a Violence-free Life for Women, (El Salvador)

LEPIINA
Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (El Salvador)

LGBTI+
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

LIBRE
Liberty and Refoundation Party (Honduras)

LIE
Law of Equality, Equity and the Eradication of Discrimination against Women

MAM
Mechanisms for the advancement of women

MESECVI
Follow Up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention

MINGOB
Ministry of Governance (Guatemala)

MIP
Ministry of the Interior and Police (Dominican Republic)

MJSP
Ministry of Justice and Public Security (El Salvador)

MP
Public Ministry (Guatemala)

MP
Public Ministry (Honduras)

OHCHR
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNICEF for Human Rights

SDG
Sustainable Development Goals

OAS
Organization of American States

OIJ
Judicial Investigation Department (Costa Rica)

IOM
International Organization for Migration

OMS
World Health Organization
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ONE</td>
<td>National Statistics Office (Dominican Republic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN WOMEN</td>
<td>UN Entity Dedicated to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAHO</td>
<td>Pan American Health Organization</td>
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<td>ORMUSA</td>
<td>Organization of Salvadoran Women for Peace</td>
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<td>PDDH</td>
<td>Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (El Salvador)</td>
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What are we talking about?
Citizen security and violence against women in Central America and the Dominican Republic
Although there is a downward trend in the rate of violent deaths in the subregion, the data remain alarmingly high, particularly in the countries of Northern Central America. In this region, there are also differences in the trend by sex: There is a marked decrease in the rate for men, which fluctuated from 98.6 in 2015 to 61.8 in 2019, compared to a moderate downward trend in violent deaths of women, from 10.3 in 2015 to 7.1 in 2019.

The data reveals an evident challenge in a subregion that faces insecurity emergencies characterized by the presence and local penetration of organized crime, drug trafficking, control of territories by criminal groups, the expansion of criminal activities criminal activities that commercialize people (particularly, but not exclusively, women), the increase in manifestations of exceedingly cruel and degrading violence against women, the everyday use of firearms and the normalization of violence.

Despite having to face these circumstances, the countries have moved forward, creating citizen security strategies that are more compatible with the perspective of human development ⁴, the information throughout this report shows that the problems that make it difficult to reverse this context of insecurity persist, and they produce high economic and social costs for both the States and society.

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1 This excludes Panama and Nicaragua.
2 Infosegura estimates are based on official data from the following sources: Belize, Belize Crime Observatory; Costa Rica, Judicial Investigation Department (OIJ); El Salvador, Director for Information Analysis (DIA); Guatemala, Ministry of Governance (MINGOB); Honduras, Technical Unit for Inter-institutional Coordination (UTECI); the Dominican Republic, September projection based on data from the Citizen Security Observatory.
3 Data from the National Civil Police (PNC) - General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses (DIGESTYC), El Salvador; National Civil Police (PNC) - National Institute of Statistics (INE), Guatemala; and UTECI-National Institute of Statistics (INE), Honduras.

⁴ Under the paradigm of human development, citizen security must be based on the guarantee of the rule of law, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, accountability and the empowerment of people within a framework of respect for fundamental freedoms (O'Donnell [1993]; Ungar [2011] cited in UNDP [2013]).
There are numerous and diverse factors behind this complex problem. Poverty, inequality, exclusion and urban sprawl are characteristic aspects of various territories in the countries in the subregion, leaving broad sectors of the population without the basics for development — such as health, education, decent housing, formal labor markets and political participation — giving rise to unequal capacities and opportunities for people, exposing them to different degrees of risk and vulnerability, according to their situation, and thereby increasing social conflict (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2013).

Added to the above are the institutional weaknesses that countries exhibit in light of the magnitude and characteristics of the problem, the ease of access to firearms, the intangible consequences of the armed conflict in several countries of the subregion, and the transnational presence of organized crime and drug trafficking, aspects that are weakening social cohesion and giving rise to the reproduction of violence (De León Escribano, 2008).

The context of violence experienced in the subregion is also the product of structural gender factors that are the foundation for unequal power relations between the sexes and have preserved the hegemony of violent masculinities, and the prevalence of stereotypes that rationalize and promote violence of all kinds, particularly against women. The reality and the violence they face are immersed in the context of high violence and crime in the region, perpetuated in a scenario of great inequality where there is prevalent social and institutional impunity with respect to violence against women and girls (VAWG).

As Azaola points out (September-December 2012), within the context of ahegemonic androcentric culture, it is no surprise that violence against women, which has “always” existed, was until recently one of the most invisible expressions of social violence.

Despite this invisibility, this reality prevails and presents a troubling panorama, where an adequate response requires the confluence of multiple actors and strategies. As documented and analyzed throughout this report, not only are femicide/femicide rates high in the countries in the region, the ways in which they are committed are also diversified, with increased cruelty, and it becomes difficult to sanction and obtain reparations for the damage when diverse associated phenomena emerge, such as organized crime or intimate femicide/feminicide committed by contract killers.

Sexual violence is also a constant that affects many women in the subregion, particularly adolescents and girls. It also takes on new modalities linked to the activities of the different criminal groups that batter the region, not only sexually abusing or raping women, but also using sexual violence as a technique to sow terror, demonstrate power and brutality, intimidate rivals, or set up complicity between members of the same criminal gang.
Trafficking in women is another reality that is strongly linked to the diversification of criminal activities that commodify women’s bodies and find sexual exploitation a highly lucrative criminal activity. Added to this is the disappearance of women, where, although insufficient statistical data obscures the real magnitude, still some data reveal it to be a serious reality:

In GUATEMALA, for instance, the problem of disappearances affects women disproportionately. During the period between 2010 & 2016, this offense represented 60% of all identified cases, and the rate increased by 214% over the course of these years. (Data by PNC-INE Guatemala)

The disappearance of women, while a problem in itself, points to possible links to other crimes such as femicides/feminicides, human trafficking and drug trafficking, which remain hidden given the lack of certainty about the events surrounding said disappearances, and the whereabouts of the women.

Although the violence that women currently face in the subregion — in addition to the violence that they systematically face in the household, at work and educational domains — has a structural basis in the prevailing system of male domination, it is also strongly influenced by the context of high insecurity, common crime, and organized crime. The development of the chapters that make up this report reveals the close link between social violence and gender-based violence that the women in these countries experience, affecting the magnitude of the problem, the emergence of particular expressions of violence, impunity, and a significant degree of against Women in Central America and the Dominican Republic 23 insensitivity to the issue.
Despite this evident link between violence against women and social violence, currently the violence women face is not included among the core problems that are addressed by government mechanisms in charge of guaranteeing citizen security, because the gender dynamic that underlies violence is insufficiently integrated, both in the conceptual corpus and in the central aspects of the legal, institutional and programmatic frameworks that support actions for citizen security.

This has led to a biased view with governments providing separate responses to social violence, on the one hand, and gender-based violence, on the other. In current practice, the institutions engaged in public safety or citizen security deal with social violence, criminal violence, and high impact violence that occurs in public spaces, while institutions responsible for promoting women’s rights are in charge of preventing and addressing gender-based violence against women and girls, predominantly domestic violence.

This must become a thing of the past, not only because gender-based violence against women and girls occurs in multiple and different domains and overlaps with other violence and security problems. It must also be overcome because, as is supported by this report, violence against women is the cause of a continuous violation of the central core of rights that citizen security is called upon to protect: The right to physical integrity, mobility, property and to live life free of violence.

This kind of violence is addressed at a fundamental level by citizen security, since no country can achieve full citizen security while women and girls continue to face high rates of violence, and unless social and criminal violence are addressed from a comprehensive perspective, allowing for a deeper understanding of the factors associated with gender that trigger and maintain it.

Currently, there are important opportunities to face these challenges, among them the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development approved by the United Nations member states in 2015, which establishes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved in 2030. It proposes mainstreaming the central issues of gender equality, and the rights and empowerment of women in sustained development. This involves not only setting goals, but also establishing the means to achieve them (Bidegain Ponte, 2017).

Gender equality is part of practically all SDGs, because multilevel transformations are important, in order for processes of change to be sustainable over time. Therefore, explicit commitments to gender is found in 14 of the 17 SDGs.

SDG 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” ties in directly to the matter of gender equity.

SDG 16: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” is more closely tied to citizen security agendas, being currently implemented in most countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic.
This new way of understanding and dealing with global challenges represents the United Nations’ substantive contribution to the development of a new conceptual framework of citizen security that focuses on people, aspiring to live free from fear of being victims and that substantively mainstreams gender, prevention, and the fight against VAWG.

This report seeks to provide elements to achieve a new way of understanding citizen security from perspective of gender, including VAWG, and putting it at the center of effective initiatives for the prevention and control of crime and violence, also contributing to achieving the SDGs, with the certainty that no one will be left behind. The challenge is unprecedented and, there are certainly multiple challenges to deal with, beginning with the technical and political will to move forward with a new perspective of action that helps to address the problems of violence in its multiple dimensions.

It is no coincidence that the objective of the report is to analyze the issue of VAWG in Central America and the Dominican Republic and, from its own characteristics, propose this new framework of action that introduces this issue into the core of citizen security policies and no longer assume it is a marginal issue, belonging to another field of action. The rise in extreme violence also has a female side to it, and turning a blind eye prevents firm steps from being taken toward the construction of peaceful and more just societies.
HUMAN SECURITY

Understanding the concept of human security in all its complexity involves an initial review of the United Nations Development Program’s definitions of human development, where it emerged.5

The first Human Development Report (UNDP, 1990) posited the need for a new human development paradigm, going beyond the emulation of economic growth, and placing people at the center, and the way their opportunities and freedoms are enlarged.

5 It should be noted that these definitions came about thanks to contributions by Amartya Sen. Based on the Capability Approach, he reformulated development theory, focusing on the “process of expanding people’s capabilities, and not as an increase in utility and economic well-being and satisfaction” (Sen, 1990 and Sen, 1999). See also the contributions of Mahbub Ul Haq to the concept of human development (Ul Haq, 1987), and his conceptualizing and formulation of the human development index at the UNDP, coordinating the team in charge of preparing the First Human Development Report in 1990. For more information on these conceptual and methodological bases, see Griffit (2001).
This is where the basic objective of development was defined as the creation of an environment where human beings can lead a healthy, long and creative life. In addition, it was pointed out that human development has two aspects “the formation of human capacities — such as a better health, knowledge and skills — and the use that people make of acquired capacities — in leisure, production or cultural, social and political activities” (UNDP, 1990, p. 34).

In time, this conceptualization of human development gained in complexity at the UNDP, within the framework of the historical development process, which is constantly subjected to contextual factors that threaten it, such as wars, organized crime, environmental degradation, natural disasters and diseases, among others. In this sense, in 1994, the UNDP determined there was a need to expand the human development paradigm, in order to incorporate human security as a central aspect for stability in development (UNDP, 1994).

Transcending the post-Cold War conceptions of security that were based on the protection of the nation state, UNDP stated that the expansion and full use of people’s capacities as pursued in human development will only be achievable if they are protected from the safety risks that threaten those capacities in such daily aspects as employment, income, health, hunger, crime, the environment, etc.

In this sense, based on the fact that human development is a process of continuous expansion of the range of options available to people, human security associated with human development “means that people can exercise those options safely and freely and you can have relative confidence that the opportunities available today will not disappear entirely tomorrow” (UNDP, 1994, p. 26-27).

In summary:
If human development is a process of expanding the options people have available, human security indicates, the stability with which such options can be effectively leveraged. It thus becomes an attribute of human development: Knowing that the opportunities it provides have a high probability of not disappearing suddenly (UNDP, 2005. p. 31).

In order to clearly situate the gender perspective in human security and, consequently, in citizen security, it is important to broaden the vision of UNDP regarding the four essential characteristics of human security:

**Universalism**

**Human security is a universal concern**
(UNDP (1994, p. 25)
Human beings all value security in their capabilities and opportunities, but they are susceptible to being restricted by various factors. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that, in terms of their situation of poverty or wealth, age or gender, people face different conditions, risks and vulnerabilities that need to be accounted for in order to ensure security is universal.
**Interdependence**

*The components of human security are interdependent* (UNDP, 1994, page 25-26). Certainly, the consequences of the impact on human security are not isolated anywhere on the planet; rather, they are interconnected and in many ways affect the whole. But this principle not only applies to the components of security, but also to the territories and regions of the world, and to the different demographic groups and sectors of the population, that is, problems most acutely affecting women and girls constitute a challenge to the well-being and safety of all people.

**Prevention**

*It is easier to ensure human security through early prevention* (UNDP, 1994, p. 26) There is a need for first-hand and timely knowledge from each sector regarding the specific threats, risks or vulnerabilities that threaten security. By identifying and targeting specific risks that affect the sustainability of women's capacities and opportunities given their gender and sex, will make it possible to anticipate the most serious effects on them, and save on social costs in which the social whole will eventually incur to respond.

**Centrality of human experience**

*Human security is human-centered* (UNDP, 1994, p. 26). It must be acknowledged that human experience varies from one person to another in the different human groups and sectors they are part of, in terms of their positioning, identity, and their specific social, economic, cultural and political circumstances, and this diversity must be acknowledged, respected and addressed in policies that are intended to guarantee human security. In this sense, it is relevant that women’s vision, with its diversity, play a part in the construction of the conditions that are necessary to guarantee human security.
The types of risks, vulnerabilities and threats that mount against development and that compromise human security are untold, and vary depending on the time, the country and the group or social sector, among other aspects. A little over two decades ago the UNDP classified them by the social sphere they had potential to affect: Economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political (UNDP, 1994, p. 28).
Over the years, some of the threats originally considered to be part of the personal security domain, such as the danger of “rape and domestic violence” (UNDP, 1994, p. 34), were included with the concept of citizen security, which gradually became a limited but central domain of human security:

If the latter (human security) addresses forms of vulnerability that compromise human rights in general, then citizen security refers to specific modes of vulnerability—those caused by violence and the deprivation—and the protection of an essential core of fundamental of individual rights (UNDP, 2005, p. 35).

The fundamental rights that comprise this core are:

- right to life and personal integrity, (in its various aspects: physical, emotional, sexual integrity), as well as other rights inherent to the individual domain, such as the inviolability of the home, freedom of mobility and the benefits of property (UNDP, 2005, p. 38).

Therefore, anything that compromises this central core of rights, compromises citizen security, as does violence against women that — as detailed throughout these 31 reports — undermines the rights to life, integrity, to freedom of mobility and a life free of violence. Therefore, when the citizen security of women is violated, so is that of the social group, because, extrapolating the principle of interdependence noted above to citizen security, the components of human security are interdependent, and a violation of women’s citizen security is a violation of the benefit of citizen security for the whole (see Figure 1).
The Hidden Side of Insecurity:
Violence against Women in Central America and the Dominican Republic

Individual rights: Peace, healthy environment, development

Economic and Social Rights

Freedom and Individual Rights

“Hard Core” Human Rights
Right to life and physical integrity

Economic and Social Rights

1st. Generation
Freedom and Individual Rights

2nd. Generation
Economic and Social Rights

3d. Generation
Individual rights: Peace, healthy environment, development

Source: UNDP 2005, p.38
Although the threats and vulnerabilities that endanger these core rights mainly have to do with violence, insecurity and crime, this should not be misconstrued as meaning that combating them is the only way to guarantee citizen security. Rather, this right is:

... the result of a policy that leans toward a comprehensive strategy, which includes improving people’s quality of life, community action to prevent crime and violence, justice that is accessible, agile and effective, education that is based on values of peaceful coexistence, respect for the law, tolerance and the construction of social cohesion (UNDP, 2013, p. 6).

In the UNDP framework, citizen security is understood as:

... the personal, objective and subjective condition of being free from violence or from the threat of intentional violence or dispossession by others. The concept of violence, in turn, denotes the use or threat of use of physical or psychological force in order to cause harm or bend their will. Finally, dispossession refers to the act of illegitimately depriving a natural or legal person of their assets (UNDP, 2005, p. 35).

This concept of citizen security has been growing, to include new ways of enforcing the core rights that it protects, not only limited to crimes such as violence and dispossession, but also take into account and shed light on other types of violence, behaviors and events that violate the citizen security of women and girls, who make up large segments of the population, both in terms of victimization and the perception of security 6.

In this particular regard, as will be shown in greater detail further on, it is important to be clear that violence against women is the product of a series of social norms that emerge in a gender-based hierarchical social system, which is hegemonic and, therefore, accepted and mainstreamed in broad sectors of the population. However, its effects constitute one of the most serious violations of the rights enshrined in this basic core of human rights.

Consequently, violence against women should not be viewed and addressed only as a citizen security issue, instead, approaching from a gender perspective in the domain of security contributes to enhancing the conceptual view of citizen security, the factors and acts that threaten it, and the most appropriate strategies to guarantee it.

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6 The UNDP report mentioned before acknowledges: It is crucial that the concept of citizen security encompass non-criminalized forms of exercise of violence and dispossession, which, in many cases, create a feeling of vulnerability and lack of protection of the hard core of fundamental rights in a large part of the population (UNDP, 2005, p. 40).
2.1 Citizen security, human rights and Social development

2.1.1 The validity of human rights and social development as premises for citizen security

Although one of the ways of guaranteeing citizen security has to do with the prevention and control of threats and vulnerabilities that directly affect the specific core of rights it protects, there is also another area of action that has to do with prevention and the control of the risks that come from other spheres of human security and that interfere with the exercise of the core of rights.

This last sphere of action involves considering the factors associated with the conditions that influence social development and the enforcement of rights, such as prevailing conditions that also compromise citizen security like high unemployment rates, disease and hunger, among others, which are social and economic factors that shape contexts that are favorable to violence and criminal behavior.

Mitigating these risks necessarily involves guaranteeing the production and distribution of the basic satisfiers that meet people’s essential needs, and enforcing the fundamental freedoms that enable both men and women to develop their potentialities, and contributing to triggering changes in social norms in favor of gender equality and respect for women’s rights.

Given that these basic needs, social norms and fundamental freedoms address the most essential aspirations of human society, which today are part of the doctrine of human rights, therefore they:

... constitute a minimum threshold of benefits required by any person, whose effective protection is a condition *qua non* for the expansion of human capacities. As a minimum threshold, human rights are, above all, a guarantee of security for people. UNDP (2005, p. 32)

In this sense, the nation states are responsible for protecting the human rights of individuals, including the rights and principles of equality and non-discrimination, and are obliged to promote social development policies that have a favorable impact on the factors that can undermine the satisfaction of these basic needs and fundamental freedoms that are the basis for human security and, consequently, citizen security. The wide range of public policies that they promote in this regard should seek to *respect, defend, promote, guarantee* human rights and remedy human rights violations; that is, they must integrate a human rights approach and, consequently, a gender perspective, since it is not feasible to guarantee the human rights of all people if policies do not include a gender perspective.

7 The learn about the implications of each of these general obligations see: Programa de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal, Comité Coordinador para la elaboración del Diagnóstico y Programa de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal. Mexico, 2009.
In this regard, it needs to be kept in mind that human rights are inherent to the human condition, that is, all people — as such — are rights holders. However, there are also groups or sectors of the population that hold specific rights that they exercise temporarily or permanently because of a particular need or specific condition that requires consideration, or, because they are under threat because they are subjected to discrimination or are vulnerable.

On this basis, women and men deserve full enjoyment of all human rights, however, guaranteeing them requires taking into account factors associated with gender and other intervening situations of discrimination. In the same vein, the public policies for social development that are promoted to ensure citizen security must address the particularities of social diversity, that is, acknowledge the rights holder’s individual gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic level, vulnerability, etc.

Moreover, actions for citizen security transcend the merely police sphere, the justice system and the prison, and are characterized by the development of multisectoral initiatives and the recognition that social prevention is a space for the implementation of public policy (Dammert & Lunecke, 2004). In this sense, it is also highly relevant that the various State agencies and the social actors at different levels (national, regional and community) share co-responsibility, which is essential for the success of initiatives in the matter.

2.1.2 Factors that affect the core of rights involved in citizen security

As noted in the first paragraph of section 2.2.1., another basis for guaranteeing citizen security is tracking the factors that directly violate the rights that sustain it. In depth, gender-based analysis of the types of dangers, risks or vulnerabilities that threaten citizen security involves reviewing the type of conduct or actions that are directed against the rights of people in this particular sphere, considering the link to delinquency, violence and crime, and the relevance both for the social group and for various specific sectors of the population.

Criminal conduct is one that is contrary to the law and the rule of law; therefore, it can be prosecuted by the corresponding authorities (UNDP, 2013, p. 6). In general, monitoring threats to citizen security requires paying greater attention to behaviors, because the government is legally obligated to combat them and because societies have favored protecting themselves from their violation, inasmuch as they protect the most prized rights or assets.
One instance is criminal conduct against property or assets, or theft from pedestrians; these are classified as crimes in various types of codes and extensive public resources are allocated to address this.

On the other hand, there are behaviors that go against the rights of individuals, involving violence, and jeopardizing citizen security, even when they are not considered crimes, or they may even be part of certain social norms. These are harmful or injurious behaviors – although some are not considered illegal – while others have been defined as punishable in some legal order that classifies them as misdemeanors of an administrative or civic nature. Unlike criminal offenses, governments have less of a legal obligation to combat these behaviors. Therefore, they allocate fewer public resources to prevention and response, although they still pose a serious risk for people individually, and for citizen security, in general.⁸

For example, among the behaviors that can violate personal integrity, there are some manifestations of sexual violence that are classified as a crime, such as in the case of rape. Yet there are many other behaviors that are framed within sexual harassment in public spaces, which injure thousands of women and girls on a daily basis. These behaviors are not adequately combated because they are not classified as a crime; perhaps their status is that of minor offense often meriting only administrative sanctions, or, in other cases, they are not even classified in any regulatory order at all.

These are non-typified and socially normalized acts of violence, with extremely harmful effects on women’s perception of security and the exercise of their rights, such as physical integrity and freedom of mobility, among others.⁹

In addition, there are behaviors that, although not carried out with violence and may or may not be criminal, do constitute a serious threat to public safety. Such is the case of “white collar” crimes, which may be a threat to the property of many people and, therefore, to citizen security; although this type of behavior is not an act of violence, and has not yet been fully included in the scope of action of citizen security policies.

Consideration also needs to be given to the fact that the actions or omissions of the government may also be an attack against Citizen Security. For instance, thousands of women victims of gender-based violence (in any of its its types and forms) are affected when their reports are not addressed, which in itself constitutes an act of institutional violence in the form of re-victimization that affects women’s rights to integrity and to live a life free of violence.

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⁸ Although the legal frameworks of various Central American and Caribbean countries that are the object of study, fail to recognize several behaviors that constitute gender-based violence, it should not be forgotten that they are within the framework of International Law that covers Women’s Human Rights, so these countries are obligated to address them.

⁹ It is worth noting that some Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Chile and Peru, in step with advances in the way citizens understand these behaviors, have classified street harassment as a crime in their criminal codes. Argentina (Law 27501), Chile (Law 21153) and Peru (Law 30314).
Based on the foregoing, this study considers criminal and non-criminal behaviors as factors that violate citizen security, whether or not they involve violence. For the purpose of analysis, the most relevant are those whose effect is more serious or more extensive on the core of basic rights of citizen security of women and girls. This provides a broader and more comprehensive vision of citizen security; namely, it is not restricted to focusing only on crimes.

Taking this into account, the manifestations of interpersonal violence need to be analyzed; that is, violence that one person inflicts on another, whether they are acquainted with each other or not, and violence on the collective, which is expressed in types of violence exerted by groups, such as human trafficking, or other forms of organized crime, which, among other aspects, affect the integrity of women (UNDP, 2005, p. 41).

In this regard, it is important to return to what theorist Martha Nussbaum pointed out about the capacities approach, but from a feminist perspective. In an effort to set political objectives that can trace the path towards social justice for people, this author states that there are a series of core capacities that need to be guaranteed for human beings to function. These capacities constitute the minimum to which every person on the planet is entitled, in order to live with dignity (Nussbaum, 2002).

The theory points to the individual’s physical integrity, namely the conditions of inequality and violence that women suffer in particular. This ability refers to “being able to move from one place to another; respect for the limits of one’s own body, that is, the capacity of security against assault, including sexual assault, sexual abuse of minors and domestic violence; opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction” (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 120-121).

### 2.2 Dimensions of citizen security

Citizen security involves two complementary but different dimensions. On the one hand, the objective dimension of security refers to people being victimized as a result of acts of violence or crimes that actually take place (UNDP, 2013, p. 7); these are victimizing behaviors or acts, either criminal or non-punishable, carried out with violence, or not. On the other, the subjective dimension of security refers to the perception of insecurity, fear of- or vulnerability to becoming a victim of violent acts, dispossession or crimes (UNDP, 2013, p. 7).

Objective security is analyzed based on information from official records, such as the statistics of police reports. Although these reports constitute a record of the behaviors and incidents mentioned previously, their scope is limited in the sense that they do not account for incidents that are not officially reported or registered for a variety reasons; this is colloquially known as the black or hidden figure of the victimizing behavior or act.

An approximate idea of the magnitude and characteristics of this issue can be gleaned from victimization surveys, as well as other types of qualitative methods. However, implementation of this type of instrument in Central America and the Dominican Republic is still incipient, so, uncertainty still obscures the magnitude and prevalence of these behaviors and events.
The subjective sense of security or feeling of fear have turned into social problems in their own right, separate from victimization. Citizens are afraid of being subjected to a victimizing act, they feel unprotected and threatened. This fear has profound and diverse consequences for the individual, the community and society. For instance, a variety of studies have shown how public spaces have been systematically abandoned, there are limits on the schedule for being outdoors, private security systems are purchased, and even place of residence is changed for fear of becoming the victim of a criminal or antisocial act or conduct (Raderstorf, Wilson, Zechmeister & Camilleri, 2017).

Various studies (Zermeño, 2009) note that this situation is a threat to women in particular, because they experience greater fear when moving through public spaces, given that they face greater vulnerability to crime overall, but particularly because they are exposed to different expressions of violence, intimidation and sexual harassment. Faced with this violence, they use strategies like avoiding places that they consider dangerous or modify their schedule for going outside the home. Another is calling on another person, generally a man, to accompany them when they go through those spaces, in addition to having to adapt the ways they dress and behave in public, among other issues that limit their autonomy, independence and freedom. All this severely restricts their right to mobility (Zermeño, 2009).

Figure 1 shows how, in most Central American countries, the perception of insecurity has significant impact on citizens in their daily lives. The information acknowledges the geography of fear has organized around the abandonment of public spaces and confinement to the home as ways of seeking safety.
2.3 Areas of citizen security action

Traditional approaches to safety in public in Central America and the Dominican Republic meant issues of violence and dispossession were to be dealt with primarily in the punitive sphere, by the police, the justice system and the prison, that is, through repression, sanction and punishment.

This vision is limited in that it ignores the other two areas of intervention: Prevention and rehabilitation. Nevertheless, at present, under a new approach to citizen security, initiatives are being deployed that aim to influence these three areas comprehensively: Punitive, prevention and rehabilitation, an approach that includes the gender perspective at an incipient level.

The UNDP has developed a conceptualization of citizen security 10 where the domain of prevention has a relevant place. As already stated, human security is considered to be immersed in a dynamic historical process, and to be subject to a variety threatening factors; therefore, the intention is to take a proactive stance toward the different conditions that may affect its foundation.

Consequently, in the sphere of citizen security, the prevention of violence, crime or any other victimizing behavior that affects the rights that are at its foundation, requires instrumentalizing a whole set

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10 It should be noted that there have also been other developments on the conceptualization of citizen security, such as those undertaken by various countries in the Latin American region, such as Mexico, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Chile and Colombia, among others. Although, the reference here is on the one that this United Nations agency proposes.
of measures that aim to prevent or limit the perpetration of these crimes, in order to prevent it from eroding (UNDP, 2005, p. 56).

The prevention approach considers various preventive measures that are differentiated according to their objective. On the one hand, there are primary, secondary and tertiary interventions that are defined as per the type of population they address.

**Primary prevention** refers to the actions that are carried out with those people who have never been involved in the criminal justice system (UNODC, 2011, p. 15).

**Secondary prevention** covers the deployment of initiatives that target the people who live in contexts where there is a high level of conflict or violence, and who have been previously identified by the social services or education systems with whom intervention is carried out to prevent them from acting in this regard; doing so “implies the presence of mechanisms that make it possible to correct or rectify people and/or problematic situations.” (Dammert, 2009, p. 126).

Moreover, **tertiary prevention** involves actions specifically directed at people who have committed victimizing actions, in an attempt at their social reintegration, preventing them from reoffending by way of “deterrence measures (police surveillance), repression (imprisonment) or rehabilitation “(Dammert, 2009).

**On the other hand, there are the three types of prevention: Social, situational and community,** according to the way actions are going to be taken in the populations defined in the strategies in the first set. As for prevention strategy sub-types,

**Social strategies** seek to influence the social risk factors and causes. An example of this is regarding violence against women, actions are taken in schools and in the media to transform social norms and behaviors that are expressed in gender prejudice and stereotypes that contribute to normalizing and justifying violence.

For its part, **situational prevention** involves taking actions for systematic and ongoing management, design or handling of the immediate surroundings, in order to reduce the opportunities for committing these types of actions, and to increase the perceived risk for a broad range of potential perpetrators. In this case, referring to violence against women in public spaces, there have been steps taken to activate and rehabilitate urban spaces and fixtures by canceling “surveillance blind spots,” placing more lighting and enabling remote devices to transmit any situation that threatens security.
Finally, the **community** strategy combines the strategies covered in the previous two, targeting the neighborhood, “understood as the destination of public policy and its executor.” (Dammert, 2009, p. 129). In this regard, actions with a gender approach have tended to enhance participation by women in assessing situations in the community setting that are a risk for their wellbeing, and in the process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the measures taken to create safe spaces for the community in general, and women in particular.

On the other hand, policies for control deal with events that occur in a certain territory in violation of the law:

Initiatives that focus on control and suppression focus on the actions in the criminal justice system for detecting the individual who has perpetrated a crime and using legal means to establish criminal responsibility. In general terms, the institutions in charge of control are the police and the judicial system (Dammert, p. 122).

**As regards rehabilitation,** this is understood to involve actions that seek to transform the people who have been perpetrators, in order to prevent them from reoffending and promote their full social reintegration. Rehabilitation involves three moments, based on imprisonment as a supposed space for change: non- penitentiary, penitentiary and post-penitentiary.

The first is carried out with the population that exhibits risk factors, such as individuals addicted to drugs, a condition that makes them more susceptible to committing crimes and engaging in antisocial behaviors. For their part, actions for rehabilitation in prison target the incarcerated population. Finally, there are the post- penitentiary initiatives aimed at a population that has experienced confinement, and that is already outside prison (Dammert, 2009, p. 137).

A cross-cutting issue in all the areas is institutional strengthening. As mentioned previously, one of the main challenges in the region is for progress in the public policy making and legal frameworks to translate into effective management. This process requires institutions that have the capacity to invest not only in strengthening their infrastructure, but also in training their personnel, carrying out inter- institutional tasks, and coordinating with other State agencies.
3.1 What is violence against women?

Before addressing the concept of violence against Women, it is important to note some of the important aspects of violence, power and gender relationships, in order to understand **the reason violence against women is part of a set of structures, relationships and norms that involves the whole of society, and not just a certain actors and circumstances.**
Violence is a social problem of the highest order; it is multifactorial and complex; its definition is not univocal, and is shaped by the approaches from which it is addressed. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence from the perspective of health as:

... the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (WHO, 2002).

This concept reveals aspects that are central to understanding this issue, such as the way it ties into the use of power; and, the way it not only causes harm, but also prepares situations that provide the possibility of causing suffering or harm, based on threat or intent, generating perceptions of fear and insecurity in the victims.

Foucault notes that violence is a means that those who have more power in society use it on those who do not; it is a resource for social domination that targets people’s bodies and souls in order to achieve control over them and maintain the established order. Violence in this sense, is an indispensable means to ensure that order and hegemony are preserved, including the preservation of the dominance-subordination relationships established by those who hold power (Foucault, 2001).

Under this conceptual framework, this analytical perspective informs the area of gender relations to show how gender-based violence against women is a means of control that is integral to the preservation of the dominant sex-gender system, with its gender hierarchy and stereotyped roles, identities and behaviors of men and women.

This gender-based hierarchy of people has supported a patriarchal system whereby, historically, women have been placed in a subordinate position vis-à-vis men, and violence is a device to preserve that hegemony, as well as being an expression of those power relations. That is why expressions of gender-based violence are primarily aimed at women; although, they are also directed against those who defy the current heteronormativity, as is the case of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

Thus, gender-based violence against women is not the result of occasional actions arising from dysfunctions or decisions of isolated individuals; rather, it expresses a form of discrimination against women based on deeply rooted inequitable social structures.

According to these principles, international organizations and instruments have produced definitions of the concept of violence against women that are mandatory points of reference on the subject.
The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women describes it in the following terms:

... any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether this takes place in public or in private. (United Nations, 1993).

This declaration established that:

...Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women’s full advancement (…)

**Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men** (United Nations, 1993).

For its part, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) defines violence against women as “any act or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere.” (Organization of American States [OAS], 1994, art.1).

The following section describes in detail the ways that there can be different types of violence against women and can lead to physical, sexual, psychological, economic or property damage; this makes it possible to delineate a wide range of harmful or potentially harmful situations that represent acts of gender-based violence against women.

Similarly, there are acts of violence against women in all areas of social interaction, both public and private. It takes place both in the sphere of family and among intimate partners, as well as in the community, at work, in political and educational spaces (OAS, 1994, Art. 2)

However, although this is acknowledged, violence against women is acknowledged and studied primarily in the private sphere, particularly in the context of couples and family relationships (Mejía Guerra, 2015, p. 73). Correspondingly, the legal architecture, as well as the public policy initiatives, have also focused on expressions of violence in the private sphere of the family (UNDP-UN Women, 2016, p. 46).

However, despite the focus on studies and public policies regarding violence in the private sphere, currently, there is a growing trend of violence in public contexts. This is due to a variety of shifts in economic and social dynamics that have driven up the rates of violence against women in public spaces, including extremely serious expressions such as femicides and sexual assaults. This trend also means that perpetrators of violence — the partner or family members — now also include people with whom women share other areas of their lives — such as peers in schools or colleagues in work spaces, political opponents, strangers, state officials and, increasingly, members of criminal groups — who use violence to exercise power over women, reproducing the hierarchical gender relationship.
Violence against women has profound impact on female victims, as well as on the social group:

- It is the leading cause of injury and disability in women, as well as a risk factor for other physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health issues.

- It has intergenerational impacts on the health, development and well-being of the daughters and sons of the women victims.

- It limits the freedoms, autonomy and opportunities of women and, consequently their ability to fully exercise their rights.

- It has negative social and economic consequences for women themselves, for their immediate environment, and for society as a whole, with important effects on the development of countries.

Likewise, there is consensus in the literature on violence against women that no single theory fully explains the issue. This is why it is said that interpretive frameworks that include several factors, also called risk factors, are needed (Germain and Gitterman [1980] cited in Roberts [2002]. From this perspective, situations of violence are seen as an outcome of the interaction of personal, situational, social, political and cultural factors that Heise (1998) organizes into four levels: Personal history, microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem. Figure 3 includes some important factors that violate or increase the risk of violence against women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macrosystem</th>
<th>Exosystem</th>
<th>Microsystem</th>
<th>Personal History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Models of Violent Masculinity</td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Male domination of decision-making in the relationship</td>
<td>Witnessing domestic violence during childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adherence to gender roles and stereotypes</td>
<td>Basic economic deprivation</td>
<td>Male domination of economic matters in the relationship</td>
<td>Having been a victim of physical or sexual abuse during childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social approval of the use of Violence against Women</td>
<td>Social isolation</td>
<td>Marital conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Inequality</td>
<td>Precarious urban development and overcrowding</td>
<td>Alcohol or drug use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of the image of women as men’s property</td>
<td>High presence of criminal activities and organized crime</td>
<td>Partner or family member participation in criminal activities or criminal groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodification of people and in particular of women’s bodies</td>
<td>Reduced presence, legitimacy and efficacy of the State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deterioration of the social fabric</td>
<td>Territories controlled by criminal groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic inequality</td>
<td>Vulnerability due to migration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and social exclusion</td>
<td>High presence of firearms in the vicinity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities for people’s development</td>
<td>Diversified activities by organized crime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Penetration of organized crime in government institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexist communications media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elevated rates of impunity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence and abandonment of public spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on the dimensions conceptualized by Heise (1998)
In recent years, the concept of violence against women and its analysis have developed to the extent that currently this issue is acknowledged as an integral and multifactorial issue with structural, community and individual components, and, as noted, it has an impact on the whole of society.

This framework leaves behind the traditional vision of a separate response by governments to social violence, on the one hand, and gender-based violence, on the other. That biased view has led to practices whereby institutions that are responsible for security (public or citizen) address social violence and violence in public, which are considered to be “high impact,” while the institutions that work on women’s rights are responsible for preventing and addressing gender-based violence against women, primarily domestic violence.

This needs to be discarded, not only because gender-based violence against women occurs in multiple and different domains, and overlaps with other violence and security problems, but also because, as described in detail further on, women’s security is a central aspect of citizen security: No one living in- and traveling through countries will enjoy full citizen security while women — because they are women — continually face physical, sexual and emotional violence in homes, streets, public transport, parks, plazas, and other spaces.

### 3.2 Types and settings of violence against Women

Once the concept of violence against women has been defined, it is important to note the different types of violence faced, as well as the areas or spaces of social interaction where they occur, in order to understand this problem more clearly, and its undeniable interrelation with security.

Before proceeding, it needs to be stressed that when this report refers to violence against women, this does not include just any form of violence targeting a woman. General recommendation no. 35 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women updates the agreed upon language on the matter, promoting the expression “gender-based violence against women”, which specifies and underscores the causes and effects of violence as it relates to gender. The recommendation advocates that “the term further strengthens the understanding of violence as a social rather than an individual problem, requiring comprehensive responses, beyond those to specific events, individual perpetrators and victims/survivors” (United Nations, 2017). In this sense, violence against women refers to those expressions of violence that operate through and are motivated by discrimination, gender inequality or hierarchy; therefore, it is not fortuitous violence, but rather directed at a woman because she is a woman (Bunch, 1991).
3.2.1 Types of violence

Women live in societies marked by different manifestations of gender-based violence expressed in subtle ways, such as the father, partner or siblings controlling their behavior; or it can be overt, in the form of physical or sexual violence. Beyond the socioeconomic status, age, ethnic-racial condition, level of education, and occupation, gender-based violence against women has the potential to impact all women and girls, but in different ways according to the place they occupy in society, the conditions in which they live, as well as the different identities and discriminations that intersect in them. From birth, many girls face differentiated and discriminatory treatment from their close family circle for the mere fact of being women.

There are different types of violence that women can face and that manifest themselves either separately or jointly, repeatedly or in isolation. The types of violence that are documented the most due to their prevalence and effects on the safety and well-being of women are the following:

1. **Psychological or emotional violence.**
These acts are damaging to the emotional and psychological well-being of women, for example: neglect, abandonment, insults, humiliation, disparagement and threats, among others.

2. **Physical violence.**
This characteristically involves the use of physical force or any type of weapon or object that may cause intentional harm.

3. **Sexual violence.**
It stems from conceiving women’s bodies as an object; the core characteristic of this violence is that it degrades or damages the victim’s body or sexuality, infringes on their liberty, dignity and physical integrity. This type of violence includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, psychological harassment and any other non-consensual act of a sexual nature.

4. **Economic and patrimonial violence.**
This corresponds to intentional acts that affect women in terms of their economic survival and patrimony, for instance, by controlling their income, or by stealing, destroying, retaining or denying them legitimate ownership of any items, personal documents, goods, valuables, patrimonial rights or economic resources intended to satisfy their needs.

In addition to these specific types, there are other analogous forms of violence that all involve injury or the potential to cause injury to the dignity, physical integrity or freedom of women, such as symbolic or political violence. In Table 1 shows the percentage of women ages 15 years and over by region in the world, who reported being victims of physical and sexual violence at the hand of their partner or by other individuals, and throughout their lives.

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**Table 1**

Prevalence of physical and sexual violence in women ages 15 and over by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>45.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Americas</td>
<td>36.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Mediterranean</td>
<td>36.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europa</td>
<td>27.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>40.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Pacific</td>
<td>27.9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WHO (2013)

Galtung (cited in Espinar Ruiz, 2007) makes a distinction between three forms of violence: Direct, structural and cultural.

Direct, Structural and Cultural. **Direct violence** is physical and/or verbal violence that is easily perceived in the form of behaviors. The term **structural violence** refers to situations of exploitation, discrimination, marginalization or domination. Thus, in a broad sense, “the general formula behind structural violence is inequality,” and social injustice. Finally, **cultural violence** can be defined as all those rationales, attitudes and ideas that justify, legitimize and promote the Direct or Structural forms of violence (Espinar Ruiz, 2007).

It could be said that these three forms of violence are a kind of pyramid (see figure 4), such that the surface is made up of all those manifestations of violence that are identifiable because they correspond to specific behaviors that women face: Beating, disparagement, unwanted touching and rape, among others. Moreover, the foundation comprises the situations that sustain these specific manifestations of violence: Foremost is male domination, inequality and gender discrimination; after that are gender stereotypes, beliefs and prejudices that legitimize and socially justify domination, inequality and violence against women. These forms of violence occur in all areas of social interaction.

**Figure 4**

Pyramid of direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence

Source: Espinar Ruiz and Nos Aldás (2007)
3.2.2 Spaces or areas of occurrence of violence

As noted, unequal relations between men and women, and male power, are the basis for violence exercised against women; and they are fully reproduced in both private spaces and in public. This reflection has given rise to the concept of continuum to account for the fact that violence against women takes place in both the private and public spheres: At home, in institutions, in education and work, on the streets and on means of transportation (Falú, 2009); and they share the same origin, namely male domination and its mandates; likewise, they produce the same effect of perpetuating women being considered objects of subordination and domination (Falú, 2014).

The continuum of violence against women also involves a process that includes self-inflicted, interpersonal, community and structural violence (Bourgois, 2001). Analysis of violence against women needs to be continuous and overlapping, organized and individual, permanent and episodic, and in the framework of the mechanisms established to maintain the political, economic and social gender-inequalities.

This perspective shows that the same violence starts from a common structural base, but that it acquires different expressions and manifests itself with particular characteristics depending on the different contexts, historical moments, population groups, areas and spaces of social interaction.

Consequently, it is possible to identify the main areas in which gender-based violence against women occurs: Family, education, work, community and institution-state (see figure 5). These areas can be the setting where any of the forms of violence mentioned in the previous section can occur.

**Figure 5**

Types and Domains of Violence against Women

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Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
The following sections contain a brief description of each of the areas in which violence occurs and its main characteristics:

**a. Domestic or family violence.**
It is also called domestic, intimate, or private violence. It strikes at women and can be perpetrated by the victim’s partner or spouse, father, siblings or by other relatives. Generally, manifestations of family violence occur within the home, although it is not uncommon for perpetrators to exert subject women to violence outside this space. In any case, what characterizes this sphere of violence is the sentimental or family bond between the perpetrator and the abused woman. There are multiple types of violence that are perpetrated in this area, for instance, it can be sexual, physical, psychological, economic and patrimonial violence, including its most extreme expression: femicidal/feminicidal violence. Data on Domestic Violence for the region reveal that the home is not a safe space for many women (see box 1).

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**BOX 1**

Data on Domestic Violence in Central America and the Dominican Republic

In Central America and the Dominican Republic, the home is not a secure space for women. Although the countries do not have permanent surveys that periodically assess the levels of violence against women, some data can serve as a frame of reference:

- **In Costa Rica**, by 2000, results showed that men with whom women shared family ties, affinity or cohabitated with committed over **65%** of acts of violence and over **80%** of violent incidents took place in the home, as did the majority of femicides. (Carcedo & Sagot, 2002).

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12 As per the ongoing enrichment of conceptual understanding of violence against women, there are other relevant types and areas of violence, such as political violence, which can occur through digital media, or obstetric violence; these are beyond the scope of this study, although their relevance is acknowledged.
The countries analyzed lack the public policies that make it possible to confront the problem effectively, nor are there mechanisms for victim protection; this, coupled with socioeconomic precariousness, brings on a cycle of abuse that in some cases leads to the death of women as a result of domestic violence.

**In the Dominican Republic,** the information on police reports of sexual crimes in 2016 showed that 4% were the result of incest, which further reinforces the characterization of the home as an insecure space (Infosegura, 2016).

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**In Guatemala,** 2015 data from the National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF) showed a new case of sexual violence was reported every 46 minutes, and 90% of the victims were women and teenagers.

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**In El Salvador in 2017,** some 48% of the women in this country have experienced at least one incident of aggression in the private domain, and this has happened to 20% of them in the last 12 months (General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses ([DIGESTYC], 2019).

**As per the National Survey on Violence Against Women in El Salvador in 2017,** some 48% of the women in this country have experienced at least one incident of aggression in the private domain, and this has happened to 20% of them in the last 12 months (General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses ([DIGESTYC], 2019).

**In Honduras,** in 2010 and 2011, 27% of women reported they had experienced physical violence in their lifetime, while 22% reported having been the subjected to violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months (National Statistics Institute y Secretariat of Health, Honduras, 2013).

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Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on cited sources
b. Violence in the workplace and education.

Aside from family or domestic violence, in the workplace and in educational environments, there is violence against women, arising from the relationships formed in each of these settings. Violence in the educational environment can be used against women by the educational authorities, professors, classmates, students or employees of the educational institutions. In this space, there can be sexual violence towards young girls and female students; there can also be psychological violence that is expressed by denigrating the intellectual capability and capacity for learning women possess. Moreover, violence in the workplace can be perpetrated by bosses and co-workers. One of the most common expressions of workplace violence against women is sexual psychological harassment and sexual harassment. However, acts of psychological, physical and even economic violence occur in both spaces. Economic violence is manifested when women get lower pay for equal work. Data from the Northern Triangle of Central America illustrate the state of these types of violence in the three countries that make up this area (see box 2).

**BOX 2**

Violence in the workplace and education in the Northern Triangle of Central America

The youth resilience survey in the report on “Resilient Youth: The Opportunity of Northern Central America,” carried out in 2017, was the source for the data presented below.

Violence in the educational environment:

- **Some 4.5% of the young women** (ages 15 to 29) who studied in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras stated they had been subjected to some type of aggression by a teacher or director in the last 12 months prior to the survey.

- **About 6.4% of the young women** (ages 15 to 29) who studied in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras had been subjected to some type of aggression by their peers in the last 12 months prior to the survey.

Violence in the Workplace

- **About 4.9% of the young women** (ages 15 to 29) who worked in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras had been subjected to some type of sexual innuendo by their boss and coworkers in the last 12 months prior to the survey.

- **About 6.9% of the young women** (ages 15 to 29) who worked in Guatemala and El Salvador had been subjected to some type of physical aggression in their work environment in the last 12 months prior to the survey.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on cited sources
C. Violence in the community.

Given its frequency and its restriction on women exercising their rights and freedoms, special attention needs to be directed toward the violence that occurs in the community, streets, public transportation, parks, squares and other public spaces where social interaction takes place. An important characteristic is that in this domain, violence is carried out by individuals who usually have little or no connection to the victims, that is, in many cases it is carried out by men who are unknown to the women. Also noteworthy is its randomness, in that there are some factors that lead to greater vulnerability in women (physically challenged youth, girls or women for instance), this can happen to any woman, regardless of her social class, education, age, background or place of residence; this results in a high degree of complexity for both prevention and the required sanction.

Some of the most common types of violence in this domain are the different forms of street sexual harassment (see box 3). Women in public spaces feel and are perceived as “objects of desire and abuse, and unacknowledged rights holders in search of a public space to exercise their rights as citizens.” (Zuniga, 2014, p. 82).

BOX 3

Manifestations of violence and sexual harassment in public

Sexual Violence in public spaces is expressed in those actions that have a sexual or lewd connotation, that are non-consensual, and involve exhibition, observation and imposition of non-consensual acts, as follows:

Lewd gaze, whistling or suggestive “flirting,” comments or vulgarities about the manner of dress or body of the individual, offenses or humiliation because of the mere fact of being a woman, taking or showing photos or videos without consent, bumping and/or touching, threatening, attempted rape or physical aggression and rape (UN WOMEN, the National Institute of Women [INMUJERES] CDMX, El Colegio de Mexico, 2017). Some of these manifestations highlighting the objectification of women are normalized in the media, or by society that still fails to acknowledge street harassment as a crime 13.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on cited sources

13 In 2015, Nicaragua and Guatemala created National Observatories of Street Sexual Harassment, and this issue that affects most women in those countries started to become visible. In fact, by 2015, the Nicaraguan Observatory estimated that 9 in 10 women had been harassed during the previous year, and that more than 80% had a passive response to acts of violence. In Costa Rica, a study conducted by the School of Statistics of the University of Costa Rica found that 6 in 10 women have been victims of sexual harassment in public spaces. The public response to this problem has been quick, and bills of law have already been submitted to regulate and punish street harassment in Costa Rica and Guatemala, showing that tolerance for street violence cannot continue. Some countries in South America have also passed laws against street harassment. Therefore, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that in these areas there is legislation in this area.
One of the aspects that is at the base of this community violence is the fact that the public spaces in cities have traditionally been masculinized spheres of interaction; they were conceived, designed and built based on men’s needs and expectations; this has had a strong impact on the way women enter, appropriate and are received as they make their way on a daily basis. Even now, despite their growing presence in public, they are viewed with suspicion, as trespassers in a place where they do not belong. Therefore, for the majority of women in Central America and the Dominican Republic, public spaces are acknowledged spaces of vulnerability and danger.

Various studies have documented that one of the most notable effects of violence against women in public spaces, especially sexual violence, is the perception of insecurity and also the feeling of “fear or fright.” (Trujillo, 2011). The high levels of fear of becoming victims of a violent act expressed by women in Central America and the Dominican Republic, as well as the constant self-protection campaigns developed by public and private organizations, consolidate a process by which they withdraw to private spaces, considered “protected,” many often limit the time and space in which women can move around the city (Vargas, 2007; Dammert, 2007).

**This effect, the perception of fear, has contributed to shedding light on the fact that violence against women and girls in public spaces is a fundamental factor that restricts their capacities and opportunities, and prevents the full enjoyment of their rights, as well as their appropriation of- and access to urban public space.**

The fact that violence against women in the community sphere persists, hampers citizen security, because it affects women’s basic rights to personal integrity and to have a decent life, and also affects human development itself because it restricts women’s free mobility and autonomy and, with it, limits their options and opportunities for employment, education, and political participation, etc. (Zermeño and Plácido, 2008 and 2009). This is a result of both the commission of violent acts (victimization) and the fear of being subjected to them (perception of insecurity).

In the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic, there are social and economic dynamics that complicate and deepen the expression of gender-based violence against women in public spaces.

**Some of those dynamics as follows:**
d. The rapid urbanization processes that have occurred in these countries. These processes have led to spatial segregation and the formation of large areas of precarious socio-territorial conditions marked by insecurity. The relationship between violence and the exclusion or marginalization of spaces has been widely studied in Central America, where it occurs either in the absence of the State, or because young people’s lives in urban contexts are so precarious (Cruz & Portillo, 1998).

e. The presence of criminal organizations. The rise in crime and the use of violence as a means to solve all kinds of conflicts characterize city life, and are expressed differently for women and men (Falu and Segovia, 2007).

f. A third link has to do with extreme levels of disempowerment of men in aspects that raise doubts about the attributes that are characteristic in hegemonic masculinity (such as being a provider within the household). In traditional patriarchal structures, this situation leads men to resort to greater levels of violence against women, girls and boys. These aspects are not only expressed in the private sphere, but are transferred to public spaces, where men use them to shore up their masculinity against challenges, and to maintain their domination and power.

g. The dynamics outlined above and the link to violence that women face in public spaces, come together in the image of multiple types of violence that are intertwined, and are linked to structural processes of gender, poverty and exclusion, as well as processes of social and criminal violence that also have repercussions on gender-based violence.

Institutional-State Violence. These are acts or omissions by agents of the state that in some way violate and affect women’s enjoyment and exercise of their human rights, and their access to the appropriate and necessary policies for preventing, addressing, investigating, sanctioning and eradicating different types of violence. State omissions that have repercussions on violence against women include the lack of comprehensive laws, policies and mechanisms that are effective in responding appropriately to the needs of direct or indirect victims, and to transform social, economic and cultural conditions that sustain and reinforce gender-based violence.

Current events in Central America and the Dominican Republic are marked by profound acts of violence with the State as a fundamental actor. In the eighties, civil war devastated Guatemala and El Salvador, and practically everyone experienced political violence in the
region, leaving behind the death and destruction that has become the backdrop for a process where violence became consolidated as a means to solve all sorts of conflicts.

*In those armed conflicts, women were the victims of multiple state and non-state actors who, affected by this context, used various mechanisms to harm women directly and indirectly, especially through sexual violence that was used as a weapon of war to humiliate and exert power over adversaries* (Bunster-Burotto, 1994).

The region has responded to the war on drugs and to criminal violence with increased militarization, a fact that has further complicated the landscape and, in many cases, has hampered the move to change the paradigm from acting to control crime toward prevention. This militarization, added to the rise in organized crime, has established scenarios where there is replication and exacerbation of historical practices of gender-based violence, and extreme violence against Women.

Additionally, the complexity of the problems of corruption, the low level of professionalization, and the improper use of law enforcement, all characteristics of the war stage, have only been partially addressed, which in many cases has resulted in the permanence of certain forms of violence exercised in the past. There has certainly been progress, and the transformations in police institutions are important, yet still insufficient in practically all the countries of the Central American region.

Furthermore, the post-conflict context has been analyzed in the literature, in light of the multidimensionality of the various forms of violence and the repercussions on women when the peace-building process fails to include a profound reform in the security sector. Table 3 presents a proposed typology of violence that takes place in these contexts, creating social scenarios in where there is an exacerbation of violence against women.
### Table 2
Typology of post-conflict violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Violence</th>
<th>Social Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State political violence</td>
<td>State actor can exercise violence to consolidate or obstruct peace agreements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political violence by non-state actors</td>
<td>Non-state actors can use violence to hinder peace processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence related to property disputes</td>
<td>Lack of land ownership records can lead to conflict between various actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence related to extralegal forms of surveillance and justice</td>
<td>Feeling of impunity, restricted state capacity, and increased fear, which can lead to a consolidation of extralegal protection groups and extrajudicial punishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine state violence</td>
<td>State security forces can intensify extremely repressive practices linked to human rights violations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence associated with violent organized groups</td>
<td>Various groups might focus on criminal activities due to lack of opportunities or incentives for reintegration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal violence and crime</td>
<td>Exponential urban development, precarious socioeconomic conditions, and normalization of violence, all can favor the escalation of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against Women</td>
<td>The rupture of social norms, coupled with increased impunity, territorial control by criminal groups, military abuse in the streets, the crisis of masculinity in the post-conflict period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on Aguirre Tobón (2014)
3.3 Violence in the life cycle of women

Gender-based violence is an issue that women face at different stages of their lives. **At each stage in life, violence takes on particular expressions.** Young and adolescent girls experience physical and psychological abuse by close relatives and even teachers (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2006), they deal with sexual abuse on the street, sexual abuse by relatives or persons who are close to the family, trafficking, forced child marriage, and many other expressions of violence.

The reproductive age is possibly the time when the presence of the multiple types and areas of violence against women is most readily visible. Given their daily dynamics at this stage of life, women experience violence in the family, in the workplace or education space, and in the public space. The lack of legal frameworks that open up access to sexual and reproductive health, legal advice in cases of abuse, protection against sexual harassment in public spaces — including transportation — are just some examples of the institutionalized violence that women face at this reproductive stage of life.

A distinctive feature of the aging process in Latin American societies is the predominance of females among older people. However, it is also “very likely that they wind up living in unfavorable conditions in the last stage of their life cycle” (Aranibar, P., 2002). In their old age, women continue to face different manifestations of violence in their daily lives, including economic, psychological and physical violence. Again, it is the relatives, men close to them as well as strangers that are the actors of these violent expressions; this emphasizes the precariousness that many of them face throughout their life cycle (see figure 6).

The regulatory frameworks in the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic acknowledge there have been important advances in generating mechanisms to protect the elderly as they face multiple levels of vulnerability, discrimination and violence (Huenchuan, 2009). However, the implementation of such frameworks is still limited and older women face various forms of violence, discrimination and abuse.
One of the clearest of these contextual factors is the high level of citizen insecurity in places permeated by organized crime (see box 4), leading to high levels of social violence, impunity, and the presence of various types of weapons for illicit use. In this regard, an econometric study by Cuevas and Demombynes cited in the World Bank (2011, p. 23), sought to identify the main risk factors for violence; it concluded that the presence of drug trafficking and organized crime is significantly more important than other factors studied, including the history of hot spots during conflicts, the presence of a larger youth population or the higher percentage of households headed by women.

Cultural and social factors actually create norms for discriminatory, unequal and stereotypical behaviors play an important role in normalizing the use of violence as a mechanism for dominance and control; however, there are factors in the context that compound and complicate the level of victimization and the individual’s perception of security, particularly that of women.

**Figure 6**

*Violence against Women in the Life Cycle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infants</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Neglect</td>
<td>• Neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sexual abuse</td>
<td>• sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• abuse</td>
<td>• child marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• trafficking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• sexual slavery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adolescence</th>
<th>Adulthood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Forced marriage</td>
<td>• Trafficking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sexual abuse</td>
<td>• street harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• violence in relationships</td>
<td>• sexual harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• violence in the environment educational, and community</td>
<td>• psychological violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• trafficking</td>
<td>• forced pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• forced abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• femicide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adulthood</th>
<th>Older persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Intimate Partner Violence</td>
<td>• Psychological violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sexual abuse</td>
<td>• physical violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sexual harassment</td>
<td>• physical violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• psychological violence</td>
<td>• femicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• physical violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• economic violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• abuse of older persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• socio-economic abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• neglect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organized Crime

The UNDP regional report defines organized crime as that which “includes any organized criminal action that occurs over time, whose capacity to subtract and provide goods and services relies on the use of corruption, coercion and, in some cases, violence” (UNDP, 2013, p. 7).

Organized crime may have a local or transnational focus. In both cases, the impact on the communities that are affected by their actions is devastating at the individual, social and institutional levels, given the multiple tools of violence, coercion and threat that they implement.

The main expressions of organized violence in Central America and the Dominican Republic are involved in three activities: illegal drug trafficking, human trafficking and smuggling, and illicit arms trafficking.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura

This growing violence does not affect all people equally. Some examples clearly show that the effects of criminal violence on men and women are different, especially with regard to sexual violence. While criminal organizations or gangs use boys in robbery or trafficking, girls are generally victims of sexual and physical violence.

A report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) states that most girls are forced to have sex with members of criminal groups, are sexually abused, trafficked, and exploited (2015). On the other hand, the same report reveals that young and adult women have traditionally been used by these groups to carry out tasks linked to traditional gender roles (housecleaning and preparing food, among others), although there are some cases where this situation is changing and women are seen playing more active roles in the criminal activities of these organizations.

The levels of violence in the Central American region are among the highest worldwide. Based on 2015 data provided by the WHO, UNICEF (2017) showed that the five highest rates of adolescent homicide in the world are in Latin American countries, two of which are in Central America (see Figure 2). Although it is impossible to identify whether these homicides are linked to organized crime or common criminal activities, it is an important indicator of the violence that takes place in the region.

In Central America and the Dominican Republic, the rise in crime, and in particular organized crime taking control of multiple public spaces has resulted not only in some of the highest homicide rates in the world in most of these countries, but also a rise in the use of violence of all kinds.
Similarly, empirical evidence shows that in contexts where there is higher presence of organized crime and criminal groups, the result is both higher levels of violence against women, including extreme expressions such as rape or feminicide, as well as greater impunity for these crimes. A report by Advocates for Human Rights (2016) stated that gang violence in El Salvador has contributed to an increase in the homicides of women, in many cases with the support of members of the police, revealing a systemic failure to protect the victim and promote justice.

These facts confirm that women’s vulnerability increases, as does the risk of gender-based violence in contexts of high insecurity caused by the presence of criminal groups. The gender connection has multiple facets, since in scenarios of high criminal activity, there is an increase in behaviors typical of violent masculinities that entail patriarchal demonstrations of power, in which the men belonging to these groups use women’s bodies as an object of dispute, an expression of power, and as prey to threaten opponents (see Box 5).

**Gangs use sexual violence as a strategy to maintain fear and control, particularly in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador where the available information shows rape is used massively to punish girls, women and their relatives for not complying with the gang’s demands, or to demonstrate their control over the community.**
Can the different forms of violence against Women prevalent on the continent be explained historically? Wilson (2014) lists the forms of violence that most affect women in the region: domestic violence, torture during civil wars and dictatorships, femicides, and structural violence.

Torture can be physical or psychological, but it is acknowledged that sexual violence has been widely used as a weapon of war “… this could include rape by one man or several, sometimes in the presence of a male relative to extract a confession” (Bunster-Burotto 1994).

In 2016, a world historical milestone took place in Guatemala: For the first time, a national court tried and sentenced sexual slavery as a war crime. The UNDP and other stakeholders supported the lawsuit against Seput Zarco, with the Alliance to Support Women, acknowledging and using a comprehensive approach, based on the importance of a wholistic effort in the case with its legal, psychosocial and communications aspects.

The use of the rape of women as a form of torture by military forces dates back to the time of the Spanish conquest, but it has been documented in counterinsurgency wars in Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala), during the Cold War. The objective of these acts of rape was not only to attack and torture the women, but also humiliate those who patriarchal society calls on to protect them (their intimate partners, fathers, brothers).

Rape (group or individual) just as torture, sexual enslavement, mutilation, forced pregnancy, imprisonment, child abduction and murder are forms of violence against women perpetrated by military, paramilitary and guerrilla forces in different contexts with multiple purposes: Terrorize women, their families and their communities, and deprive them of their lands; weaken adversaries and accumulate war trophies, among others. All these practices turn women’s bodies into battlefields and legitimize the more general use of violence against women in society (Fregoso and Bejarano, 2010).
In this sense, the most excruciating expressions of violence against women in these contexts (femicides, rape and sexual assaults) are not random, circumstantial or collateral events or threats, but rather a weapon to demonstrate masculine power, intimidation and are even tied to rites of membership in these organizations (Fuentes, Flores, Gomez, Monárrez and Peña, 2011).

Additionally, in places where criminal activity and organized crime is high, there tends to be diversification, and there is a rise in activities such as the commodification of people’s bodies, both swelling the ranks of organized crime and engaging in human trafficking for a variety of purposes, or to make individuals disappear to fit the needs of criminal groups. The UNODC report (2012, p. 5) recognizes that “...the Zetas, the gangs and other territorial groups seem to be involved in the smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and firearms trafficking, and this could increase if the profits from cocaine sales decline.”

This commodification of people has specific effects on women, who are exposed to multiple humiliations, from being victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, to being used by criminals groups as objects for dispute, revenge and the demonstration of power (Estévez, 2017).

This linkage notwithstanding, gender-based violence against women in places where organized crime is high is “considered normal, an everyday occurrence, while organized crime is considered pathological, and is reported as such” (Azaola, 2012).

The analysis of organized crime actors has gone into significant detail in various regional studies. The document published by UNODC (2012) acknowledges the existence of criminal groups of various kinds and present in various territories, but aside from defining each group, it is notable that almost no study lists violence against women as one of their actions.

This high prevalence of organized crime becomes more dire when there are greater numbers of weapons involved, for use as a feature of masculine identity by young people in that area to show power and gain recognition; otherwise, they only face situations of unemployment and poverty. This issue is greatly influenced by the history of war in several countries of the region, and by the insufficient post-conflict reforms to regulate the situation.14

In Central America more than two-thirds of homicides are committed with firearms. This high ratio indicates that a significant licit and illicit weapons market has emerged in the area, where the main problem is not transnational trafficking, but the leakage from civil, military and police to illicit usage (UNODC, 2012). This source calculated that over a million weapons circulate in Guatemala, and fewer than half are registered. On the other hand, in both El Salvador and Guatemala there were 7 weapons for each soldier in 2012 (UNODC, 2012).

14 Over the past three decades, reforms have been slow and unsuccessful in the security sector, after the civil wars that ravaged Guatemala and El Salvador, along with the political violence experienced in practically all the countries in Central America and Dominican Republic in the eighties. Several key processes remain unfinished, for instance, it is estimated that in El Salvador, around 360,000 military-type weapons were not handed over at the end of the war (UNODC, 2012).
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: 
A matter of citizen security

From the moment gender-based violence is conceived as a public problem that affects the development and enforcement of human rights, it reasonable to look at it from a citizen security perspective.

As previously stated, *citizen security consists of protecting a basic core of rights, including the right to life, respect for the individual’s physical and material integrity, and their right to a decent life.*
Violence against women represents a violation of this basic core of human rights — including the right to a life free from violence, which corresponds to the domain of protection — and affects human development, with its profound implications for women’s health and economic, educational, social and cultural opportunities. Therefore, violence against women is a citizen security problem that must be fully addressed by the authorities responsible for guaranteeing it.

In addition, it should be taken into account that, as shown throughout this text, violence against women affects three central components of citizen security: Victimization, the perception of security and securitability; the latter is understood as the “set of thoughts, sensations and behaviors that enable a person to feel safe and return to a state of security after experiencing any type of insecure situation” (Latvian National Human Development Report 2003 cited in UNDP, 2005).

As Maritza Segura Villalva (2006) points out, the most forceful effects of violence against women locate it among the public problems that affect the development of countries in three ways:

- **a.** In exercising Human Rights
- **b.** In public health
- **c.** In citizen security

Despite this obvious link between violence against women and citizen security, as discussed in detail in Chapter 3, violence women face nowadays is not part of the core issues that are addressed through the lens of citizen security, because the gender dynamics underlying this kind of violence have not been sufficiently integrated in either the conceptual corpus, or in the central aspects of the legal, institutional and programmatic frameworks that support citizen security actions.

It is fair to acknowledge that there have been important advances in this field, mainly as a result of the efforts of organized women in different regions of the world (Segura Villalva, 2006). However, accepting its evolution implies not only acknowledging it formally, but also, substantively, mainstreaming it in the institutions, policies, laws and budgets that make up the scaffolding of citizen security; this has yet to be fully achieved.

In recent decades, the governments of Central America and the Dominican Republic have implemented public policy initiatives for citizen security that stressed the following:

- **a.** The need to understand crime in greater and more rigorous detail.
- **b.** Consolidate official information systems, making it possible to understand the issues of violence and crime, but also the effectiveness and efficacy of the institutions,
- **c.** The recognition of crime prevention as a fundamental area to address the problem, as it relates to the investment in factors at an individual and situational level that can enhance the development of criminal actions.
d. Strengthening the legal framework to address incidents in a more expeditious manner.

This provides for a more solid institutional architecture that makes it possible to understand important parts of the issue of crime. However, the use of violence in dealing with conflicts has not been managed in a sustainable way over time, and institutional limitations are real barriers for maintaining and further developing practices that work well, and for deepening those that could be successful. Likewise, there is significant lag in gender mainstreaming in citizen security policies, and much remains to be done for the full incorporation of violence against women and girls in the areas of prevention, control, and rehabilitation.

It should be noted that the inclusion of the gender approach in security policies is a crucial factor to increase their effectiveness, because it is impossible to advance to full citizen security while women, who make up half of the population, are not sufficiently integrated, and while the gender factors underlying the violence remain concealed.

This is especially relevant in terms of prevention, because, as several studies have noted, cultural values and the socialization processes that they produce are among the factors that affect the dynamics and magnitude of citizen insecurity, particularly in some processes of identity construction — in particular, the male identity — and the transmission of conflict resolution behaviors that are likely to have a direct effect on the individual’s predisposition to resort to aggression to achieve his or her objectives. (UNDP, 2005, p. 50-51).

Therefore, viewing insecurity from a gender perspective makes for a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the social and cultural factors that underlie violence, and better strategies for prevention, control, and rehabilitation can be designed.

Citizen security initiatives need to be passed on to a new generation that will actively incorporate gender and violence against women as cross-cutting components of intervention. Achieving this requires moving forward with comprehensive mechanisms that ensure that violence against women becomes structurally incorporated into citizen security work, and overcome the separation of spaces for debate and action. In other words, the gender approach needs to be more deeply incorporated as a fundamental component across the entire citizen security public policy cycle, so that gender and violence against women are included and translated into actions at all levels (see box 6).
Several countries in the subregion have already taken steps to incorporate gender into citizen security policies. However, the challenge is great and requires that measures be taken to address each of the current areas emphasized in public security policy:

- **a.** Deeper look into crime from a gender perspective, to enhance understanding of the gender factors involved in the issue, as well as its repercussions, differentiated by sex, age, ethnic-racial condition, etc.

- **b.** Consolidate official information systems — disaggregated by sex and other relevant variables — that include information that is strategic for women’s safety, to better understand the issue and improve institutional response. This information should be collected, systematized, and delivered to the public policy decision makers, as it contributes to understanding the way crimes and violence affect men and women, and the vulnerability factors involved.

- **c.** Strengthen crime prevention by including key gender issues that make it possible to dismantle the male mandates that are part of the structural causes of the problem.

- **d.** Strengthen the legal and institutional architecture of citizen security to include the needs, specific problems and give due attention to women and girls, and the different groups that they comprise.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
Central America and the Dominican Republic have taken important steps along this path, creating the legal frameworks to address violence against women. But this response is insufficient to be effective in addressing a complex social problem that also involves insecurity and violence. In this sense, further progress is required, incorporating the gender approach in the legal frameworks of citizen security, and including violence against women as an actual problem in citizen insecurity, and not set aside as a fringe issue.

In sum, current data on the magnitude, characteristics and behavior of violence against women in Central America and the Dominican Republic, point to the urgent need to tie responses to violence against women more closely to the way we address issues of violence and insecurity traditionally addressed by citizen security — like committing a crime, the actions of criminal organization, drug-trafficking, appropriation and use of public space, and prevention in all its dimensions — that so far have all been addressed separately.

The conceptual areas and the areas of intervention both need more holistic and comprehensive theoretical frameworks, improved measurement systems, deeper qualitative analysis of the issue, and a historical view from the perspective of gender, to achieve a deeper understanding of the different forms of violence and their transformations in the region, as well as a deeper understanding of gender factors that intervene in the development and characteristics of the most pressing problems of violence and insecurity (Imbusch Misse and Carrión [2011]; Auyero, Bourgois and Schepers-Hughes [2015]).
In order to provide elements to integrate violence against women and the gender approach into citizen security policies, this chapter focuses on four situations that are framed in the agendas of violence against women and citizen security today.

Among the priorities on the agendas of most Central American and Dominican Republic governments, these issues are still invisible:

- **a.** Femicide/Feminicide
- **b.** Sexual violence in public spaces
- **c.** Victims of Trafficking
- **d.** Violence against women migrants
These 4 problems were chosen because they are expressions of violence against women and have profound effects on their safety, both due to the levels of victimization and the impact on the perception of safety. Likewise, this is violence with a strong foundation in gender, and with a very important correlation to other insecurity phenomena that are experienced in the region, such as organized crime, high levels of crime, the presence of weapons, and territories controlled by criminal groups. In addition, they are little-explored problems, especially in terms of their links to social and criminal violence. Therefore, it is strategic to seek a deeper understanding in order to contribute to uncovering the strong ties between violence against women and citizen security.

For the purposes of this report, some basic concepts are presented below.

a. **Femicide/Feminicide.**

Femicide/feminicide is the extreme, deadly form of violence against women of all ages (UN Women, nd). In the legal frameworks of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama the concept is called femicide, while El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, identify it as feminicide. Finally, in Belize, where there is no law sanctioning this crime, the term femicide is used.

The first person to use the term *femicide* as it relates to violence against women was social psychologist Diana Russell at the First International Tribunal for Crimes against Women in 1976. Since then, the content and scope of the term have grown.

Russell (2006) herself, along with Jane Caputi, initially defined it as the *murder of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure or a sense of ownership of women.* Subsequently, with Jill Radford, they described as:

...the misogynistic murder of women by men [...] [Representing] the end of a *continuum* of anti-female terror that includes a wide variety of verbal and physical abuse, such as: Rape, torture, sexual slavery (particularly prostitution), incestuous or extra-family child sexual abuse, physical and emotional beatings, sexual harassment (on the phone, on the streets, in the office and in the classroom), genital mutilation (clitoridectomies, excision, infibulations), unnecessary gynecological operations (hysterectomies), forced heterosexuality, forced sterilization, forced motherhood (with the criminalization of contraception and abortion), psychosurgery, denial of food for women in some cultures, plastic surgery and other mutilations with a pretext of beautification. Whenever these forms of terrorism end in a fatality, they turn into feminicide (Russell y Radford, 2006. p. 58).

15 However, Russell argues that *femicide* has been around for over two centuries and first appeared in literature in A Satirical View of London, in England in 1801, in reference to “the murder of a woman.”
Patsilli Toledo points out (2012, p. 24), that the translation of the term femicide in Spanish has produced two terms: Femicidio and feminicidio, with no theoretical consensus to date regarding the conceptual suitability of one over the other.

The research and practical studies carried out in different Latin American countries on whether femicide or femicide is to be used, alludes to a more restricted definition of the original concept coined by Russel and Caputti, indicated above, as it is restricted to gender-related violent deaths of women, which excludes deaths that occur as a result of discriminatory laws or practices that do not necessarily constitute crimes.

These elements must be taken into account because they allow us to understand the scope and limitations of the current data on the issue of femicide or femicide in the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic.

In the Central American region, historical scenarios have been identified that contextualize the problem of femicides or femicides, the violence that is exerted by the intimate partner or ex-partner, that is exercised by other men in the family, that is tied to sexual violence, and that happens in the context of sexual trade at the hand of clients, pimps and the authorities.

Since the beginning of the century, new scenarios for femicides have also been identified in the region, such as trafficking for all types of exploitation, gangs and neighborhood thugs, national and transnational criminal groups, state and parastatal armed groups (legal and illegal), sexual exploitation and the use of women’s bodies as territory for revenge and settling of accounts between men (Carcedo, 2010, p. 15 ff.).
Sexual Violence in Public Spaces
The latent threat of physical and specifically sexual assaults on women in public spaces is an element of daily life in the cities in the region. From street harassment to rape, public spaces are the setting for constant violence directed at women violence simply because they are women Thus, the fear of becoming a victim of an incident of this nature has been installed in the way women deal with their personal and professional lives.

As pointed out in previous sections, the rise in crime — particularly the presence of criminal organizations that have taken control of multiple public spaces — increases the acts of violence against women in public spaces; more than fortuitous events or “collateral damage,” these are expressions of power and struggle between criminal groups.

In sum, systematic violence against Women in streets, on transportation, in parks and other public places is a male mechanism for social control in the use of public space, making it a gender issue that generates, reproduces and perpetuates relationships of power and inequality between women and men, and significantly limits women’s rights and opportunities for development.
c. Victims of Trafficking.
In 2000, the United Nations “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children”; (one of three Palermo Protocols), presented the first internationally agreed definition of human trafficking as follows: “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, whether by abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of the person or persons for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, as a minimum, prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (UN, 2000).

In this context, women, simply because they are women, are vulnerable to trafficking, or at risk of becoming its victims, mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, it is also true that some specific groups of women are more vulnerable or at greater risk because of marginalization, discrimination or a particular inequality, such as being indigenous, poor, illiterate, migrant or young women.

d. Violence against women migrants.
International migration is defined as follows:

The “movement of people who leave their country of origin or the country where they habitually reside, to settle temporarily or permanently in a country other than their own. To do this, these people have had to cross a border. If this is not the case, they are internal migrants (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2006).

The term migrant in an irregular situation is used to refer to those migrants who enter into- and/or transit in an irregular manner through a State of which they are not nationals or who have remained beyond the time for which they were authorized to remain in the country in which they are located.

As per the Protocol against Smuggling Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, illegal smuggling of migrants is:
...the facilitation, for financial or other material gain, of irregular entry into a country where the migrant is not a national or resident. The smuggling of migrants is the procedure by which the smuggler seeks to obtain, directly or indirectly, an economic or other benefit by illegally entering a person into a country of which that person is not a national or permanent resident (UNODC, 2004).

In Central America and the Dominican Republic, migratory phenomena are deeply rooted and are linked to the country’s structural weaknesses, as is the case with violence. Multiple studies in the press reveal that many women who decide to migrate do so primarily escaping social- or intimate partner violence which they are subjected to on a permanent basis. These studies also reveal that many migrant women face specific manifestations of gender-based violence (sexual, physical and psychological) in their places of destination. This aggression is compounded by factors, such as the lack of support networks and basic social services (such as health), and, fundamentally, the irregularity of their migratory status, increasing migrant women’s vulnerability and risk of gender-based violence, which hinders them from seeking out State protection and accessing essential services in instances of violence.
Summarizing what has been reviewed so far, and the results of studies that look into the different types of violence against women and their possible interconnections to other forms of violence, crimes and criminality, *studying violence from a gender perspective* calls for analyzing the different forms of violence simultaneously, questioning the implicit hierarchies that prioritize the visible over the invisible, what apparently “has” gender over what does not, the experience of men over that of women. But more importantly, it invites us to deal with these manifestations not as disconnected phenomena that somehow coexist in the same territory lacking any common basis or logic.
Instead, the ways different types of violence are connected to the gender dynamics that accompany all forms of violence, should be seen as mutually constitutive. The forms of everyday violence must be studied in parallel with sensational, criminal and institutional violence in order to understand the reproduction of violence in all its forms (Hume and Wilding, 2015, p. 109-110).

This approach grows out of the idea of understanding violence as a continuum, and expanding it towards understanding the social relationships that produce violent processes and behaviors, normally infused with inequities, and the interconnection between different types of violence.

Another way of finding interconnections between different types of violence or even different structural frameworks that generate violence is by using the intersectional perspective that unveils the different positionalities of both men and women, crossed with gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, etc., and how this intersection increases or decreases their vulnerability to situations of violence.

This document also emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationship between structural violence and different expressions of violence against women, as well as with other types of violence. In making this connection, new frameworks for understanding certain manifestations of violence point to a “territorialized” and historically situated analysis.

On the other hand, conflict has increased in spaces of “transnationalization” marked by new dynamics in organized crime, and by the emergence of new actors in the compression of violence, possibly due to the increase in femicides/feminicides in the region. Finally, there is a relatively new trend in analysis of the significance of the fear of becoming a victim of a crime, and its repercussions on the daily lives of women (Dammert, 2007).

In this context, policies for citizen security need to be strategic and comprehensive. Strategic in that the goal is not simply a reduction in the rates of violence and insecurity; rather, it is the elimination of violence and discrimination in order to achieve equality between men and women, and to contribute to the participation of women as subjects of rights and protagonists of any security program or policy, and comprehensive because they are linked to the guarantee and full exercise of all human rights and human development.

This needs to be clear, violence against women emerges from unequal gender relations and power patterns that intersect with other fundamental forms of hierarchy that underlie the whole of society, including the State. This explains why the approach has to be comprehensive and strategic, since without a transformation in power relations sustainable security will not be achieved.
In Central America and the Dominican Republic, steps have been taken in the design of public policies on security that are comprehensive, as well as legal frameworks that seek to recognize the problem of violence against women. However, these efforts in understanding the issue of violence in its multiple aspects have failed to include gender, just as the structural roots of violence against women have not been addressed, neither has it been viewed as a problem inherent to citizen security.

The information is unequivocal: Analysis and action require a new perspective that makes it possible to move forward based on a conceptualization of citizen security from a structural gender perspective that, therefore, revisits the institutional and public policy designs developed in recent decades.


The continuum of violence against women in numbers
Central America and the Dominican Republic have moved toward creating citizen security strategies that are more compatible with the human development perspective, which, among other things, has led to a decline in the indicators, like the rate of violent deaths in the subregion. Nonetheless, factors persist in the context of insecurity and produce high economic costs, for both the State and society at large. Most countries have insufficient and limited information and lack measurement systems for systematic and reliable data on the prevalence and rate of this problem, or on its behavior in locations where insecurity and crime run high.

Violence against women has traditionally been conceived as an issue that is private in nature, that is, it takes place in the private or family sphere, particularly in a partner relationship (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2013). However, authors such as Jelin (1997) have highlighted that “the privacy of the family is used as a justification to limit State intervention in this sphere.” Nevertheless:

Given the social recognition gained and moral outrage produced by domestic violence in recent years, the old “(accomplice) respect for privacy” becomes an urgent need for intervention when there are human rights violations in the private sphere, because respect for privacy within the context of the family can never justify legal impunity for violence against women (Jelin, 1997).

In addition, the analysis and policies on security in the region have made some progress in understanding the real magnitude and dynamics of violence against women in public spaces. This is because, given the lack of understanding of the issue, and the “little” importance given to this situation, historically, it has not been a priority on the institutional agenda of the countries’ security policies.

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16 Under the human development paradigm, citizen security must be based on the rule of law, peaceful conflict resolution, accountability and people’s empowerment within a framework of respect for fundamental freedoms (O’Donnell, 1993; Ungar, 2011, cited in UNDP [2013]).
The scope of efforts to gain a deeper understanding and grasping the dimension of violence against women in the public and private spheres, is constrained because several tasks remain unfinished in terms of information management and research into the problem.

Most countries insufficient information and measurement systems that provide limited systematic and reliable data on the prevalence and incidence of this issue, and on its behavior in places where insecurity and crime are high. The data is either lacking or poor quality (low disaggregation), and there is a scarcity of in-depth, qualitative studies on the subject, making for dense barriers when attempting to analyze the issue, and consequently when designing and adapting public policies and legislative projects to the current needs and problems of women and girls.

Likewise, evidence about the behavior of the issue is limited, restricting the processes to plan, monitor and evaluate national plans to address it, because there is little data on impact, leaving fewer possibilities to improve the effectiveness of prevention interventions, care, punishment and reparation.
The available information — which has significant challenges that are addressed in Chapter 3 — has been the basis for the following assessment of violence as it affects women in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

In this process, a variety of official data has been sourced (surveys, observatories, reports, administrative data, etc.) in attempting to understand the causes and dynamics of this issue. *The results serve as input to guide policies that contribute to its eradication.*
It must be noted that preparing this analysis has been no easy task due to the lack of available information, and the fact that current databases are actually administrative records, which leads to analytical dilemmas:

**a.** Analysis of reports filed by women is a challenge because, on the one hand, a woman’s report could include more than one victim, and it could also be a report involving a minor or an elderly male, which can lead to underrepresentation or overrepresentation in the figures.

**b.** Although the rise in the number reports may be a positive thing if it is accompanied by a decline in cases, how can the gap between actual incidents and those reported be calculated if there is no information to estimate the true prevalence of the event?

**c.** In the observed cases, has the number of complaints risen due to the rise in the prevalence of the issue, or due to the approval of new bodies of law, or because of the implementation of policies/programs, or as a response to the activism of women’s organizations demanding effective actions from the State?

**d.** Do the differences in the number of reports have to do with changes in the magnitude of the issue, or changes in the public sector, or greater trust in institutions?

**e.** Can the difference between number of reports and judicial cases be due to a problem with the initial classification, or due to a tendency to change it along the way in response to operational difficulties (inability to gather evidence, inaccuracies and lack of adequate information)?

**f.** Does the scarcity of public information have to do with a lack of interest in the matter, or is it due to the lack of institutional capacity to build information systems? and other aspects (Dammert, 2017).

Interpreting the available information involved taking into account the limitations in the information and the problems described. The outcome of this effort was a gender-differentiated analysis that delves into the different acts of violence that women are continuously subjected to throughout their lives, including the most extreme form of violence, against the right to life: femicide/feminicide.

Delving into the causes and dynamics of the problem and understanding them provides the countries with an invaluable opportunity, as it enables them to address the situation of insecurity in the region from a multidimensional approach, emphasizing the effects of insecurity on violence against women and providing elements to strengthen the prevention component from a citizen security and gender perspective.
### 1.1 Differential impacts of violence on men and women

One of the main findings of this study is that, contrary to popular understanding, violence affects women and men differently. **Although the impact of lethal violence is greater on men, women are victimized all throughout their lives by a spiral of crimes that occur in different spheres and that threaten their integrity and their lives**, and, in many situations, this is driven by gender inequalities and discrimination. The most representative case is sexual violence, affecting 9 women per every one man, with considerable effects on the survivors.

This effect is evident throughout the life cycle. Graph 1 shows marked differences in the frequency with which certain crimes are recorded for both sexes. Although administrative records of reported sexual crimes are below actual figures, they allow us to infer, on the one hand, that sexual violence predominantly affects women beginning the first years of life to adulthood (age 45-49). Hence the probability of women becoming victims of this crime is significantly greater in childhood and, even more so during adolescence. In the case of men, however, this type of violence basically shows up in records involving children and adolescents, albeit to a lesser degree than in the case of women; and in the case of young and adult men, records show almost no incidents.

Graph 1 also shows the way intrafamily violence fundamentally affects women, while violent deaths are notoriously more frequent in the case of men. Likewise, it shows a rise in the frequency of reports of domestic violence and violent deaths of women after the age of 15, and continue to increase into adulthood.

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17 Statistical data in this study is analyzed on the basis of cases reported to law enforcement, or cases from health services, patients who declared they had been victims of violence. These records tend to be complex in that multiple perpetrators may be involved, and more than one victim and multiple attacks. This is a limitation that affects all crimes equally. Notwithstanding the criminological perspective on violence against women, the best approach in analysis is cross-referencing data from specialized surveys on violence against women and girls (VAWG) and cases reported by women who state they are victims. Moreover, for lack of these surveys, reported cases are counted as relevant indicators in this report, in order to achieve an approximate idea of the characteristics of the victims.
Additionally, the data show women — different from men — experience intrafamily violence all throughout the life cycle, whereas men are exposed to violent death throughout their life cycle. This also shows that women between the ages of 15 and 19 deal with the highest levels of victimization and the greatest variety of crimes, as they are targets for sexual crime, disappearance, intrafamily violence and violent death; therefore, they should be a priority for care.

Similarly, young men between the ages of 20 and 24 are a highly victimized group, primarily in terms of violent deaths.

This behavior by age and by sex clearly reveals that gender components are structural factors that contribute to violence, for example, the objectification and commodification of women’s bodies, mainly manifested in adolescent women’s high vulnerability to sexual violence, and the hegemony of violent and reckless masculinities under which youth are continually exposed to risky situations and behaviors, and induced to participate in criminal groups.
and activities where there is a high risk of exercising and facing violence that can lead to homicide.

This alarming scenario points to the need to delve into the dynamics and factors that give rise to these characteristics and exacerbate the problem, in order to expose the relation between social violence, organized crime and gender-based violence, and to show that violence restricts women’s lives, their opportunities for development and their participation in society.

This work involves broadening the base of available information, studying the available evidence and, subsequently, shed light for women and men decision-makers to identify the areas and sectors of the population to work with as a priority in order to prevent existing risks. At the end of the day, the States promote a variety of norms and policies to guarantee citizen security, but in practice, not all people, particularly the most vulnerable, are in condition to exercise their rights and freedoms. (Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas [IEEPP], 2016).

1.2 Violence against women starts at home

As noted, women experience violence from the earliest stages of life. One of the main expressions of violence at an early age is the child abuse that takes place at home.

Graph 2 shows the number of reported child abuse cases in girls and adolescents by age range in Honduras and Guatemala\(^{18}\). Notable in both case is that adolescents aged 15 to 19 are the most affected by this situation. One of the more common manifestations of child abuse is physical aggression. Moreover, this is usually accompanied by other types, for instance, psychological and sexual abuse.

This type of abuse certainly has undesirable effect on the lives of girls; furthermore, it is possibly a factor in attempted suicide.

Statistics from 2016 provided by the Legal Medicine Institute de El Salvador showed that adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 accounted for 37% of all suicides of women at the national level.

Although the data does not show causality, it is important to note that the high concentration of suicides in this age bracket coincides with the high prevalence of sexual crimes among girls and adolescents of this same group (see Graph 1), and it coincides with the fact that the group of young women ages 15 to 19 also has the highest aggregate prevalence of victimization in all four crimes reported in the same graph. Despite these coincidences, a more detailed analysis is impossible as this source does not offer details about the causes or contexts in which the suicides occurred.

\(^{18}\) The data from different countries are not comparable due to the methodological differences in calculation.
An important weakness in the child abuse registry is that the data that institutions report is not generally disaggregated by sex, relationship to perpetrator, or type of abuse, or other variables that would help in trying to understand the problem. Neither are there time series to be able to assess the impact of child protection policies.

In administrative data, child abuse is one of the types of violence with serious gaps in information. Underreporting is enormous, because adults who witness or learn about the child abuse are the ones usually filing the complaint, and not necessarily the victim. When the perpetrator is the caretaker, for example, the case is highly unlikely to get the attention of the authorities.

Country records also show many reports of domestic or intrafamily violence. Available statistics show that at least 8 in 10 victims who reported this offense are women. In 2015, the year for which there is more data, a total of 42,256 complaints filed by women were registered in the subregion.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{19}\) This figure omits Belize and the Dominican Republic for lack of information available for that year.
Table 1

Evolution in the Rate of Intrafamily Violence Reported by Women (2010-2017)

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<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
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</table>

Notes:
- The data available from the Dominican Republic is not disaggregated by sex.
- For Costa Rica, reported cases of “crimes against the family” reported to the Public Ministry are used.
- The rate of reports of domestic violence filed by women in Belize was 903.3 per 100,000 in 2016 (Belize Police Department-Belize Institute of Statistics, 2016).


Table 1 uses incidence rates that are calculated based on the number of complaints of domestic violence filed each year by women among the population of women for that year multiplied by 100,000. This indicator is used to standardize complaints, given the marked differences between the populations of the countries, and it is interpreted as the probability of a woman becoming a victim of this crime in the year of reference.

It should be explained that these rates are not indicative that Honduras is the country with the highest intrafamilial violence rates in the region, because each country has its own particular legal frameworks. Intrafamilial violence is conceived differently by each State, so each has their own definitions and protocols for reporting cases. Likewise, the number of reported cases is sensitive to cultural factors according to each country, and trust in institutions, and the institutions’ capacity to detect these expressions of violence. Therefore, it is not possible to derive the magnitude and behavior of incidence from reporting rates.

Available statistics also show that the probability of women being victims of this crime increases significantly after the age of 15 and remains high throughout adulthood. As graph 3 illustrates, women who report domestic violence in Honduras and Guatemala are primarily between the ages of 25 to 29.

A significant issue that emerges with the analysis of the data on reports of domestic violence is that in several cases the authorities fail to record the age of the victims in their files. Honduras shows a clear disadvantage in this regard, since in 2017 the percentage of cases with data “not available” (NA) for age was 22%.
Failure to register this crucial information, and the lack of records on other relevant variables like ethnic background, level of education, occupation and marital status, among others, **limits the ability to analyze the characteristics of this issue, as it is impossible to have precise victim profiles.**

**Graph 3**

Aggregate of reports of intrafamily violence presented by women in Honduras and Guatemala by age bracket (2017)

![Graph 3](image)

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2017 data provided by Public Ministry of Honduras, and Police (PNC) of Guatemala.

**In Costa Rica,**

most instances of intrafamily violence are reported by single women. Out of 10 cases on record, 5 were reported by single women, and approximately 3 by married women. The rest were filed by women who are divorced, widowed and separated, or by those who live with their partner in common-law relationship. Nevertheless, this statement is only valid in Costa Rica, because statistics provided by the rest of the countries are not disaggregated this way.

**Guatemala,**

whose records hold data on victims, has been one of the few countries where it is possible to establish a kinship with perpetrators (see Graph 4), particularly in the case of this offense. Data reveal that 66% of reports filed by women show the perpetrator was either the victim’s intimate partner or husband. Once more, this is not precisely the case in the rest of the countries.
Violence that occurs inside the homes is only the starting point for the continuum of violence faced by women in the countries throughout the region. In this regard, it is important to note that, on occasions, the perpetrators of this violence manage to link up with other actors in the public sphere—such as criminal networks—to commit crimes against their victims and to make it appear like there is no link between the two events. This complex relationship between the public and private spheres is not necessarily reflected in the figures recorded by the institutions. The case in Box 1 shows that, in some countries, hired killings serve to cover up intimate partner femicide/feminicide, making them more complex to investigate and favoring impunity, as well as making it difficult to generate statistics. This is why it is vital to delve into the dynamics of violence against women from a qualitative approach.

**Graph 4**

Guatemala: Percentage de Reports of Intrafamily Violence Filed by Women by Relationship to Perpetrator (2018)

- Other household member: 2%
- Partner or current spouse: 66%
- Blood Relative: 32%

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2018 data provided by Police (PNC) of Guatemala.

**Box 1**

When the line between private and public is Blurred: **Contract killing as a strategy for intimate femicide for hire in El Salvador and Guatemala**

**The Facts**

An activity that is typical of organized crime, hired killing has been assimilated by the Central American gangs as a way to generate extra income for these groups. This is a contractual relationship between the gangs and other criminal groups or individuals who pay them large amounts of money to murder another person. In addition, hired killing has spread beyond the gangs and infiltrated State institutions in charge of security (PNC, December 8 2016).
Cases of contract femicide/feminicide in El Salvador reveal the crossroads between organized crime and gender-based violence, specifically in the case of contract killing.

Actually, according to a report by the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), only 52% of a sample of judicialized cases of murders of women had the author been determined to have been the partner, ex-partner, family members or persons known to the victims.

In the remaining 48% there had been no relationship or the relationship was unknown (ISDEMU, 2015, p. 49). The report notes that some of these violent deaths may have been committed by a hired third person or hit man. The cases analyzed in the study also show that when it had not been possible to establish a relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, there had been no further investigation to rule out the possibility of a hitman (ISDEMU, 2015, p. 33).

On April 1, 2013, Salvadoran-American citizen Suyapa Villatoro and her friend Ana Cristina Ramos, a Colombian-American, both residents of the United States, were attacked in El Salvador by an armed group while on their way to Comalapa Airport. The women were intercepted by several armed men who forced the driver out, and took the vehicle with both women inside to the Olocuilta sector where they were shot dead (Beltrán Luna, April 1, 2013). Ana Cristina Ramos died and Suyapa Villatoro survived the attack.

Initially, the possibility was discussed that the crime might linked to drug trafficking. However, the investigations carried out by the of the Prosecutor General of the Republic (FGR Spanish acronym) indicated that José Elías Canessa de León, Suyapa’s husband who was in the United States, had hired Salvadoran hitmen to kill his wife (Vásquez, April 5, 2013). Consequently, a few days later, the FGR presented an injunction for the crimes of aggravated homicide and unaccomplished aggravated homicide (FGR files an injunction against Elías Canessa for trying to kill his wife, April 6, 2013).
María Yesenia Díaz

In another similar case, on the night of January 12, 2016, María Yesenia Díaz, 48, was walking through the Las Cañas neighborhood when several armed individuals shot her, leading to her immediate demise; they then fled. Police sources noted that Díaz’s stepsons had sent a hit squad to take her life following an argument (Hit Men Hired by Stepsons to Kill Woman, January 14, 2016).

Adelma Esperanza Cifuentes

In Guatemala, on March 18, 2008, two men arrived at the home of Adelma Esperanza Cifuentes asking for her husband. When they realized it was her before them, they shot her with the intention of ending her life. She was wounded in the arm, they failed to kill her because at that moment, one of her children pulled her away. Criminal investigation found her husband Rene Monzon to be intellectual author of the attempted murder, he had exercised violence against her for 14 years. Adelma had recently reported him, and the violence had escalated. This spiral ended when Monzón finally hired two hit men to kill her (Supreme Court of Criminal Justice, September 1, 2011). The Eighth Court of Criminal Sentencing, Drug Trafficking and Crimes against the Environment declared René de Jesús Monzón Cifuentes liable, as author, for attempted the murder of Adelma Esperanza Cifuentes Alvizures, with a sentence of 37 years and 6 months in prison reduced by one third, for a total of 25 years in prison without remission, (Supreme Court of Criminal Justice, September 1, 2011).

STATE RESPONSE

Three above-mentioned cases of femicide/feminicide and parricide had been contracted, the justice system of the State of El Salvador and that of

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20 Although the sentence was handed down in 2010, the offense was attempted murder it was not processed as hired violence against women, because it took place just before the Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women was approved.
Another of the current difficulties lies in the fact that investigations into the violent deaths of women pay insufficient attention to the fact that hitmen are being used as a strategy in intimate partner femicides/feminicides. This is in addition to the difficulties involved in investigating a homicide committed by hitmen, since in many cases the material authors refuse to speak out for fear of retaliation by the contractors who may belong to gangs or criminal groups (ISDEMU, 2015).

This situation may lead to a number of femicides where the intellectual author is someone close to the victims, hidden among the numbers of murders of women perpetrated by hitmen.

One of the serious failings of the State in preventing femicide/feminicide is the case of Adelma Esperanza Cifuentes Alvizures, because there is evidence that she had been a victim of intimate partner violence for 14 years, and there is a report she had filed against her husband. However, this did not lead public institutions to take sufficient protective actions to prevent her murder. On the contrary, the cycle of violence worsened.

**Contract killing allows femicide/feminicide to be hidden in the guise of a common offense, by taking advantage of the difficulty of proving motives that immediately link the victim and the perpetrator. Hence, they take advantage of the context of social violence in these countries to generate impunity.**

Guatemala had the capacity to carry out the relevant investigations, identify the intellectual author of an act that is difficult to charge, sentence and execute convictions. However, the countries of Central America continue to fail to address the crime of contract killing in general and contract femicide/feminicide in particular, for many reasons including the legal gaps, because, although this form of murder is on the rise in all of the countries under review, even those with low crime rates like Costa Rica, only the Dominican Republic has taken steps to typify hired killing as an offense.
PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES (OR LESSONS LEARNED)

These three incidents illustrate the way intimate femicides (intimate partners, ex-partners and other relatives) find impunity in contexts of social violence; in doing so, they blur the lines between the public and private sphere. In addition, they show that high degrees of social violence, a strong presence of organized crime and high levels of impunity are favorable to the murder of women by their partners or other people close to them, by means of hitmen, increasing the possibilities for the crimes to remain unclarified and, justice unserved, given the complexity of investigating the cases. This situation is a challenge for the States and for public policies on security and addressing gender-based violence; and makes it necessary to deepen our understanding of this issue and design methodological and procedural tools that strengthen legal investigations in cases of violent deaths of women perpetrated by unknown persons, in order to rule out or document contract femicide/feminicide. Therefore, it is advisable to adopt the policy that some countries, such as El Salvador have already adopted, in the sense of applying the femicide investigation protocol in all cases of violent deaths of women, as well as strengthen content of said protocols to include contract killing as possible lines of investigation.

With the rise in the crime of contract killing, and the difficulty in assigning responsibility in judicial processes, it is highly recommended that the specific laws for security and violence against women, and femicide/feminicide be strengthened in order to adequately classify contract killers, and to generate the necessary legal and normative instruments for adequate investigation and punishment of both the material and intellectual authors of the murders of women, as well as to ensure that femicides/feminicides are properly registered, thus preventing them from being blurred in with common crimes.

El Salvador and Guatemala — countries with high levels of social violence that is confused with gender-based violence, where what is public and private are blurred and impunity runs high— urgently need to coordinate citizen security policies with policies to respond to violence against women, because both are mutually reinforcing. It appears that where social violence is high, particular forms of violence against women emerge, and impunity is strengthened.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
1.3 Sexual violence: A recurring risk in women’s lives that is not limited to the private sphere

It cannot be overstated that it is the female population that is predominantly affected by sexual violence in Central America and the Dominican Republic. In recent years, data on reports filed by women have different trends in the countries studied (see table 2).

Table 2

Evolution in the Rate of Sexual Crime Reported by Women (2010-2018)

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</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- Data disaggregated by sex was unavailable for Costa Rica and The Dominican Republic.
- Honduras is not included in this table because the available data was only from 30 municipalities covered by the Municipal Observatories for Coexistence and Citizen Security.
- Total number of sex crime reported by women in a given year/population of women for that year (100,000).

In a total of 129 women per 100,000 filed reports of sexual violence in El Salvador, while in Guatemala there were 146 per 100,000.

It should be emphasized that caution is indicated when interpreting these indicators, since the reporting rates do not necessarily reflect the magnitude of the incidence rate, so a decrease in the rate is not always an indicator of fewer acts of violence against women. On the contrary, it may be indicative of greater resistance on the part of women to report incidents of abuse for fear of being victimized or discriminated against, or a lack of trust in the institution’s capacity to solve cases. In the same way, it must be taken into account that various expressions of violence are not classified as offenses, therefore they are not reported.

In the case of El Salvador, reports of sexual crimes against women in 2018 rose 139% as compared to 2010. Although there was an overall, non-linear downward trend between 2014 and 2017, it rose again in 2018, and reached its maximum point for the entire period that year (see table 2). In 2018, there were a total of 4,530 reports registered in the country, indicating that approximately 1 sexual crime against women was reported every 2 hours.

In Belize, reporting frequency decreased as of 2014. However, figures are still alarming and are among the highest recorded in the last 8 years. In 2016, 100% of registered sexual crimes involved female victims, which is striking, since it is not known if there were any male victims at all, or if they fail to report this offense to the authorities. Currently, this tends to be tied to the risk men run of losing their positions of power in the context of hegemonic masculinities.

Guatemala on the other hand, reported, on average, 32 sexual crimes against women per day throughout the period studied. Although the reporting rate exhibited a downward trend over the last 4 years, in 2018 this figure increased by 29% compared to 2010, and the reported cases of sexual violence against women continue to exceed cases reported by men more than 8 times.

Likewise, a rise in the rate of filing complaints may be caused by other factors such as applying specific protocols to address women’s needs, and campaigns with incentives for reporting.
In the case of El Salvador, the available data shows that reports of sexual crimes have increased by 8 cases, on average, in the municipalities where there are Institutional Units for Specialized Attention to Women in Situations of Violence of the Office for Citizen Complaints and Assistance (Unimujer-ODAC Spanish acronym). It should be noted that this finding does not necessarily point to a causal relationship; more detailed study is needed to figure out the relationship and mechanisms between these two factors (see Graph 5).

**Graph 5**


Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2016-2017 data provided by the Police of El Salvador.

Data from complaints of sexual violence filed in the countries reflect a complicated situation for women, both in public spaces and inside private spaces (see figure 6).
Between 2010 and 2016, more than half of the sexual crimes reported by women in El Salvador and Guatemala occurred in private homes or apartments, or in hotel or motel rooms. The most common place was the home. In this regard, it should be noted that, since this data from reports, the incidence of sexual crimes in the different spaces is not known exactly. It is highly probable that there has been underreporting of incidents in the home, because many women do not report on members of their own family out of fear, threats, or the social sanction that they may face from the relatives themselves. This situation is aggravated by a lack of trust in the authorities as there are currently no victim-responsive reporting mechanisms.

In that regard, it should be noted that a great number of acts of sexual violence are committed against women in the public sphere, in places such as streets, transportation, parks, etc. Most of the time, these attacks are not reported by women due to several factors:

- Doubt regarding the effectiveness of the response by the institutions.
- The lack of mechanisms to present a detailed report of the incident without falling into re-victimization processes, particularly when the aggressor is unknown (for example, in cases of street harassment).
- The lack of classification of expressions of sexual harassment.
- Women’s unfamiliarity regarding the possibility of reporting this sort of incident.

In this regard, numerous quantitative and qualitative studies have been carried out in cities accross Latin America and other parts of the world, showing a high prevalence of sexual violence against women in public spaces coupled with a very little reporting 21.

Despite the limitations mentioned before, the progress in El Salvador and Guatemala should be acknowledged in terms of recording incident location, because they have managed to substantially reduce the percentage of cases where data is not available.”

The improvements in the generation of information are deemed to be the result of the approval of special laws on violence against women, which resulted in improved records.

The improvements in the production of information are deemed to be the result of the approval of special laws on violence against women, which resulted in improved records.

Moreover, the statistics show that women victims of sexual violence who report it, are predominantly attacked by people they know or are close to, that

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21 For further information, see different studies prepared by UN Women, as part of the flagship program “Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls.”
An important variable to consider when formulating public policy prevention, protection and mitigation of risks are the days on which these events take place. El Salvador is one of the few countries that breaks down reports of sexual crimes by day of the incident. The data show that attacks on girls and adolescents often take place on weekdays, possibly when the caregiver is away from home (see Graph 8). It also shows a decline in the incidence rate for this age group on weekends, when there are usually more people at home. It is important to note that this trend did not follow this pattern for the rest of the age groups.

Notes:
- Honduran data corresponds to the 30 municipalities covered by the Municipal Observatories for Coexistence and Citizen Security.
- Cases where there is no record as to the relationship with the perpetrator are excluded.
Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2016 data from the Police of El Salvador and the UTECI of Honduras
Graph 8

El Salvador: Number on sexual crimes by day of the week (2015-2018)

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2018 data from the Police Information and Statistics Department (DIEP) of El Salvador

Regarding sexual violence, the production and use of statistical information needs further development for an in-depth understanding of the trends this issue exhibits in settings where crime and public insecurity run high. There are some recent studies in Latin American countries where levels of organized crime are high, such as Mexico, which have delved into this and point to the fact that women are more exposed to sexual violence in these contexts.

According to Estévez (July-December 2017), in the high crime locations, organized crime and collusion between State agents and crime, there emerges a phenomenon he calls “necropower.”
According to the author, in this context of necropower:

The commodification of female bodies, the exacerbation of misogyny, systemic impunity, and the growing risks in the drug trade have positioned women as adversaries in another necropolitical war, one that parallels the narco-war and is led by the men who are involved in it, but also many of the men who have been or may be the object of narcoviolence. In this war the victim of the war against drugs is also potentially a perpetrator, because what is at stake is not territory or power or control over the illicit drug market, but of women's dispossession of their bodies, in order to dominate them and profit from them sexually (Estévez, July-December 2017, p. 81).

Necropolitical wars in the States emerge in places where there is a downturn in public services, a weakening of the economy, and a rise in corruption, and there emerge criminal or paramilitary groups that fight for to become a parallel state able to use force, commodify people’s bodies (for swelling the ranks, for trafficking or killing them, according to its own convenience) This capacity is what the author calls “necropower,” that is the appropriation of security, the territory and the population itself by criminal elements.
Such a state of affairs represents a greater risk for women of becoming victims of sexual violence and trafficking, but also of facing new expressions of more bloody and cruel violence that eventually turns into femicides/feminicides that, as this report shows, are linked to the criminal groups’ mechanisms for demonstrating power, with the diversification of criminal activities, with the exacerbation of sexist violence and with new codes, rituals and pacts between the criminal groups themselves (see box 2).

To add to this reflection:

La Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) states that in 2012 more females than males were victims of serious offenses like the following:

- 82% Rape
- 82% Trade
- 81% Trafficking
- 79% Sexual Abuse
- 79% Intrafamily Violence
- 71% Rape
- 56% Crime against Family
- 83% Crime against Freedom

The victimization index shows a rise in this trend, with 43% of crime victims were women in 2010; in 2014, the percentage rose to 51%, while that of men decreased from 53% to 48%, respectively (IACHR, 2015, 75, 93-100, 117 y 121, cited by Estévez [July-December 2017]).

1.4 The disappearance of women: A rising phenomenon

A little-documented phenomenon in the region is “disappearances or missing persons.” This term refers to individuals whose families have had no contact with them for a long period of time or whose disappearance has been reported to the authorities based on reliable information.

Generally, when a disappearance is reported, the corresponding authorities start with the assumption that the disappeared person has been deprived of liberty or is the victim of a crime. The seriousness of the situation demands that the agencies in charge of investigating be alert and committed to solving the case from the first hours after the disappearance, because failure to act immediately complicates this process and may lead to further crimes such as trafficking, murder or femicide/feminicide.

Among the countries considered in this study, only two have records on this offense, namely Guatemala and El Salvador; this initially poses a great challenge to understanding the real magnitude of the problem.
According to available information, **EL SALVADOR** reported a total of 11,298 disappeared women between January 2010 and December 2018. Women accounted for 38% of all cases detected. As Graph 9 shows, the rate increased 45% from 2010 to 2014; subsequently, it showed a downward trend until 2017, and then increased in 2018 and stood at 4.2% higher than 2010.

In the case of **GUATEMALA**, the problem of disappearances disproportionately affects women. In the period between 2010 and 2018, they accounted for 60% of the total cases registered by the police. From 2010 to 2013 there was a growing rate of reported disappearances and, from this last year, a gradual decrease has been observed until reaching a rate of 18 disappearances per 100,000 females in 2018, which is more than double the rate in 2010.

**Graph 9**
Evolution in Rate of Disappearances of Women Reported (2010-2018)

![Graph showing the rate of disappearances of women in El Salvador and Guatemala from 2010 to 2018.](image)

Notes: Reporting rate: Absolute number of missing women in a given year/population of women for that year (100,000)
Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2010-2018 data provided by the FGR of El Salvador and police of Guatemala

Although qualitative and journalistic information exists indicating that the disappearances of women are closely linked to expressions of gender-based violence — such as recruitment practices for the purpose of exploitation, intimate partner or intrafamily violence, the practices of various criminal groups and conflicts with men known to the women —, institutions lack consolidated gender-sensitive practices and information systems to be able to investigate the disappearance of vulnerable populations promptly.
and diligently, neither are they able to explain the characteristics more clearly.

As can be seen in figure 10, these vulnerable populations are generally adolescent girls or women under 18 years of age who are also poor, or live in border areas (Urdinez, January 7, 2016). This profile may be associated with recruitment for the purpose of sexual exploitation, although the lack of information hinders more in-depth analysis to better comprehend and understand the issue, its causes and effects.

**Graph 10**

*Guatemala: Reports of Disappeared Women by Age (2018)*

![Graph showing reports of disappeared women by age in Guatemala (2018)](image)

For lack of these records, the available figures do not contribute to precise analysis of the magnitude of the issue, and the way the perpetrators operate; this in turn, makes it more difficult to understand the gender-related factors.

Similarly, the case study in Box 2 shows that this lack of information means the number of femicides/femicides hidden behind so many disappearances is unknown, as is their link with other crimes such as trafficking and organized crime.

One of the difficulties in getting more and better statistical information on disappearances is the lack of data on the outcomes of disappearances, along with the fact that the disappearances are not classified as a crime. Consequently, administrative records have limitations when used in generating statistics, because in cases where it is possible to relate the disappearance to another offense, such as kidnapping, trafficking or homicide, new statistical data is generated that is not correlated with the reported disappearance.

It should also be noted that the institutions do not have a specific registry for missing persons. Although there are a number cases, it is not always possible to determine how many of those individuals reported as missing have turned up, or in what state (alive or dead), or the place they were found (bars, clandestine graves, etc.), or the reason for the disappearance.

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22 There are important initiatives in this regard, such as the registries for missing girls and missing women in Guatemala, part of mechanisms known as Alba Keneth Alert (see https://www.albakeneth.gob.gt/) and Isabel-Claudina Alert (see https://www.facebook.com/isabelclaudinamp/) which immediately activate searches when a girl or woman goes missing. Both systems are under the Public Ministry.
BOX 2
When disappearance is a prelude to femicide:
Three among thousands of women who disappeared in Guatemala

THE FACTS

Betzabé, Yamileth and Cristina

On September 1, 2016, in the municipality of Amatitlán in Guatemala, the bodies of two women previously reported missing were found: Betzabé López, a 15-year-old adolescent girl, and Verónica Yamileth Larios Mayorga, a 25-year-old woman (their bodies turned up in a grave in Guatemala, and the total is currently four, nd).

Another case, more widely discussed by the public probably because it involved a middle-class family: The 2011 disappearance of Cristina Siekavizza, last seen at her residence in San José Pinula (Sánchez, July 5, 2016). Since then, Cristina has been missing and her husband, Roberto Barreda León, is still on trial for femicide/feminicide.

Betzabé, Yamileth and Cristina are not the only ones. The Mutual Support Group for the Families of the Disappeared (in Spanish Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo or GAM) reports that police:

- in Guatemala report an average of 5.7 disappearances per day between 2003 and 2014,
- in all 25,192 human beings, 13,156 of them female and 12,036 male (Over 25,000 disappearances in Guatemala between 2003 and 2014, April 20, 2015).

Overall in Central America, and particularly in the countries of the Northern Triangle, the reporting on disappearances of women has been significant since the second decade of the new century. Different sectors and actors explain this covers a wide range of offenses, including trafficking for the purpose of exploitation, primarily sexual exploitation (With an alarming number of disappeared women in Honduras, November 5, 2015); intimate partner or family violence (Woltke, G. (July 6, 2016); the actions of various criminal groups and personal quarrels (Honduras: Un infierno para las mujeres y las niñas, May 24, 2016; López, 18 July 2015).
For its part, Radio Progreso in Honduras points out, as background to the disappearances of women, that criminal groups make particular demands of them. This indicates that one of the reasons for being considered an enemy or traitor by criminal groups is resistance, which is taken to be young women’s rejection of the gang members’ or drug traffickers’ attention or propositions (Honduras: Un infierno para las mujeres y las niñas, May 24, 2016).

In El Salvador, the age of the disappeared is also a marked difference between the disappearances of women and men (Violence Observatory, s.f.).

- The most frequent age bracket for women was between the ages of 13 and 17, while for men it was between 18 and 30 years of age.
- The majority of women who disappeared (51.7%) were under 18 years of age when it happened; in men younger than that, it was only 1 in 5 (20.5%).
- Up to the age of 18, most of the missing persons that year were women (55.8%).

Many of the cases of disappearances of women have a background of gender-based violence.

Sexual assault, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, trying to escape by ruse or from a violent relationship, and revenge for not wanting to visit a partner in prison elicit expressions of violence against women due to gender subordination.

When women disappear under these circumstances, and the outcomes is their death, this is considered a femicide. This is also so when their tortured bodies or severed heads are found.

Laws that criminalize violence against women in Guatemala (Decree number 22, 2008), El Salvador (Decree 520, 2010) and Honduras (Honduras 23-2013, 2013) include these signs of cruelty as an element that typifies femicide. The number of disappearances of women in the region that end in femicide is unknown. While these disappearances remain unsolved, the possibility that this may be so is left permanently open.
When disappearance and femicide/feminicide converge, the damage to the family and the immediate environment is greater, as is the difficulty in solving the cases. Available statistics indicate that the disappearance of women in some countries in the region, goes beyond the dimension of homicides of women and femicide\(^{23}\). These disappearances hide an unknown number of femicides that are invisible in both investigations conducted by state institutions, and in public discussions. Likewise, lack of knowledge about the outcome of the disappearances makes it difficult to gain in-depth insight into the motivations and the mechanics of the violence involved, both of which are important for any public action to address and respond to them.

\[^{23}\text{In El Salvador, the FGR reported 183 femicides committed in 2014, and the police reported 912 disappearances that same year.}\]
**STATE RESPONSE**

In general, the state response to cases of disappearance of women and their derivation into femicides/feminicides in Central America faces serious constraints. An important legal obstacle is that disappearance does not in itself constitute a crime, unless it is a forced disappearance, that is, when a State is the author of the disappearance or tolerates it (Organization of American States [OAS], 1994, art. 2).

Due to the difficulties in relating femicides/feminicides with disappearances, the response the judicial response and criminal prosecution has been limited. In general, the cases with the greatest recorded advances are those covered in the media, such as Cristina Siekavizza. However, even this case has run into serious obstacles, precluding decisive advances.

In terms of state response, institutions in charge of protecting human rights have had important advances; others have been the result of rulings of the international justice system, which have sanctioned the Central American states. In this regard, it is worth highlighting that the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (in Spanish PDDH) of El Salvador recommended:

- **a.** The creation of a registry of disappeared persons.
- **b.** Coordination between institutions engaged in health, prisons, police, customs, and shelters.
- **c.** The creation of a special FGR unit with the resources required to adequately investigate disappearances (trained personnel, exhumation and corpse treatment specialists) and care for the families.

In the case of Guatemala, as a result of rulings by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Inter-American Court), handed down as Decree Number 9-2016, the 2016 Law for the Immediate Search of Disappeared Women was approved.
PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES (OR LESSONS LEARNED)

- Improved statistical systems are needed to register the disappearances of women, making the dimensions of this problem quantitatively visible in Central America and the Dominican Republic. In this regard, although the institutions keep records as required by law, it is highly recommended that there be a Single Missing Persons Registry, and that in addition to relevant information on the cases, records should also be kept on:

  a. The status of appearance after being reported missing

  b. Status of the people who were found (alive or dead)

  c. Place where they were found (bars, clandestine graves, etc.)

  d. The reason for their disappearance.

- It is highly recommended that there be specific State protocols for taking action in response to the disappearance of women, that they be in line with international standards and start by acknowledging this offense as a form of gender-based violence that stems from other forms of violence (such as sexual or domestic violence) or that may eventually lead to other crimes (such as trafficking or femicide/feminicide). These protocols would enhance State responses in terms of investigation, search, attention and access to justice.

- Research and studies that deepen the understanding of the issue of disappearances of women and the way it ties into other forms of gender-based violence and offenses, such as domestic, sexual and physical violence, trafficking and femicide/feminicide, providing knowledge to inform the design of better strategies for prevention, control and access to justice.

- Recommendations for the search for missing women involve providing for sufficient human and financial resources to ensure an immediate response that increases the chances of saving more women’s lives.

The classification of the disappearance of women as a crime in Central American legislation could help law enforcement authorities provide a better first-response and during investigations.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
1.5 Femicide/Feminicide: The most serious expression of violence against women

Violence against women has been shown to manifest in multiple ways (physical, sexual, psychological, economic, etc.) in all areas of social interaction. Different types of violence do not discriminate between contexts, circumstances and localities, and they interrelate and accumulate throughout women’s life cycles, resulting in consequences both for the direct victims and for the society as a whole, given the repercussions for development, citizen security and human rights.

Despite this relevance, the continuum of violence against women is a persistent issue in every country in the world. In addition, in many cases, it includes the loss of life, the extreme form of gender-based violence, reaching serious levels in many places, which is of great concern. This section analyzes some characteristics and patterns in femicide/feminicide in the region.

The Central American region and the Dominican Republic are characterized as being some of the most violent locations in the world for women. Despite the fact that armed conflicts in these countries ended a few decades ago, the information available shows there are alarming levels of lethal violence that continue to haunt the female population today.

According to the most recent data recorded by the Infosegura project

1,616 women lost their lives under violent circumstances in this region, which is equivalent to an average rate of 6.4 events per 100,000 women (see Table 3). This number is more than twice the world average and is greater than the rate for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Moreover, lethal violence against women is clearly a serious problem in this region and deserves the commitment of the national authorities to ensure its prevention. This commitment necessarily involves deepening the understanding of violence against women and the link between social violence, organized crime, impunity and femicides/feminicides.
To a large extent, the dramatic levels of crime in the region – including violent deaths – are catalyzed by the presence of organized crime networks linked to drug trafficking, constituting one of the most complex problems governments face, particularly the countries in the North of Central America. Settings where the levels criminal violence is high encourage gender-based violence, not only because there is impunity, but also because of the emergence of criminal activities linked to drug trafficking that violate the safety of women, such as various activities through which the body of women is commodified, thereby increasing incidents of human trafficking and disappearance, driving a rise in emergence of femicides/femicides (Estévez, July-December 2017).

This is compounded by the persistence of femicides/feminicides perpetrated by the victims’ intimate partners. In this regard, the evidence points to the murders of women being mostly caused by misogynistic behaviors that are expressed in relationships (UNODC, 2011). There is currently insufficient information to unravel the effects of high crime and social violence on the prevalence of femicides/femicides perpetrated by intimate partners.

**Table 3**

**Violent Death Rates by Region and Sex (2018)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000 women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North of Central America</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America and the Dominican Republic</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(except Nicaragua and Panama)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: For the north of Central America, and for Central America and the Dominican Republic (excluding Nicaragua and Panama), Infosegura based on official data from 2017; for Latin America and the Caribbean, Infosegura based on data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2017); and for the world, UNODC (2018). Infosegura based on official data from 2017 (for the North of Central America, and for Central America and the Dominican Republic [Nicaragua and Panama are excluded]), information from 2018 provided by the Gender Equality Observatory (for Latin America and the Caribbean) and information from 2018 provided by UNODC (global).
However, it can be pointed out that societies where impunity and criminality run high emerge from the hegemonic prevalence of sexist and violent masculinities, with repercussions like high rates of violence, not only in the public sphere but also in the private sphere. Therefore, it is feasible to assume that in contexts of high conflict and social violence there is a hegemonic presence of violent masculinities, which are not only expressed in the public sphere, but are also present in family relationships in the private sphere.

In this sense, understanding the continuum of violence, it can be stated that in territories where social violence is high, gender-based violence is also prevalent, affecting femicide/feminicide rates.

Analysis of country trends in the crime of violent deaths of women, shows that El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize historically had the highest rates of violent deaths, although in 2019, El Salvador exhibited a quite marked decrease compared to 2018 (see graph 11).

- Both El Salvador and Guatemala exhibited a rate of violent Deaths of Women per 100,000 women.
- El Salvador exhibited a steep decline in the last four years, while Guatemala maintains a more stable downward trend.
- Belize and Honduras register the highest rates in this region, with available information showing a rate of 8.2 for Honduras and 8.8 for Belize.
It is crucial that governments analyze these trends in light of public policies and of the events in their countries, in order to explain the possible changes in the behavior of this crime. In the case of El Salvador, for example, Graph 11 shows an abrupt fall in 2013, one year after the enactment of the Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free from Violence for Women (LEIV) and with the truce between gangs.

Meanwhile, the countries with the lowest homicide rates for women in the region are Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. Despite the fact that rates in Costa Rica have managed to remain close to the world average (2.3), lethal violence against women has been climbing steadily since 2015. However, a reversal in this trend can be seen in 2019 in both countries.

Note: 2019 Data from the Dominican Republic based on projections.
Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on data provided by the PNC-DIA of El Salvador, the PNC-Ministry of the Governance (MINGOB) of Guatemala, the University Institute for Democracy, Peace and Security (IUDPAS) -UITECI of Honduras, the Judicial Investigation Department (OIJ) of Costa Rica, the Observatory of Citizen Security of the Dominican Republic and the Belize Police Department.
However, after that, the rate began to rise to 16.8 violent deaths per 100,000 women, the third highest in the period. It started to increase one year after the truce between gangs ended, suggesting a possible link to the gangs, that is, a link between violence against women - its most extreme expression - and organized crime.

As can be seen in Box 3, the context where there is high social conflict and the presence of criminal violence are fertile ground for violence against women. Not only do the registered conditions make it easier to commit crimes and to do so with impunity, there are specific and excessive forms of violence against women emerging that are used as resources to strengthen the power of criminal groups. A case in point is presented in Box 3 as a clear example of how criminal groups use violence against women as an instrument to intimidate society and to send a message of power to establish their control in the territories.

**BOX 3**

When the risk factor is being a woman in the context of criminal violence on the streets in Honduras

**THE FACTS**

Ángela Marina Lobo Gómez

On August 15, 2016, National Autonomous University (UNAH) of Honduras architecture student Ángela Marina Lobo Gómez, 26, was murdered at a bus stop in the Roberto Suazo Córdova neighborhood in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital at 7:30 in the morning, by a man who approached on a motorcycle to shoot her directly in the eye with a firearm. Apparently, the murderer was waiting for her at the scene on the motorcycle, and committed the femicide/feminicide despite the large number of witnesses.

The motive of the femicide/feminicide appears to have been an armed robbery attempt that had been foiled four days earlier. On Friday, August 12, the man who killed her had tried to rob her at gunpoint
in the same place and at the same time. Comments in the press state that upon realizing he was attempting to rob her, she screamed and ran for help, and was helped by a woman who let her into her house. The offender did not withdraw, instead he shouted obscenities at her and threatened to murder her. Although it was not treated as such by the legal system, Angela’s murder could easily be classified as femicide/feminicide given the characteristics. According to information released in the print media, the university student had previously been threatened, and was followed and watched by the murderer. The act was carried out with a firearm, in the face, directly at one of her eyes, which is an expression of cruelty.

In Honduras, Article 118-A of the Penal Code defines femicide as a crime and it states the following:

\[ \text{The crime of femicide is committed by the man or men who kill a woman based on her gender, with hatred and contempt for her condition as a woman and will be punished with a sentence of thirty (30) to forty (40) years of imprisonment...} \]

In addition, subsection 3 sets out the circumstances of femicide, such as:

\[ \text{“when the crime is preceded by a situation of sexual violence, intimidation, harassment or persecution of any nature”} \]

and in subsection 4:

\[ \text{“when the crime is committed with cruelty or when the wounds inflicted are notorious, degrading injuries or mutilations before or after the taking of a life.”} \]

In the particular case of Angela’s murder, both circumstances are present: Persecution and previous threat, and cruelty (shot with a firearm in the face, in one eye, at a short distance from the victim).

Furthermore, these characteristics point to a form of femicide/feminicide that has been on the rise in public in Honduras: intimidation and a form of killing considered an “execution”, a typical technique used by organized crime and gangs, in circumstances that are related to crimes of revenge or that are intended to be exemplary for third parties. Such incidents play out in public before a crowd of witnesses.

In this case, exercising violence within a completely disproportionate power relationship is used as an instrument to send a message of extreme hate and patriarchal violence, domination over the victim, an entirely defenseless young woman who dared to resist an armed robbery. This case of Rita Segato (2016) is an example

24 Online newspapers El Heraldo, El Tiempo, La Prensa, La Tribuna, Presencia Universitaria, all reported this incident on August 15.
of instrumental violence and symbolic violence. It is instrumental in that it is about directly punishing the woman who had not allowed herself to be robbed and it is symbolic because the execution is intended as a message to the rest of the population, women in particular, not to dodge the decision and the act of force of man.

Angela’s murder caused widespread outrage at the university among administrators, faculty and students. Their reactions were to decry the situation of insecurity at the university and the fact that Angela’s murder had not been an isolated act perpetrated by a single assailant, but rather by groups tied to organized crime operating in the Santa Margarita neighborhood where she lived.

An example of this is the information released by the newspaper La Tribuna that stated Angela was murdered “for not allowing herself to be robbed,” and another media outlet, “she had been overconfident” by daring to leave her house “unaccompanied.”

Additionally, the graphic images chosen to illustrate this femicide in the media are highly revealing of the prejudice and stereotypes prevalent in news outlets, with personal pictures of the victim, family parties, focusing on her figure, exposing and objectifying her body as a sex symbol. By contrast, there was no reference to the male attacker’s body, not even as elements to help demonstrate his part in the crime — like his height, hair color, or other relevant physical characteristics; besides, images in the press had been taken at the moment he was apprehended. Neither did the press make any judgments about the causes of the incident, nor any responsibility attributed to the perpetrator, as had been done in the case of the victim (Tiempo Digital, La Tribuna and La Prensa newspapers, different dates in August 2016). These images affect public opinion, and they show a strongly sexist bias, and they promote impunity for perpetrators of femicide.

In contrast, the media handled this femicide/feminicide by revictimizing, blaming, stereotyping or generating suspicions about the victim herself, her resisting the armed robbery, her physical appearance, her lack of preventive measures, or not having someone with her, among others.
Female students have become a subset of women that is particularly vulnerable to violence in Honduras due to multiple factors, as shown by the situations faced by three young female UNAH students: Claudia, Cecilia and Fernanda have been victims, and survivors as well. The three young women (24 to 29 years old) were studying the same degree and were in the same year, they were classmates and over the course of one college quarter they experienced high-risk situations in public (kidnapping, truck robbery and attempted trafficking), and in all three situations they were subjected to sexual assault.

25 Fictitious names.
Criminals establish a horizontal conversation with male victims, and they even greet when approaching the victim, while “they give us orders and sexually assault us,” one of the women commented. This difference in violence against men and against women in public was pointed out by lawyer Mercedes Bustillo, coordinator of the Office of the Public Prosecutor for Women.

When asked about the primary attackers, the women students stated they were gang members involved in collecting “taxes” (extortion) from the transportation sector, and members of a trafficking ring, with taxi and bus drivers involved either out of fear or collusion. They believe that fewer and fewer criminals are working on their own without ties to organized crime or gangs.

**STATE RESPONSE**

The state response in Angela’s case focused on the judicial investigation. After an inquiry that dragged on through different prosecuting and police offices, including scientific evidence (no mention of testimony), the result was the detention and processing of the perpetrator, Julio Cesar Reyes Torres, age 23 (Headline: Honduran model is still missing and anguish grows in Santa Bárbara (August 9, 2016).

Despite the relative efficiency of the criminal process, it should be underscored that with all the characteristics noted in Angela’s murder, which could be classified as femicide/feminicide under current Honduran legislation, the case was investigated as a homicide linked to robbery.

**PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES (OR LESSONS LEARNED)**

- Vulnerability that female students experience in settings where criminal violence runs high points to the need to implement specific policies to increase the safety of young women riding public transportation and in public spaces, as well as in the areas surrounding learning institutions.

- Angela’s case reveals the need for training civil servants in the use of current legal instruments against femicide/feminicide during legal investigations and criminal prosecution in Honduras, in order to ensure appropriate typification and investigation of this offense.
A good practice that can be replicated in the countries in the subregion is the default enforcement of the femicide/feminicide protocol in all cases of violent deaths of women, so that the offense is already legally established as such, and can subsequently be discarded during the investigation process. This practice would promote more robust judicial investigations that take in the elements of proof necessary for the best possible investigation and conclusion of the cases.

The media’s treatment of these cases clearly illustrates the need to train journalists on issues of gender, human rights, and violence against women, because they belong to a sector that is particularly influential in shaping public opinion. In this regard, the content they broadcast influences the beliefs, values and social norms, and they are able to contribute to making changes that are favorable to women’s human rights, or justifying violence against women and promoting impunity for perpetrators.

It is also useful to study the way the issue evolves according to the geographic areas or locations, as this makes it possible to see where the populations most vulnerable to this crime are concentrated, and eventually run deeper analysis into the explanatory factors and the risk factors as well. In this study, it was actually possible to disaggregate the information gathered in three countries in the North of Central America. In the case of the Dominican Republic, this data is not collected, since it is difficult to distinguish between urban and rural areas, given the specific features of the territory.

Official statistics from Honduras and Guatemala reveal that women are more exposed to lethal violence in urban areas, although there has been a progressive upward trend in rural areas in recent years. This could be indicative of a possible spread of organized crime towards less populated areas, which has the impact of leading to more violence against women.

some 55.6% of violent deaths of women in El Salvador occurred in rural areas. Except in 2015, when the greatest number of violent deaths were recorded in urban areas, the rest of the years show higher rates in rural areas; and from 2015 to 2018 records show a greater decline in the number of deaths in urban areas.

Graph 12 shows that in 2018

Graph 12 shows that in 2018

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
Some countries such as El Salvador also have information on the place of occurrence of the incident. According to available information, 4 in 5 women are murdered in public, that is, on the street, in shopping centers, in parks, etc. In terms of percentages, more women than men die in private locations, accounting for their greater exposure to risk in these spaces otherwise thought to be the safest (see graph 13).

Moreover, it is relevant that in 2017 only 9% of violent deaths of men occurred in private, while in the case of women this was so in 26% of cases, which points to specific aspects women face in the continuum of violence, abuse and domestic violence, and to their greater vulnerability in the different spaces where they interact with family and socially.

Another way to measure the relevance of domestic violence in the case of women — and its extreme expression that is feminicide — is to show the percentage of violent deaths by sex.
show that, in that year, violent deaths of women in public accounted for 11.4% of such incidents, including men as well as women. However, in private they accounted for 24.0% of all violent deaths (PNC-DIEP), namely, while fewer than 1 in 10 violent deaths in public involved women, more than 1 in 4 violent deaths in private involved women.

These data are highly revealing of the gender mandates and dynamics that underlie violent deaths, as gender is the key factor that explains this disparity: Women face greater domestic violence that can lead to femicides perpetrated by their partners or relatives. However, the preceding should not give rise to neglecting the relevance of violence against women in public, since, as Graph 13 also shows, violent deaths predominantly occur in public.

Graph 13
El Salvador: Evolution of the Percentage of Violent Deaths by Sex and Place of Occurrence (2010-2018)

Data from 2018 in El Salvador

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2010-2018 PNC-DIEP data
The study of lethal violence against women also needs to consider the characteristics of the victims, in order to build a profile of the population that is most at risk, to then delve into the underlying causes of the issue and outline strategies for more effective prevention.

In the case of the countries of the North of Central America, the data show that women face a greater probability of being victims of murder starting at the age of 15 (see Graph 14). This probability continues to be extremely high throughout adulthood, and starts to decline gradually after the age of 45. It should be noted that the trend is the same in the three countries where data is available, according to structural factors affecting gender differences.

That means, women are exposed to this crime throughout all stages of the life cycle, although they are most at risk during adolescence and young adulthood.

The fact that more than half of the victims are women of productive and reproductive age reveals a series of collateral effects for societies, while, in addition, an invaluable loss in itself, their absence due to violent death also has an irreparable impact on their families, particularly in cases where they are survived by children who automatically become indirect victims of the murders of women.

It should be noted that the trend of higher violent death rates among adolescent and young women coincides with the prevalence of sexual crimes, disappearances and intrafamily violence in those age brackets. This prevalence is certainly associated, among other factors, with the commodification and objectification of women's bodies, which, in turn, has repercussions on the high levels of sexual violence and the greater risk of exposure to other types of associated violence (physical, psychological and economic) that, in some cases, go to the extreme, such as femicide. Likewise, violence can be associated to the life- stage with many are mothers facing high levels of intimate partner violence and limited autonomy, face increased risk of intimate partner femicide/feminicide.
Delving into the characteristics of violent deaths of women, several cases reveal that women are murdered with more cruelty than men. Particularly those categorized as femicide/feminicide, involve methods such as torture, dismemberment, cutting parts of the body, sexual aggression, and exhibiting the destroyed and naked female body; this makes for greater physical, sexual, emotional and symbolic suffering prior to the victim’s death.

Box 4 shows a case of femicide that, in addition to revealing the relation between social violence and gender-based violence, denotes sadism, torture and cruelty against women, characteristics that are frequent in femicides committed by gangs. In these cases, there is also a cautionary purpose: They seek to control society through terror and threat, as well as to force the recruitment of more members of the gangs, while instructing group members at the same time, according to psychologist Maricruz Figueroa Portillo. To do this, they use women to convey the message and sow terror.
Another revelatory aspect that the case sheds light on in Box 4, is revictimization, which women are exposed to at the hands of society. 

More than a few cases of femicide/feminicide have garnered reactions in the public and the press expressing distrust of the victim, blaming them for the situation, their actions or form of dress, or expressing sexist and stereotypical comments that add to a climate impunity and to insensitivity toward this serious issue.

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**BOX 4**

**Feminicide in Gang-Ridden Territories in Guatemala**

**THE FACTS**

Toribia Arceno Pérez, Karen Paola Arceno Pérez and Yessica Noemy Arceno

On September first, 2012, Toribia Arceno Pérez (age 38) along with her teenage daughters Karen Paola Arceno Pérez (age 13) Yessica Noemy Arceno (age 15), and another adolescent named Cindi Verónica Castillo, went to a party at the El Pajón village, in the municipality of Santa Catarina Pinula, near Guatemala City. Toribia Arceno was a widowed domestic worker who had migrated to the municipality from the interior of the country.

There, a group of 8 men belonging to the local Barrio 18 gang clique\(^{26}\) (Solo para Locos, Los Duendes), extracted the 4 women from the party to take them to an uninhabited building. At the site, 3 men raped, beheaded and mutilated the body of Karen Paola in front of the others.

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\(^{26}\) The term "clique" refers to gang cells installed in a given location, and are part of the gang structure.
On November 6, 2013, the Pluripersonal Court of Criminal Sentencing of Femicide and other Forms of Violence against Women of the Department of Guatemala convicted 3 men for triple femicide, sentencing them to 150 years prison each. Two other defendants could not be tried as they were fugitives (Judicial Branch, 2012, p. 82).

The conviction was based on expert and testimonial evidence. The sole survivor of the attack gave her statement as a protected witness by videoconference, and her description of what happened coincided with what the forensic evidence showed (Judicial Branch, 2012, p. 20).

Based on the evidence, the court established that there had been unequal power relations in the commission of these femicides, in addition to misogyny, premeditation, treachery and cruelty (Judicial Branch, 2012, p. 64, 66, 67 and 68).

This multiple femicide was not an isolated event in places like Santa Catarina Pinula, a bedroom community with great social extremes and sectors of the population where the presence of criminal groups is high (official of the Santa Catarina Pinula Health Center). The way this crime was committed is not unusual either, because cruelty as a way of stripping the women of dignity before murder is the distinctive sign of femicides in this part of Guatemala, as attorney general Thelma Aldana stated during an interview on international media in 2015. In that interview, the AG stated that the violent deaths of women are different from those of men in that:

"women are made to suffer before dying: They rape, beat and mutilate them" (Piette, December 14, 2015).
Notwithstanding the conviction, it is not uncommon to hear expressions of revictimization from people in society in the region where these femicides took place. Interviews with women in the municipality show that because the femicides were somehow linked to a gang, makes them see the deaths as justified, or that they were looking for trouble. One of the interviewees in Santa Catarina de Pinula summarized her views as follows: “It doesn’t happen to me because I’m not like them.”

Despite the knowing exhaustive detail about the circumstances of the femicides, taken from the court sentencing document where the murderers were convicted, there is no information about who these women were, what their occupation was, or what happened to the boy and girl who were orphaned. During the criminal proceedings, there were no complainants, no relatives were present, and no reparations, because no one requested it (Judicial Branch, 2012, p. 3).

**STATE RESPONSE**

Responses from different state institutions to the case of the Arceno Perez family women’s feminicides is marked by contrasts. Four women were chosen at random and agreed to a short interviews during a visit to the municipality of Santa Catarina Pinula. That reflect social attitudes toward this kind of crime, and shed light on institutional changes required, in order to respond to gender-based violence.

On the one hand, the justification of the crime due to social stigmas and re-victimization by the people living in Santa Catarina Pinula influences the state institutions in charge of protecting the population and providing care. Immediately after the deaths, there was complete silence about the whereabouts of Toribia Arceno’s orphaned son and daughter. Subsequently, officials from the local women’s protection offices denied any recollection of the case, or denied the inhabitants of the municipality were victims or perpetrators — which may be due to fear of reprisals as well.

On the other hand, the prosecuting attorneys were able to efficiently deliver a criminal case, in terms of evidence and protection of at least the key witness, and they applied the recent legislation against femicide. This efficiency in the judicial process concluded with the sentencing of the 3 femicides of Toribia Arceno Pérez, Karen Paola Arceno Pérez and Yessica Noemy Arceno, in the face of significant challenges, like fear.
which could have made witnesses refuse to testify. Frequently, similar circumstances make it impossible to clarify the facts and, thus, demonstrate that the case constitutes the offense classified as femicide, established in the law, as stated by the lawyer, judge, president of the court, Alba Leticia Alvizuris Torres, who handed down the sentence for this triple murder.

Nonetheless, the meticulousness of the investigation process, the effective protection provided the eyewitness, the clarity of the approach of those who made up the court, allowed for a conviction that precluded impunity for these deaths.

PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES (OR LESSONS LEARNED)

- Strengthen educational efforts to sensitize Guatemalan society about the cultural conditions and the power underlying gender-based violence and, specifically, feminicides.

- Strengthen the mechanisms for reparations and for protecting the indirect victims of feminicides, in this case, the orphaned children.

- Gather more information in the judicial investigation processes and generate statistics for a deeper understanding of the profiles of the victims and the perpetrators.

- The way the events transpired reveals communication between the actions of the gangs and organized crime, with manifestations of extreme gender-based violence against women, a phenomenon that needs to be understood more deeply through academic research and in civil society as well.

- The key to successful prosecution of the feminicides was the existence of specific legislation, and its enforcement in building the case, efficiency in the investigative process, and clarity of focus in the court that applied justice.

- This case also shows the importance of witness protection and their trust and decision of either testifying or avoiding collaboration with the cases.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
Graph 15 takes the case of Costa Rica to illustrate the percentage of femicides by type of weapon. Data shows that at least 7 in 10 female victims are murdered in ways that extend their physical and emotional suffering with, for example, a knife, strangulation and beatings, among others.

As for the rest of the countries (with the exception of Belize, since this crime is not classified there), femicides/femicides present similar characteristics to those observed in Costa Rica, but the percentage committed with firearms is usually higher. However, it should be noted that these countries still have significant information gaps in the records of femicides/femicides, raising questions about the quality of the data. In the case of El Salvador, for example, in 95% of the femicide files registered in 2016, the weapon involved in the attack was not identified.

This makes a case for the urgent need to multiply efforts and expand resources at the Office of the Public Prosecutor to investigate the murders and generate robust statistics, recording relevant variables to better understand the characteristics of the problem, and the misogynistic behaviors involved in it.
In most countries, the definition of the crime continues to be a great challenge. Although some have second-generation laws to combat violence against women, which offer a precise definition of femicide/feminicide, and address the problem of violence against women in a comprehensive way, there are still great challenges for more in-depth investigation of cases, which makes it difficult to apply the law in practice.

Some of the current difficulties are the lack of specific protocols for carrying out an investigation; failure to apply protocols in existing cases; gender stereotypes and prejudice on the part of police, investigative or jurisdictional work agents who advance conclusions about the classification of the crime (homicide or femicide/feminicide), based on the profiles of the victims or the visible circumstances, without conducting an investigation or performing due diligence, and without training on femicide/feminicide, its characteristics and its legal configuration.

Fighting impunity is also an important challenge because, as seen in the case of El Salvador in Graph 17, cases of perpetrator conviction are the exception.

**81%**

*Between 2013 and 2018, on average, in 81% of femicides there was no conviction.* Likewise, the percentage of sentences handed down has tended to decline during the same period, which accounts for the ineffectiveness of the justice system.

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**Graph 17**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Violent Deaths of Women</th>
<th>Feminicide</th>
<th>Absolved</th>
<th>Convicted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2013-2018 data provided by PNC-DIEP and the FGR of El Salvador

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**IN COSTA RICA, 85% of femicides are at the hands of individuals who are close to victims, such as a partner, former partner or relatives, while 15% — a minority — involved people who have no relation to the victim (see Graph 16)**
1.6 When violence against women crosses national borders

Various studies indicate that for migrants from Central America and the Dominican Republic, the United States or Canada is their main destination. This forms a corridor through the countries of the North of Central America, along with Mexico, bringing together the largest number of migrants in transit worldwide (International Organization for Migration [OIM], 2017).

According to IOM estimates (2017), as many as 141,828 migrants returned to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Some 51% came from Mexico, and 49% from the United States, as illustrated in figure 18. The source further revealed that 15% of this group were women and girls.

According to OIM (2017), migratory flows in the countries of Central America and in the Dominican Republic are predominantly male28. However, the number of women in migrations has increased significantly over the years, due to the fact that an increasing number of them have crossed the borders of their country, either by their own decision (primary migrants) or because they are forced to do so.

28 Ratio of male to female migrants.
One of the main reasons that drives people to migrate is the situation of insecurity that exists in their own countries. As observed in El Salvador, this reason is second only to economic reasons in adult respondents (see graph 19). Among children and adolescents, insecurity is what drives 23% of them to leave the country.

In this regard, figures provided by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), though not country specific, record regional displacement resulting from sexual violence, and indicate that, in addition to criminal violence, women in Central America and Mexico face sexual violence and intrafamily violence as well.

According to the IDMC (2015, cited by Estevez, July-December 2017), some 21,500 young people from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico have been forced to abandon their countries in search of international protection or simply to escape systematic and generalized sexual violence; about 18,800 of them are women (87.44%); 23% of the women are young minors, between the ages of 12 and 17.

Upon analysis, these figures show almost 90% of those fleeing violence are young women (IDMC, 2015, p. 9-21 cited by Estevez, July-December 2017, p. 74).
According to Estévez:

**Data bases that specialize in gender** indicate that Mexican women, just as Guatemalan, Honduran and Salvadoran women, are fleeing feminicidal persecution composed of intrafamily and sexual violence in the home, and in public, at times perpetrated by a partner or a relative with connections to organized crime. Perpetrators are fundamentally intimate partners and fathers who, in some cases, are state agents working for cartels, or protected by the patriarchal pact in public institutions (July-December 2017, p. 75).

Although the lack of sex-disaggregated data hinder measuring differences in the motives that drive women and men to migrate, there are qualitative studies that have gathered women’s testimonies in which gang violence and domestic violence stand out as reasons to migrate:

**Well, in my case, it is not that it motivated me to migrate, but (it) was the situation I was living, because I was living a violence... domestic violence, that was what practically made me flee my country, afraid that what had happened to me would happen again. Yes, because they almost killed me with a machete (...) So, it was that I couldn’t continue like this, I was already desperate to disappear from there (focus group with migrant women from Costa Rica, 2016, cited in IOM [2016]).**

I was also threatened by the young men in my neighborhood who told me they did not want me there, because, since my husband had gotten killed in the market, they didn’t know what gang he belonged to and who could show up later to take revenge, so they gave me a few days to get out (migrant woman from Honduras, personal communication, 2016, cited in IOM [2016]).

**However, fleeing violence in your home country does not necessarily mean saving yourself from that evil at all.**  
*Migration is a process that exposes individuals to a series of risks that threaten their physical integrity and their lives.* En the case of women, these risks are present at every stage (in transit, destination, and return), since they are one of the groups that is most vulnerable to violence due to their status as women, migrants and irregular persons.
In these contexts, women—particularly girls and adolescents—are exposed to becoming victims of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual or labor exploitation. In addition, they are subjected to different forms of psychological and sexual violence by the different actors involved in the migration process:

The sexual abuse and rape women are subjected to along the migratory route is the cost that they must pay to truck- or vehicle drivers that transport them along the road; the payment demanded by the coyotes or polleros, or it becomes a mandatory part of the relationship of dependency these men established, which places the women in a situation of inferiority and total submission; or, simply so that they do not abandon them, giving them a false sense of greater protection. Other times, sexual abuse becomes a payment imposed by the security forces and/or border security, or as the only form of payment for lodgings or food (IOM, 2016).

Some countries in the region (like Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica) have made efforts to document violence people are subject to in the context of migration, particularly human trafficking, a crime that women face during migration. Moreover, on the migratory route, trafficking is both a risk and a driver of migration.

As shown in figure 20, there is a significant number of women who migrate to other countries involuntarily as victims of trafficking, an evil that has not been reversed so far.

**IN GUATEMALA, this issue exhibited an upward trend for a period, from 2012 to 2015; although, as of 2015, the trend was toward a decline. By 2017, the number of cases had reached that of 2012.**

**In the case of EL SALVADOR, the trend rose slightly during the period from 2012-2017. The data in Graph 21 show that through 2017, 69% of trafficking victims in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras were women.**

**Graph 20**

**Number of Cases of Trafficking of Women Reported to Authorities (2012-2017)**

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on 2012-2017 data from the Public Ministry (MP Spanish acronym) of Guatemala and the FGR of El Salvador
The situation in Guatemala is noteworthy, both in men and in women, the number of reported human trafficking cases has been on a downward trend (see Graph 22).

**Graph 21**

El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras: Percentage of Human Trafficking Victims by Sex (2017)

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura with 2014-2017 data provided by the FGR of El Salvador, the MP of Guatemala and the Online Police Statistical System (SEPOL)-MP of Honduras.

**Graph 22**

Guatemala: Human Trafficking Victims (2010-2018)

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura with 2020-2018 data provided by the MP of Guatemala

However, the trend is steeper in the case of men, with a 42.7% decline in 2018, as compared to 2014, while cases involving women during the same time period declined 29%.
The violence that girls and women are subjected to during migration is one of the least documented for analysis in the region. The primary causes are irregularities in the process and the fact that victims do not acknowledge themselves as such. Against this background, it is complex to obtain accurate information and disaggregated data that allow us to get a clearer idea of the types of violence to which this population is subjected, the magnitude, the characteristics and the impacts, as differentiated by sex.

Despite their relevance, official statistics on these population groups are practically non-existent in some countries. Besides, where there data is available, the quality is poor, not even usable to measure their true magnitude. Likewise, the lack of disaggregation of criminal data rules out delving into the specific situations of insecurity and violence faced by certain groups or profiles of women who are the subject of multiple discrimination.

Documentary and journalistic information has made it possible to identify some situations faced by women who — due to their condition, position or activity — are more vulnerable and at risk of discrimination, lack of protection and violence. Boxes 5 and 6 present cases of women living on the streets or who are homeless, as well as women human rights defenders who for different reasons face situations that put their security at high risk.

**Furthermore, it must be noted that there are specific groups of women who are affected by particular types of violence, or who face greater risks or difficulties in accessing essential services for health care, justice and reparations. This is the case of women inmates, human rights advocates, indigenous and afrodescendant women, those who are homeless, or those who belong to the LGBTI+ community, among others.**
When social exclusion and discrimination of women lead to death. **Eleven women murdered in serial feminicide in Costa Rica.**

The victims fit a similar profile: Young women who lived on the street and had problems with addiction, who, like many in this situation, were forced into sex work for money, drugs or alcohol. Rather than homeless, these women were vagrants, as they still maintained certain social protection networks.

Nine women were of a young age. At the time of their death, they were between 18 and 43 years old, according to information from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE Spanish acronym). Eight of them had at least one child. They had been young mothers, becoming mothers around the age of 20.

Despite this situation, the TSE notes that, at the time of their murder, 5 of the 9 women were married, which is unusual, since, according to data provided by the government welfare agency, the Mixed Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS Spanish acronym), only 8.4% of people living on the street are married (Ministry of Human Development and Inclusion, nd, p. 69). According to TSE data, they had married in recent years, after 2010, 4 of them to foreign men. This situation could point to the possibility that these women had been used by trafficking networks, forcing nationalizations.
Some people have stated that the man behind these events is a young man who received a fatal disease, HIV or AIDS, from a homeless woman. Without disclosing his identity, an individual stated that a woman knows him and she told him that the fellow was enraged when he realized what had happened, he vowed to take revenge for his illness by killing as many as he could (Estrada, August 7, 2015).

The media was revictimizing in its coverage of the events, as it sought to justify the murders, arguing that women of a similar profile to those murdered could have caused the murderer harm:

...they lived on the street, and we demand just as forcefully the elucidation of these femicides, and punishment for the women’s murderers (...) Ninguna mujer sobra en Costa Rica, ninguna es menos que otra (Feminist Network Against Violence toward Women, November 19, 2015).

Finally, based on the account of a rape survivor, and as the result of the judicial investigation, the authorities managed to capture and convict the serial woman killer. This was a junk dealer named Adrián Arroyo Gutiérrez, who offered the victims drugs in exchange for sexual relations. He took women to secluded places like vacant lots, and when they were naked, he killed them. There is also suspicion that he may have exerted sexual violence (Judicial Branch, 2016). Arroyo accepted the charges and underwent abbreviated proceedings. In September 2016, he was sentenced by the Criminal Court of the First Circuit of San José to 110 years in prison for the simple homicide of 6 women and for 2 rapes (Judicial Branch, 2016).
Capturing and sentencing Arroyo was the outcome of favorable circumstances, such as the statement by a survivor, and notable improvements in the way homicides of women with characteristics of femicide are investigated. This outcome represents hope for the region as a whole, to face the challenge of clarifying femicides that present particular difficulties, such as those committed by sexual assault or against a highly vulnerable and discriminated population.

STATE RESPONSE

The State proceeded with great efficiency in the investigation and criminal prosecution that led to the capture and punishment of the murderer. Among the positive factors that led to these favorable results was coordination between institutions like the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the Judicial Investigation Department (OIJ Spanish acronym), which, according to the Adjunct Prosecutor for Domestic Violence and Sexual Crimes, was key in detaining this serial woman killer, by identifying repetitive patterns.

According to a source at the Deputy Public Prosecutor Office for Domestic Violence and Sexual Crimes, two more factors that helped in the arrest of the serial murderer were the dissemination and training efforts of the Latin American protocol model for investigating violent deaths of women due to gender (femicide/feminicide) (Regional Office for Central America of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] and UN Women, 2014) (), as well as the trust the state generated, in favoring the survivor’s testimony.

Despite this efficiency, the information on living conditions for women on the streets or who are homeless, and the victim’s lives manifest great vulnerability and lack of access to essential services like detention, protection that this population faces.

There is not enough State-generated statistical data to understand the number of women in this situation and their conditions (for example: age, origin, family situation, etc.) in order to...
In this sense, the resources to serve homeless or vagrant women are more limited than what is available to men in Costa Rica, as per the assessment that served as the basis for the National Policy for Comprehensive Care for Abandoned and Homeless Persons: The number of facilities to provide care for the male population is greater than that for females (Ministry of Human Development and Social Inclusion, 2016, p. 79).

Another limitation for providing these women with adequate care is the fact that some of the private entities that serve the street population are religious in nature, their work is not based on a human rights approach. This can particularly affect women involved in sex work.

PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES (OR LESSONS LEARNED)

- Improving public communication strategies and, in general, educating journalists is highly recommended in order to combat stigmas that weigh on women at risk. This is a way to avoid their re-victimization by public opinion when they are victims of gender-based violence.

- These cases show the need to establish gender-sensitive policies to protect and support women living who are on the streets or homeless, as well as other populations in extremely vulnerable conditions. They would shed light on their particular conditions, and address their specific problems with a public and human rights approach, and reduce the risk of gender-based violence.
On this point, the cases reveal the way various factors of vulnerability and discrimination intersect, increasing the risk that certain women face of becoming victims to specific forms of violence, and facing even greater difficulties in accessing justice once victimized. A clear example of this is that one of the difficulties the investigation ran into was the degree to which the victims' bodies had decomposed, because of the fact that nobody had looked for these women. This abandonment is terrible, and shows the need to strengthen public social outreach for specific groups of women who face multiple discrimination, as a fundamental mechanism for preventing violence and citizen insecurity.

The adoption of the Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women greatly increases the possibility of solving complex cases, such as serial femicide, provided it is combined with efficient bureaucracies, adequate laws and the trust of witnesses or potential collaborators.

BOX 6
The feminicide of Margarita Murillo, human rights advocate in Honduras

THE FACTS

Margarita Murillo

Margarita Murillo was a prominent human rights advocate in Honduras. Born in 1958, she started at an early age to participate in farmer movements (Lopez, August 28, 2014). At the age of 13, she coordinated groups of farmer housewives, organized by the Catholic church. In subsequent years, she participated in marches and other farmer movement demonstrations demanding land. In 1978, she was an outstanding part of founding the first autonomous farmer women’s organization, the Honduran Federation of Farm Women (FEHMUC Spanish acronym). In 1985, she was the founder of the National Rural Workers Union (CNTC Spanish acronym).

Years later, in 2005, she ventured into political activity, when she ran for mayor of the city of Villanueva with the emerging Democratic Unification (UD) party (The president...
of the Villanueva farmer group was murdered on August 27, 2014), but was not elected. During the coup on June 28, 2009, Margarita Murillo was an outstanding leader of the opposition sectors, as one of the founders of the National Popular Resistance Front (FNRP). She was a co-founder of the LIBRE Party (Partido Libertad y Refundación) in 2009, and ran for congressional representative of the department of Cortés in the 2013 elections.

In this final stage of her life, she co-founded the Foro Social del Valle de Sula (Sula Valley Social Forum) to promote the demands and proposals of social movements, serving as Secretary General, and emphatically defending the farmers’ rights to land, and that this land be legalized by the State run National Agrarian Institute (INA Spanish acronym) with certificates of ownership, training services, technology, housing, health and food security, as part of a real process of agrarian reform. Margarita was also president of the Las Ventanas Farmer Production Association, in the Villanueva area, Cortés, a position she held at the time of her death.

Precisely because of her leading role in the farmer movement for access to land and protection of natural resources, Margarita Murillo received threats against her life and that of her relatives (Sefton, August 28, 2014, and Demandan justicia por crimen político cometido contra la lideresa campesina Margarita Murillo, October 16, 2015). A month before she was murdered, on July 26, 2014, her 23-year-old son was kidnapped from the family home in the Marañón community by a group of soldiers (IACHR, 2015); he was only released months later.

So, it is no coincidence that her feminicide (on April 9, 2015) occurred in the same period that the peasant movement was preparing to submit a Bill of Comprehensive Agrarian Transformation with Gender Equity for Sovereignty Food and Social Development to the Congress (Ley de Reforma Agraria Integral enredada en telaraña de intereses dentro de Congreso Nacional, July 31, 2015).

On August 27, 2014, in what constitutes a case of political femicide (Impunidad a un año de la muerte de Margarita Murillo, August 27, 2015), Margarita Murillo was working alone on her plot in the mountain El Planón, Venado village, more than an hour from the city of Villanueva, when a group of armed and hooded men arrived. As
she was mulching the cucumber plants with a hoe, they attacked her from behind. According to her daughter, Kenia Murillo, “she fought her attackers, but they beat her down because she was weak, and then they shot her in the forehead... next to her body lay the hoe she had been using to work” (Organizations Platform, 2014).

The feminicide of Margarita Murillo occurred in a context of criminalization of women and men human rights advocates and widespread impunity in Honduras. According to a report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), figures for 2012 indicate that Honduras ranked second for attacks on women human rights defenders in the region that includes Mexico and Central America, with 119 attacks. Of these, 95 were against defenders of land rights and natural assets. On March 3, 2016, another emblematic case of political femicide, the human rights defender, environmentalist, feminist and indigenous leader Berta Cáceres was murdered by armed men who violently entered her home at night.

As is the case with Cáceres, the feminicide of Margarita Murillo continues to go unexplained. Furthermore, two prosecutors who initially led the case, Marlene Banegas and Olga Patricia Eufragio, were murdered on October 10, 2016, in San Pedro Sula (Audiovisual | Radio Progreso, ERIC-sj, August 28, 2015). The alleged material perpetrator of the crime, former police officer David Edgardo Ordóñez, a.k.a. El Pony, who has alleged ties to the 18 Street Gang, was arrested and transferred to Tegucigalpa (Capturan a expolicía por el asesinato de la fiscal Marlen Banegas, October 17, 2016). However, the investigation was put on hold because the defendant, the material author of the double crime, himself died, allegedly assassinated in the Special Unit of the Police Cobras, the place where he was detained (Plataforma de Organizaciones, 2015). As of this writing, no substantial progress has been made in the case of Margarita, although it was taken up by the Technical Agency for Criminal Investigation (ATIC Spanish acronym), created in January 2015; likewise, other state officials have spoken in favor of promptly solving the case.
STATE RESPONSE

The state response to the political feminicide of Margarita Murillo has been wanting. No one has, as of yet, been sentenced as the material author, much less the intellectual author. When the ATIC took on the case, they had to re-launch the investigation all over again, because the previous results had been nill. According to information provided by Kenia Murillo, Margarita’s daughter, during the following 7 months after the ATIC resumed the judicial investigation, only a few phone interventions and interviews were carried out with the family members, with no results in these proceedings.

However, given the concern over attacks on human rights defenders and journalists, there was international pressure to transform the state structures in charge of providing protection to these groups. In this context, the UN Human Rights Council issued resolutions that helped the Honduran State create a public policy and a national human rights plan. Additionally, the Honduran State created a State Secretariat in the Office of Human Rights, Justice and the Interior, and on May 15, 2015, the Law for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Operators entered into force. This law is guided by the vision of the human being as the purpose of the State, with the goal of protecting women and men human rights defenders, journalists and justice operators, and it defines mechanisms for the prevention, promotion and protection of the rights of men and women defenders.

Furthermore, within the framework of this law, the National Protection System for Human Rights Defenders was created. This system comprises 5 institutions:

1. The State Secretariat for Human Rights, Justice, Government and Decentralization (SDHJGD), is the governing body.
The National Council for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators, and Justice Operators, a deliberative and advisory body, with civil society organizations in the minority compared to state representatives.

The General Directorate of the Protection System is part of the organizational structure of the SDHJGD.

The Technical Committee of the Protection Mechanism is in charge of executing the orders for risk analysis, deliberation and decision on the requests for protection that are submitted to the General Directorate.

The Department of Human Rights of the Secretary of State in the Office of Security.

PUBLIC POLICY CHALLENGES (OR LESSONS LEARNED)

One strategy to protect women human rights defenders involves combating the climate of impunity that surrounds attacks against them.

The feminicide of Margarita Murillo is still pending resolution, and the material and intellectual authors have yet to be charged; this is a challenge that the Honduran judicial system still has to deal with, especially when considering the time that has elapsed.

Mainstreaming the defense of human rights across state actions, managing sufficient resources for protection, and promoting broad based citizen participation are important aspects for the protection of journalists as well as human rights defenders.

Fuente: Elaboración de PNUD Infosegura
So far, the data describes a troubling situation in Central America and the Dominican Republic for women overall, and particularly for adolescents and young women and for those women who are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination and who face a series of violent acts in the different social spaces where they interact. This situation is a serious violation of their rights to physical integrity, mobility and a life free of violence, among others; and it clearly shows how far women are from fully enjoying citizen security.

This harsh context is further aggravated by the high insecurity, ordinary crime and organized crime the countries of the region are facing, shedding light on the close link between social violence and gender-based violence against women, with repercussions taking the form of particular expressions of violence, cruelty against women, impunity for perpetrators, and a great degree of social insensitivity to the issue. In other words, a hidden side of insecurity is revealed: Violence against women.

This situation not only has an impact on the direct victims, but also reaches beyond the social and economic spheres, with profound repercussions on human development, human rights and human security.

Therefore, state resources need to be committed to designing and implementing public policies for citizen security, in order to address the issue through social prevention, mitigate risk factors, provide support to victims, investigate cases, punish offenders and rehabilitate the population activating social norms that are favorable to gender equality and non-violence.

In short, full citizen security is not possible until women are included, and the issue is addressed from a gender-based and multisector approach.
In the past, countries have tended to implement reactive measures to address the issue of violence against women. However, in all its multiple dimensions and complexity, it needs to be addressed from the perspective of citizen security, emphasizing prevention when designing evidence-based policy, programs and laws, to ensure it is eradicated in the medium-term.
The assessment prepared here shows that the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic have taken decisive steps on this path, despite the challenges that still need to be overcome. However, there are now many opportunities to improve the management of information on violence against women.

On the one hand, these countries have already made some progress, in that they have ratified international instruments such as the Belém do Pará Convention, which offers a useful conceptual legal framework to identify and recognize the different types of violence that affect women. This corpus sets the standard, so that, in countries where comprehensive laws do not yet exist, a bill can be submitted, defining the crimes that affect women and providing guidelines for the detection, measurement, care, sanction, prevention and reparation of these crimes. As per the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (OAS and Council of Europe, 2014), this “allows for the various forms of violence against women to be met with a unified and coherent response in public policy, justice, research and the collection of data and statistics.”

This opens a window of opportunity to improve the administrative records, in order to reduce the hidden figure and the data that is “not available”, and to expand the number of variables being recorded. This involves creating institutional, standard formats (on paper and digital) to record the particular details of the crimes reported and the profiles of the victims and perpetrators, and to elaborate on the circumstances in which the crimes occur; then, training officials in the use of this information, providing them with the equipment required to improve the collection process and design quality control in the different units, in order to standardize the figures internally.

This also promotes the use of the gender approach in the production of official statistics by developing measurement techniques that are consistent with nationally and internationally established parameters. This would also generate in comparable indicators between countries. This must also include an effort to strengthen institutional capacities to register complaints, manage judicial processes, and generate good quality disaggregated information.

El Salvador and Guatemala have already implemented this type of strategy, applying protocols to address gender-based violence in specialized offices, and promoting campaigns to encourage women to report incidents of abuse. These best practices could be adopted in the rest of the countries.
The diagnostic assessment also shows this is an invaluable opportunity for the institutions in different countries to improve institutional effectiveness, since very few have documentation on the cases presented and sentences handed down by the courts. Having this information available is crucial in implementing strategies that aim to reduce impunity.

As mentioned previously, national statistical institutes are another major player in the production of information. In this sense, it would be valuable for there to be surveys that focus on VAWG, or if not full surveys, modules in household surveys that address this issue, providing better insight into the prevalence of the phenomenon at the national level. This effort must be accompanied by earmarked funding to ensure the survey is carried out regularly and the information is updated.

Production of disaggregated and good quality statistics should go hand in hand with investigation; that is to say, quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to understand the issue and its causes, and to find how issues are interrelated, like violence against women and organized crime, or violence in areas affected by high levels of social conflict and crime.
To achieve this, it is essential that both in State institutions and civil society enhance their capacities for gender-sensitive analysis, and are encouraged to prepare and disseminate reports and news briefs to raise awareness about the issue and its importance in society. In this respect, it is strongly recommended that government and academia form more robust working relationships, in order to increase production of gender-sensitive research specifically on citizen security and emerging local matters that are strategic to gain insight into the violence that women currently face in the contexts of insecurity in different territories throughout the region.

Another important development is the creation of standardized indicators on violence against women and femicides that are comparable at the regional level, in order to monitor the progress achieved in responding to the issue, and the support State agencies provide.

Finally, this is an opportunity for governments to direct efforts at setting up integrated information systems so data can become transparent, eliminate fragmentation, making it accessible to users, and enabling its active use by women and men decision-makers in preparing gender-sensitive citizen security plans and policies, and to monitor and evaluate the programs implemented along these lines.


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CHAPTER 2
Violence against Women in Central America and the Dominican Republic


CHAPTER 3

Institutional capacities for integrating violence against women and girls in public policies on citizen security
This chapter presents the results of investigations into the institutional efforts to integrate violence against women and girls (VAWG) into public policies on citizen security. The main objective is to identify areas of opportunity to strengthen the capacities of the institutions responsible for citizen security in the countries of the Central American subregion and the Dominican Republic to fully integrate VAWG as a core issue in their performance, and mainstreaming gender throughout these institutions’ public policy cycle from the inclusion of public issues to be addressed, the generation of diagnostic assessments, and strategy design through strategy implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The chapter starts by considering how essential it is for the institutions in charge of citizen security to move forward with the full and transversal inclusion of the gender approach, and incorporating violence against women and girls as an issue that is central to citizen security. This is the only way to overcome the current segregation of VAWG as if the issue were separate from crime and the dynamics of violence and social insecurity. Similarly, it is based on the conviction that this will improve the citizen security institutions’ effectiveness in their substantive functions working for people’s well-being, because addressing security problems from a gender perspective provides a more comprehensive insight into them, including their causes and effects; therefore, the strategies that are defined, implemented and evaluated are more comprehensive and relevant.

As will be seen, the objectives of this chapter focus on policies and institutions responsible for citizen security, and not on institutions that labor for the advancement of women. This is because the ultimate goal is to reflect on the need to view and address VAWG as a matter of citizen security, and not as an extraneous phenomenon, because if it continues to be treated as such, this will further obstruct the countries’ efforts to eradicate this evil, as shown in chapters 1 and 2.

This study is based on both documentary analysis and field data collection administering an online survey, and conducting semi-structured, in person interviews with personnel from the following institutions:

- a. Ministries of Security and Police
- b. Public Ministries or Justice Ministries
- c. Statistics Offices
- d. Women’s Offices or Institutions
The objective of these interviews was to delve into the capacities, progress, challenges and opportunities of mainstreaming gender and VAWG into citizen security policies. The countries visited were Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica. The online survey was also administered in the Dominican Republic.

It should be noted that the following report aims to offer a subregional view of each of the issues addressed, therefore it does not constitute a report from each of the individual countries involved. In this sense, there are particular aspects in the countries covered in this study that are not necessarily described in this document.

A final consideration is that the scope of this report is circumscribed by the information that was accessible. Given that the approach proposed in this study is new, there is little prior material and analysis. Therefore, this study is a contribution to a process of analysis that is under construction, and part of this is the lack of data and information. Consequently, further efforts are called for on different fronts.
The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has developed a theoretical and methodological framework to analyze capacities of national governments to face any development issue. This framework defines “capacity” as “the ability that individuals, institutions and societies possess to carry out tasks, solve problems, define and achieve objectives in a sustainable way” (UNDP, 2010, p. 2).
One of its core functions is to strengthen the capacities of national governments; this agency promotes the design, implementation and evaluation of capacity development, that is, what national governments do to improve their development work, with the well-being of the population as the ultimate goal.

The UNDP (2009) framework for measuring state capacities is based on an approach to public management focused on verifying the planning, generation and evaluation of relevant and interconnected results in terms of outputs (goods produced or services provided), outcomes (changes in the performance of institutions) and impacts (changes in people’s well-being). Starting from the fact that state action must aim to achieve positive changes in the well-being of citizens, the UNDP has developed a capacity measurement approach at two levels:

- **At the first level, there are those capacities that allow an institution to act effectively and efficiently**, repeat the action over time, and manage change and crises as they arise. At this level, changes in capacities manifest as effects.

- **At another level are the capacity drivers, or drivers of change:** Institutional agreements and incentives, strategic leadership, human resource knowledge and skills, and mechanisms for accountability. The results of the activities carried out at this level are reflected in outputs (UNDP, 2010, p. 1).

The focus of this study is progress achieved in the relatively recent implementation of gender-sensitive and gender-based violence perspectives in citizen security policies. Consequently, it is more appropriate to go to the second level, since it is a question of looking into how far along the countries of the region have gotten with a new process that, because it is new, we can only report on the pillars on which the process of capacity building is being built, but not the potential changes of the effects.

Therefore, at the second level of analysis, UNDP’s capabilities-based approach measures the design, institution and implementation of policies, systems, processes and mechanisms that enable it to operate better. **There are 4 areas where there have been significant changes that show progress in the development of state capacities.** These transformations can be directed both at the organizational and external levels:

- **Institutional arrangements.**
  This “refers to policies, procedures and processes that enable systems to operate and interact effectively and efficiently in an organized context” (UNDP, 2009, p. 19). This has to do with changes in laws, in public policies, or the establishment of political arrangements and agreements that produce obligations, institutions, mechanisms and patterns of behavior, mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and evaluation, among other aspects.
b. **Leadership.**
This accounts for the changes that aim to provide a unified vision for the efforts, formally organized in strategic planning; “Change and risk management: Risk assessment and analysis, decision-making capacity, ethics and values, executive management skills; the recruitment and retention of leadership, etc.” (UNDP, 2009, p. 22).

c. **Cognition.**
This involves analyzing changes in terms of the availability of education, training and learning processes for the generation and use of information and knowledge.

d. **Accountability.**
Finally, in terms of accountability, it examines initiatives to set up mechanisms for citizen feedback of public administration. This can be through mechanisms for transparency and publicizing government actions, as well as spaces for discussion where government and civil society can meet, and enabling systems to access information.

A concept that is addressed throughout the chapter, is that of mainstreaming the Gender Perspective. Starts by considering that the incorporation of the gender perspective is:

**Mainstreaming gender perspective** is the process of assessing the implications that any planned action has for men and women, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s and men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (United Nations, 1999, p. 24)

Based on the previous definition, gender mainstreaming is a strategy that provides for the inclusion of the gender perspective in all the various aspects, areas and levels of public administration. This implies the restructuring of procedures and norms, organizational changes in public institutions, capacity development for women and men stakeholders and those who participate in the design, execution and monitoring of government actions, as well as in the changes in the agenda of public priorities, among others, all in order to be able to improve or influence the creation of public policies to enhance

29 Chapter IV. Series of coordination meetings. Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations system, article I. Concepts and principles, article A. Definition of the concept of incorporating the gender perspective.
the effective response to the problems that affect the different population groups, and the achievement of the substantive equality between women and men.

One aspect that strengthens the gender perspective is the analysis of the intersection and overlap of different factors of inequality and discrimination, enabling a better understanding of the complexity of the VAWG problem. In this vein, the intersectional approach makes for greater precision in identifying the profiles of women who exhibit greater vulnerability or risk of violence, as well as those who face greater limitations in accessing essential care and justice services when they become victims of acts and crimes of violence. Therefore, this intersectional approach is an element that is included throughout this report.

On this basis, chapter 3 looks at the national governments under analysis in terms of their capacities to mainstream the gender perspective and substantively address VAWG, particularly with a focus on the areas and types of change discussed in the different sections.

The first section presents an analysis of binding and non-binding national and international legal frameworks, that are the basis for mandates and recommendations to address the problem of VAWG, and how the issue is being incorporated into citizen security policies. In addition, it offers a review of the scope and characteristics of the policies that address VAWG, as well as its incorporation into citizen security policies.

The second describes the scope and challenges of incorporating the gender perspective and VAWG, both in the strategic planning processes of citizen security policies and in monitoring and evaluating the plans and programs.

The third presents an analysis of the institutional capacities for managing citizen security policies and integration of the gender perspective and VAWG. It focuses primarily on the gender architecture of the institutions responsible for implementing citizen security policies and for the training and education processes on gender and VAWG that is delivered to staff at the institutions in charge of citizen security. It also provides an assessment of the capabilities to generate, analyze and use data regarding VAWG. It also reports on resources earmarked for addressing the issue of VAWG in those institutions responsible for citizen security policies, and also the existing mechanisms for intra institutional and inter-institutional coordination to address VAWG.
The final section focuses on assessing the existing accountability schemes in the area of the issue that is the object of this research. Specifically, it offers an analysis of the characteristics of the mechanisms for discussion and involvement of civil society, as well as the mechanisms of accountability to the population, be it organized or not.

Finally, the chapter closes with a section that reflects on the challenges, and road maps to strengthen citizen security institutions as they move toward more fully incorporating the gender perspective and VAWG.
2.1 International legal framework on VAWG, and its relation to citizen security

In recent decades, the Central American states considered in this analysis and the Dominican Republic have made a clear commitment to eradicating VAWG by ratifying the most important international legal instruments on the matter. At the global level, they have endorsed the obligations contained in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); moreover, at the regional level, they have committed to the mandates of the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará). Both instruments plantean put forward the
obligation to develop national laws and policies for the prevention, care, punishment and eradication of gender-based violence against women.

In the case of CEDAW, despite the fact that its original articles do not contain direct and explicit mandates regarding violence against women, in 1989 and 1992, the body of independent experts (the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) issued general recommendations that have expanded the rights of women in this area and expanded the obligations of the States. In 2017, this committee issued general recommendation 35, which sets out various mandates that seek to comprehensively guarantee a life free of violence for women, several of which are directly linked to the sphere of citizen security (see Annex I, section A, referring to CEDAW).

It should be noted that within the framework of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, the States parties submit periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee, which in turn issues recommendations that are mandatory, among which are some related to violence against women (see Annex I, section on the Optional Protocol). However, among the countries analyzed in this report, El Salvador has not ratified the Optional Protocol, Honduras has neither signed or ratified it, and Belize, despite having ratified it, presented a reservation in which it exempts itself from recognizing the competence of the committee to examine serious or systematic violations of the rights enunciated in CEDAW, in accordance with articles 8 and 9 (United Nations, nd).

In the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), various recommendations and reports were issued that are binding on the States parties. In the most recent Hemispheric Report (OAS, 2017), from the Third Round of Multilateral Evaluation of the Implementation of the Convention, the MESECVI issued recommendations to guarantee the safety of women, based on legislation, national plans, access to justice, and the information and statistics applied by the States parties (see Annex I, Section of the Convention Belém do Pará).

The instruments that address specific issues that affect women subjected to various forms of violence (such as human trafficking and special protection for women and girls in vulnerable situations [migrant women and those girls and adolescents at serious risk of sale, prostitution and pornography, and everything that threatens their personal integrity]) are those that complement the international instruments that the States have generally adopted (see Annex I, section C. Other binding international instruments).

In addition to the above, there are non-binding international legal instruments that prescribe general guidelines for national states to take action on various aspects related to VAWG within the framework of citizen security policies, and constitute a political mandate for the signatories.
There is also the 1997 United Nations Declaration on Crime and Public Security that enjoins the States to create the mechanisms to protect the safety and well-being of citizens, adopting effective measures to combat manifestations of transnational crime, including human trafficking. Additionally, there is the 2005 Bangkok Declaration Synergies and Responses: Strategic Alliances in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which proposes taking gender into account in the provision of services to child victims of crime and those who are in conflict with the law.

In the same vein, there is General Assembly 2010 resolution 65/228 Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women, which calls for “evaluating the perception of public safety, and planning for the safety, environmental design and management of public spaces in such a way as to reduce the risk of violence against women.”

Finally, in the case of femicide/feminicide, the UN adopted resolution 68/191, Adoption of measures against the murder of women and girls on the basis of gender, presented by the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and approved by the General Assembly in 2014. Among other issues, it posits the need to “adopt an integrated multidisciplinary approach, taking into account gender issues, for the investigation of gender-based killings of women, and promoting and formalizing close collaboration and appropriate exchange of information between the institutions that participate in the investigation of these crimes” (see these and others in Annex I, section “Other binding international instruments”).
Figure 1
Timeline of the creation of the main international legal instruments created to eradicate gender-based violence and incorporate the fight against it into citizen security efforts

- 1979: CEDAW
- 1990: RIADH GUIDELINES
- 1994: BELÉM DO PARÁ
- 1997: UN CRIME AND SECURITY DECLARATION
- 2000: PALERMO PROTOCOL
  INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON THE PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION PROTOCOL
- 2002: CRC PROTOCOL
- 2010: RESOLUTION 65/228, UN CRIME AND VAWG
- 2014: UN RESOLUTION 68/191
  GBV KILLING OF WOMEN

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
As can be seen from the previous description, there is a broad set of international legal instruments that prescribe obligations for States to eliminate VAWG, and there are some international recommendations so that actions to advance a life free of violence for women are incorporated into policies and strategies for citizen security.

In the Central American subregion, two strategies are included within the framework of the Central American Integration System (SICA), that promote actions to counter VAWG within the framework of citizen security policies.

One of them is the Central American Security Strategy (ESCA) of 2011, with actions to combat VAWG in general, and some of its specific manifestations, such as femicide/feminicide and human trafficking. Recently, discussions are underway to delve further into the matter, because, as SICA itself acknowledges, “the Gender Assessment carried out on ESCA projects has warned that the gender perspective is not sufficiently reflected in the Central American Security Strategy” (System of Central American Integration [SICA], 2019); consequently, there has been a proposal to correct this deficiency to:

... ensure that women enjoy such security in a full and equal manner. Including differentiating criteria in the analysis of the existing threats, strengthens the security sector’s capacity to provide responses according to the rights and priorities of each population group (SICA, 2019).

The other strategy is Regional Policy for Gender Equality and Equity (PRIEG); one of its pillars on security and a life free of violence, “to promote the incorporation of the right to a life free of violence in policies, programs and public actions aimed at preventing, detecting, addressing and eradicating violence in the public and private spheres” (Central American Agricultural Council [CAC], 2017).

Based on the aforementioned, it is clear that, as covered in this report, there are multiple commitments and obligations that the countries have engaged in with the international community to ensure a life free of violence for women and girls as part of citizen security policies.

Given the mechanisms that exist today that help make such commitments enforceable, there is a wide range of recommendations that constitute concrete guidelines for the governments of Central America and the Dominican Republic to take action in terms of legislation, planning, and implementation, evaluation and production of data, and in specific areas or themes that make it possible to incorporate the gender approach into public security actions and fully address VAWG. In this sense, there are also specific prescriptions for the citizen security sector to work for the rights of women in prison, against femicide/feminicide, within the framework of violence in transportation and public spaces, in the prisons, in prevention, etc.

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30 SICA is a political legal mechanism that emerged from the Organization of Central American States (ODECA), so its agreements are binding.
The fact that these countries have ratified these international legal instruments, and, furthermore, they actively participate in intergovernmental spaces, is a sign of their commitment to strengthening their capacities to face the problem, and to fully incorporate the gender perspective and VAWG in the domain of citizen security.

2.2 National legal framework on VAWG, and its relation to citizen security

The international regulatory frameworks reviewed in the previous section are the main instruments that provide the foundations for the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic to advance towards the enactment of citizen security laws, as well as laws that provide criminal sanctions for certain offenses that impact women greatly, such as human trafficking, disappearances and VAWG.

This section specifically analyzes national laws on VAWG (see Annex I, section F. National regulatory frameworks for violence against women). All the countries studied have first-generation laws, that is, those that protect the rights of victims and survivors of domestic violence or intrafamily violence.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that only 3 out of the 6 countries in the study (Costa Rica, Guatemala and El Salvador) have comprehensive laws or second-generation laws in the matter of VAWG, that is, those that are comprehensive and are intended to prevent, punish and eradicate VAWG, and are aligned with the dispositions in the corresponding international conventions, namely, the Convention of Belém do Pará. These laws address the different crimes that affect women, for example physical, psychological, sexual, property, economic and symbolic violence, among others. In addition, they tend to adopt a diversity and intersectional approach: They acknowledge that violence does not affect
It is important to note that the comprehensive laws applied in the countries mentioned before, recognize femicidal/feminicidal violence, that is, the violent death of women motivated by hatred and contempt for their gender, in the different areas they occur. There are cases in which in those same laws they typify and penalize it, while in others do so in the penal codes. In Costa Rica, existing legislation only classifies intimate femicide, that is, when it takes place in the context of a couple (see Annex I, section G on Legal frameworks for femicide/feminicide. Moreover, in the Dominican Republic and Belize, there is no classification for femicide/feminicide (see Annex I, section G. National legal frameworks for femicide/feminicide).

Legal frameworks on femicide/feminicide are relatively recent in Central American countries, as they were approved less than a decade ago. In this sense, the great challenge for countries lies in guaranteeing enforcement. **One of the great difficulties they face are the patriarchal cultural patterns that still persist in the region** making recognition of the continuum of VAWG difficult for the authorities and officials in charge of the victim/survivor care system, and for society in general. Likewise, **countries lack the tools and the trained personnel to be effective in detecting the gender hatred or contempt** that may have been the motive, leading to the violent death of a woman - especially, in characteristic contexts of organized crime in the region—, resulting in their registration and punishment as homicides, and not as femicides/femicides. This causes not only an underestimation of the problem but also a lack of understanding of the issue, limiting the design of more effective prevention and care strategies.

On the other hand, the laws related to sexual violence in the region have undergone reforms in recent years. It has gone from a classification of crimes of honor to one of crimes against sexual freedom and the integrity and privacy of the injured party, and it has been acknowledged that the victims are mostly women. In addition, efforts were made to eliminate discriminatory content from the national regulations on sexual violence, such as the exemption that released the rapist from punishment by marrying a victim who was a minor; or references to the honesty and morality of the victim as a condition to typify the crime.

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31 Comprehensive care refers to the enforcement of prevention, care, sanction and reparation measures to guarantee the transversality of the issue of violence against women in the formulation of policies, access to justice, research and preparing situational assessments. (Essayag, 2017).

32 In addition, new laws were enacted and others were amended to penalize crimes not previously included, such as marital rape, sexual harassment or intimidation, sexual exploitation, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation and forced prostitution, among others.
Regarding human trafficking, in the last decade, Central American countries have approved special laws to combat it, incorporating concepts emanating from a human rights approach that have contributed to better detection, prosecution and penalization of this type of crime. One example is that the right to sexual freedom has been considered a protected right, primarily to the benefit of women and girls, because they are more vulnerable to this issue of sexual violence in the context of trafficking.

However, there is room in these laws for the inclusion of the gender approach, since, for example, in the actions for the prevention and care of sexual violence, they do not consider the factors of vulnerability specific to girls and women (See Annex I, section H. National legal frameworks for human trafficking).

With regard to national laws relating to citizen security and the way in which they integrate prevention, care, access to justice for women victims of violence, as well as the gender perspective, there has been little progress made. There are no specific citizen security laws establishing legal mandates regarding this substantive function of government. In general, in the countries of the region there are organic laws of the police, the Public Ministry (PM Spanish acronym) and even the Armed Forces (their involvement in citizen security functions is not uncommon), defining the way in these institutions are structured, organized and operate, and some sections refer to the substantive security functions (conceptualized as internal/public security and, on occasion, citizen security). This framework refers to some aspects of objectives that can be conceptually framed in those of citizen security that are analyzed in this document (see Chapter 1). Nevertheless, no explicit references are made to addressing VAWG, or to incorporating elements of the gender perspective. On occasions, these instruments are supplemented by decrees that are intended to make their provisions more operational; however, they present the same shortcomings and, in general, point to inter-institutional coordination issues.
Notwithstanding this absence, Costa Rica\textsuperscript{33}, Guatemala, and to a lesser extent, the Dominican Republic, have developed specific legal instruments to improve access to justice for women victims of violence and insecurity, with Guatemala also developing a law establishing the objective and the mechanisms to coordinate the immediate search for missing women\textsuperscript{34}, for more, see Box 1.

\textsuperscript{33} Decree N or 41240 (2018) declares “priority interest in the intervention, care and prevention of violence against women” and, in paragraph XI it states: The perpetuation of violence against women is a product of the male dominant culture present in all spheres of social life, but is closely related to poverty and exclusion as experienced by women in society through an endless cycle that results in the intergenerational transmission of poverty and violence against women. \textit{Social violence and insecurity, including organized crime, make up the third determining factor associated with the rise in violence against women and the lethality patterns} [italics added]. The National Institute for Women (INAMU) is in charge of inter-institutional coordination, but the regulatory basis makes no specific reference to the security forces.

\textsuperscript{34} See annex I, section on “National legal framework, national laws on citizen security and their relationship with violence against women and the gender perspective”.

\begin{boxedtext}
\textbf{BOX 1}

\textbf{Objective and generalities of the Law for the Immediate Search of Disappeared Women of Guatemala}

\textbf{Article 1. Creation, objective and purpose.}

This Law creates and regulates the operation of a mechanism for the immediate search for disappeared women to guarantee the life, liberty, security, integrity and dignity of women who are missing, in order to provide a means for their prompt location and protection so that after their disappearance, they are shielded from being subjected to other types of harassment, murder or transfer to other communities or countries.

This law sets up a National Search Coordinator, as well as local teams. In addition, it establishes that a registry of missing women and aggressors is to be created.

The law characterizes the principle of speed, requiring urgency and speed in the search. In order to prioritize the search, the initiation of the search is not limited to completing formalities.

Source: Decree Number 9-2016 (2016).\end{boxedtext}
Despite the shortcomings mentioned before, in regional terms, the civil service personnel interviewed during this study generally are of the opinion that the current legal framework on VAWG and citizen security represents progress and offers opportunities to combat the problem. For instance, one civil servant pointed out:

There have been very important advances (...) in the regulations, in acknowledging that acts of violence against women have been culturally accepted for a long time, it presents new legal figures like femicide suicide (...) in addition, we have created a special court to deal with the acts of violence against women, with which I think we have made progress. Nevertheless, el level de rates de violence, its acceptance and cultural normalization still constitute a great barrier to progress in this area. (Civil servant at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).

Such insights are found more readily in countries like El Salvador where there are comprehensive or second generation laws that define types and forms of VAWG; this has helped the State to act and do outreach on the manifestations of violence faced by women victims with greater clarity. This, together with the provisions for its prevention, care, and punishment, and the provisions regarding the generation of information and monitoring the issue, has led public servants interviewed in El Salvador, Guatemala and Costa Rica to state that there is currently work being done on issue, and there are legal instruments to make this possible.

In this sense, the public officials who were asked about the legal framework that regulates their actions in matters of VAWG and citizen security consider that there has been progress, but that this legislative context must be updated to fill gaps and to provide adequate tools to address this extremely complex issue. Progress is evaluated based on the recognition that laws to address VAWG have been enacted (a positive development from any standpoint), and secondary ordinances have been issued — the decrees, regulations and protocols — to fill the gaps in the laws governing citizen security; all of this provides the institutional and legal tools for the institutions of the security sector to take action on the issue.

However, practically all the civil servants interviewed pointed out that there is legislation pending to have better instruments to face VAWG.

Some of them mentioned the legal and criminal recognition of other forms of violence not yet covered (during courtship, in public spaces, etc.). These respondents also proposed expanding objectives, responsibilities and obligations for the production, administrative records and strategic use of information on incidents of- and responses to this matter. The officials who were interviewed concurred more than once that there is a need to strengthen the powers of the national mechanisms for the advancement of women, as they are a central part of the institutional architecture for the eradication of VAWG and are not fully equipped to participate in - and influence citizen, public or internal security systems, and position the VAWG issue and the incorporation of the gender perspective.
In the area of access to justice, there were proposals to incorporate or clarify interpretation criteria to apply domestic violence laws or comprehensive laws, define the scope of law enforcement support for victims, and to establish stronger obligations and instruments for the care of primary and secondary victims of violence.

Regarding prevention and care, it was proposed that the incorporation of the gender perspective in the regulations that regulate the police function be expanded. In addition, in countries that lack comprehensive VAWG laws, there is a special need to establish general provisions that require inter-institutional coordination, and above all, to provide legal definitions of gender-based violence, its types and modalities, and consideration in the field of citizen security.

Finally, it is important to note that, notwithstanding the respondent’s statement about the need to update legal frameworks, their point of view is that the core aspects of problems in addressing violence against women currently stem not from legal issues, but from limitations in operational capacities such as the scarcity of resources (human, material and financial) for implementation, the lack of comprehensive knowledge of the issue, and the resulting lack of response strategies, for instance - in some cases - some government agencies lack the political will to comply with legal mandates, making it difficult to advance in the reducing the problem.
2.3 Public policies on citizen security and inclusion of VAWG

The legal instruments set out above laid the foundations for the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic to advance towards the formulation of public policies for citizen security and VAWG. Accordingly, different plans and programs have been implemented since the turn of the century, with greater involvement of different institutions in preventing, addressing and punishing VAWG and insecurity, as well as repairing the damage to the victims. However, as this study shows, there are areas of opportunity for incorporating the gender perspective and the fight against VAWG in the main core of policies in the citizen security sector.

This section analyzes the ways VAWG has been included in the documents that embody citizen security policies, and the link the way policies and plans have to combat VAWG tie in to citizen security tasks. Regarding VAWG, an initial fact to highlight is that the countries under analysis have specific national action plans for the eradication of violence against women each with their own scope and characteristics 35, except for Belize, which has its own National Plan of Action focused on gender-based violence 36.

An initial finding to highlight in the analysis of the set of policies and plans is that, except Belize, almost all the countries propose to promote gender mainstreaming in the agencies responsible for promoting policies against VAWG as a general strategy for institutional strengthening, however in the case of the agencies responsible for implementing citizen security policies, this is limited to specific aspects such as staff training, but there is no mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the strategies and actions promoted to combat insecurity and violence (see Annex II. Plans and Policies for the Elimination of VAWG).

In practically all cases, the link between policies and plans to combat VAWG and citizen security is evident in specific actions, although the scope varies in each country.

**IN BELICE**, for instance, the policy focuses on gender-based violence, but not women and girls, there is no specific national program for VAWG; instead, it only calls for actions such as establishing areas within the Police Department that specialize in sexual and domestic violence against women.

35 According to Sebastian Essayag (2017), this is a type of strategic program that a body or group of public institutions draws up, in order to implement short-, medium- and long term activities to address — and as a goal to eradicate — all manifestations of violence against women, both in the private sphere (domestic, family, intrafamily and intimate) and in the public sphere. This public policy instrument is based on a results-based management model, intended to organize and operationalize laws, which are essentially declarative (p. 34).

36 Essayag classifies plans by the type of violence that the policy or plan addresses. Data from 2015-2016 shows that Belize does not explicitly address violence against women, but rather gender-based violence, with some specific actions in favor of women, therefore there are no specific elements and approaches.
IN COSTA RICA, on the other hand, they actually contemplate several lines of action and strategies that aim to incorporate objectives for the eradication of VAWG in the hard core of citizen security policies. For instance, it proposes strengthening protection mechanisms for women victims of violence, and those that have been set up to stop feminicidal violence, with public security agencies playing a central role.

Although the rest of the countries do not include citizen security actions to fight against homicide/feminicide or human trafficking, they take steps to increase their institutional capacities, for example, setting up regional teams in the countries to address VAWG within the framework of the Public Ministry (HONDURAS) and incorporating women’s citizen security into municipal and national regulations (EL SALVADOR).

All the countries agree on proposing certain actions aimed at strengthening the conditions for the prosecution and enforcement of justice for women, either by training the prosecutors and judges, or by creating mechanisms to speed up the enforcement of justice. However, involving stakeholders and setting objectives for citizen security to take action in preventing and addressing VAWG is marginal in all plans and policies. In the few cases where this type of violence is mentioned, it is set as an example of the existing problems in citizen security, but it is not considered a general pillar or strategy to work on, or as a specific aspect or line of action (see annex II. Plans and Policies for the Elimination of VAWG).

If the legal mandates for the elimination of VAWG are contrasted with VAWG policies and plans, it emerges that the latter go beyond what is strictly established regarding the inclusion of citizen security institutions, which shows that the Governments are not setting a limited interpretation of the legal mandates; on the contrary, they are trying to respond more effectively to what the legal norms prescribe.

For example, there are countries in which the legal mandates on the matter are limited to defining the way in which the various government bodies will be organized to face the matter of security, but they do not set specific objectives, attributions in particular matters, mechanisms of coordination, etc. However, the policies and plans consider aspects such as the evidence available to address issues of citizen security and VAWG as a part of it.
Moreover, the countries in the region have set out the policies and strategies in the field of citizen security in documents that incorporate specific objectives for addressing VAWG, yet the gender is not mainstreamed, except in the case of Costa Rica.

A review of national experiences\(^{37}\) shows that VAWG is incorporated into these documents in a targeted way, that is, national security plans incorporate specific strategies aimed at addressing the problem of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence or sexual violence; in some cases it is in areas of specialized care (El Salvador and Honduras). This trend reproduces the practice of compartmentalizing VAWG as if it were a particular issue in citizen security, and fails to incorporate it structurally, as it does with other issues it addresses.

There are several factors that influence this practice.

First, citizen security has not been addressed from the perspective of gender, consequently, the knowledge that the policy is based on fails to identify causes, expressions and effects of gender in criminal matters, therefore, the objectives that would address them are not identified. Added to this is the fact that there is limited or insufficient understanding of the problems of insecurity and violence women face, for example the link between disappearances and femicides/feminicides or, as seen in Chapter 2, femicides/feminicides by contract killers.

As a result, when planning security policies, the objectives included in the public planning instruments are the same as have traditionally been addressed in VAWG policies, with an emphasis on domestic or intimate partner violence.

Furthermore, despite the differences between the countries under consideration, the institutions responsible for citizen security incorporate VAWG in their national plans in a restricted way, since, as previously indicated, it is limited to certain specific objectives.

In addition, the institutions responsible for implementing the plans and programs for the elimination of social violence and public security do not find the specific objectives of VAWG particularly relevant. This emerges in the different testimonies gathered in the field, as well as the fact that resources allocated for the execution of the planned actions are not sufficient (as detailed below).

Overall, the civil service members that were interviewed shared this view. For instance, a civil servant in El Salvador pointed out:

> “the issue of violence against women has not been taken up in an important way in the plans to eliminate social violence and public security” (Civil servant of the National Civil Police [PNC] of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).

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\(^{37}\) See Annex II, section on “Citizen security plans and policies and their incorporation of the gender perspective and the objectives for the elimination of VAWG”. 
A good example of the effect of this sectorization is that the view institutions of justice have of criminal investigation is still based on investigating gender-based violence as one thing, and violence that is typified as part of citizen security, as another. This is why there are separate public prosecutor’s office or areas, each working with different approaches (for example, in El Salvador and Guatemala). In the Salvadoran case, the gender approach is incorporated, while in the Guatemalan case, it is not. In this case, and as has already been observed, the problem is rooted in the legal framework, and above all, in the type of regulations, where this organization is reflected, which ends up restricting the adoption of new governmental organizational formulas to better address the barrier. But, this also stems from the policies and plans themselves, because they lack innovation, in that the objectives for eradicating VAWG and objectives for citizen security do not converge, and instead tend to be sectorized. Consequently, there is a limited margin for designing strategies and actions that aim for this convergence. A Salvadoran official expressed it as follows:

The prosecutors specializing in violence against women generally lack the same relevance and importance as the other prosecutor’s offices. Violence against women is investigated on one side; and citizen security is investigated on another. (Civil servant at the Office of the Public Prosecutor General of the Republic of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).

For her part, a civil servant from Guatemala stated:

“despite the fact that violence against women is the most reported offense at the national level, and that there is the dark figure, this is not the primary work of this institution.” (Civil servant of the Guatemalan MP, personal communication, June 2019).
3.1 Scope and challenges of incorporating gender and VAWG in the processes of strategic planning for citizen security

Strategic planning processes require a broad enough diagnostic base to be able to identify, quantify and characterize the main public issues they address, and their causes, risk factors and effects. In the institutions that are responsible for citizen security, *clarity regarding the magnitude, severity and characteristics of the issues they address, as well as their causes and risk factors, provides for better strategic planning of public policies for prevention and response.*
Specifically, implementing gender-sensitive citizen security policies also require the gender-sensitive assessments of the phenomena and issues in citizen security; this makes it possible to identify the causal and risk factors associated with gender, as well as the differentiated effects on women, men and the various groups into which they are disaggregated. If these diagnoses are not available, it will be difficult to design and plan public actions to address the gender-related causes of citizen insecurity and those that respond to the specific and differentiated needs that women and men have in terms of citizen security.

In the countries of the subregion, there have been important advances in the generation of data on the magnitude and characteristics of VAWG, in the preparation of studies by international agencies or universities on particularities or specific issues associated with VAWG, and in the production of data on citizen security, disaggregated according to variables that are useful for gender analysis (see section 4.3).

Despite these advances, the institutions that are responsible for citizen security currently lack systematic and institutionalized practice of including the gender approach in citizen security diagnostic assessments, an indispensable tool to carry out effective strategic planning for citizen security policy if it is to respond to the needs of different demographic groups subjected to insecurity.

As respondents from the institutions of this sector point out, “there are administrative records, there are surveys, but there is no gender analysis” (civil servants of the Ministry of Justice and the National Coordinator of Statistics on Acts of Violence against Women of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019). Likewise, a Guatemalan civil servant stated that:

“there are working groups where the information is analyzed, but there are no actual assessments. There is a lot of information, but very little analysis” (civil servant of the Presidential Secretariat for Women [SEPREM] of Guatemala, June 2019).

A representative of the Office of the Public Prosecutor for Women noted:

“the VAWG phenomenon has not been addressed as a criminal phenomenon” (civil servant of the Office of the Public Prosecutor for Women of Guatemala, personal communication, June 2019).
As indicated in the previous section, certain security plans or policies in the countries of the subregion include certain data or specific analysis on some aspects of VAWG, especially sexual or domestic violence, which are identified in the policies on gender-based violence; although this is necessary, it is not enough to fully integrate the gender perspective and VAWG in public policy instruments and in the strategic planning processes that they involve.

The fact that these diagnoses are insufficient has important implications for understanding citizen security from a gender perspective, as well as for identifying specific problems of insecurity that women face. A number of different criminal phenomena still have not been analyzed from a gender perspective, while there is no significant deficit in understanding the effects of social dynamics associated with insecurity, organized crime, gangs, the emergence and diversification of crimes in the magnitude, characteristics and dynamics of VAWG. As stated by a Salvadoran civil servant:

“there has been no progress in understanding the link between gender-based violence and social violence” (civil servant at the Ministry of the Economy of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).

or, the link between VAWG that takes place in public, and street sales of drugs; or the particular characteristics of domestic violence against women whose partners are men involved in the gangs or in organized crime, and the challenges of addressing this; also, challenges in providing care and access to justice for women victims of violence in places where there are high rates of criminal actions and impunity. These are some of the aspects that institutions in charge of public security need to start targeting with specific analysis that will enable them to trace better strategic plans for response.

According to the research and respondent testimony, these are some of the factors that hinder institutionalizing this practice:

a. The lack of regulations that directly mandate institutions that are sources for information in terms of regularly producing gender-sensitive statistics on violence and insecurity — except in the case of El Salvador—. “There are no regulations on how to incorporate the gender perspective when generating information” (civil servant at the office of the Public Prosecutor for Women of the AGO of Guatemala, personal communication, May 2019).

For instance, there is the way certain expressions of sexual violence against women is tied to the presence of organized crime and gangs in the communities;
b. There is little standardization, homologation and reconciliation of the data produced by the institutions in charge of citizen security. “There are no unique data records” (civil servant of the Costa Rican Violence Observatory, personal communication, May 2019).

c. There is insufficient disaggregation of administrative records into relevant variables to be able to carry out gender and intersectional analysis; for example: Data on people’s indigenous background, or disability, the relationship between perpetrator and victim, times and places of occurrence, and other relevant variables.

d. Prioritization of certain issues that are the object of attention of citizen security policies, such as homicides, robberies, and others, which requires running gender-sensitive analytical diagnostics, is seen very little. “Until now, the traditional issues of public safety are seen: gangs, drug trafficking, homicides... Femicide has barely been made visible” (civil servant in the PNC of El Salvador, May 2019).

e. Lack of sufficient financial and human resources, both for the generation of information and for its analysis. “The law says they have more funds to generate that information, but they don’t give them to them. This is added (to the fact) that they haven’t got enough staff” (civil servant at the Guatemalan National Statistics Institute, personal communication, June 2019).

f. There are insufficient surveys and qualitative studies to supplement the information gleaned from administrative records. Currently only El Salvador has a national survey on VAWG. “The information is basically taken from administrative records” (civil servant at the SEPREM of Guatemala, personal communication, June 2019).

g. There is no continuity and diagnostic investigations are not prepared in a systematic way. “A diagnostic study was done in preparation for the Institutional Policy for Equality and Non-Discrimination in 2017. However, I consider that diagnostics should be run annually, this is not done frequently for lack of funding” (civil servant at the Public Defender of the Republic of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).
The insufficient assessment, added to the way that national security policies and plans incorporate the gender perspective and VAWG in their national policies, as described in the previous section, sets off a series of effects that limit the governments’ capacity to conduct strategic planning to respond to VAWG; because strategic plans, and operational programs, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies are based on policy design, so strategic planning reproduces the trends and the policy gaps already mentioned:

- the set of objectives, strategies, actions, indicators and goals lack a gender focus;
- the strategies aimed at providing care for women are limited to certain specific actions that primarily deal with VAWG crimes that are addressed in a traditional way, or included in providing care for “vulnerable” groups;
- there is a dearth of specific strategies to respond to particular issues in the lack of security for women and girls, and that are linked to contexts where there is social violence, organized crime or insecurity.

Within this general framework, it is important to note the differences between countries. Some police institutions in the subregion have shown progress in the inclusion of certain favorable contents, as is the case of the PNC of GUATEMALA, where the normative framework of its 2016-2020 institutional strategic plan incorporated some CEDAW mandates on VAWG, indicators disaggregated by sex, as well as strategies to label budgets, strengthen gender units in the gender approach; or the case of EL SALVADOR whose 2015-2019 Institutional Strategic Plan integrated an operational action to “implement the institutional policy for gender equity and equality” (National Civil Police [PNC], 2015, p. 39), which is certainly an important step forward.

Regarding the justice enforcement institutions or attorneys general, some of the strategic plans of the countries in the subregion exhibit favorable content, as is the cases of El Salvador, with the Institutional Strategic Plan 2015-2019 of the MJSP, and in Guatemala, with the AG’s Strategic Plan 2015-2019.

In the first case, what is noteworthy is the inclusion of actions for providing care to women victims of violence and human trafficking, as well as regional coordination to combat criminal structures, including the fight against crimes such as violence against women and human trafficking.
In the second, it is noteworthy that there are actions to strengthen strategic criminal prosecution of offenses against women, particularly in cases that involve criminal organizations, as well as the increase of technical capacities to investigate offenses like human trafficking, sexual violence, femicide and other forms of VAWG.

In addition, some plans include institutional actions to provide training to their staff on gender and human rights. Table 1 presents the gender-sensitive and VAWG content in the strategic plans for citizen security in 6 countries.

### Table 1

**Gender-sensitive and VAWG content in strategic planning at institutions responsible for citizen security in 6 countries in the region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name of the law</th>
<th>VAWG content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Strategic Plan for National Security 2016-2020,</td>
<td>There is no content in this regard.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security White Paper by the National Security Council</td>
<td>There is no content in this regard.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Civil Police 2016-2020 Strategic Plan</td>
<td>Strategy:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Implement the gender budget classifier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Contribute to the strengthening the Gender, Multiculturalism, Youth and Children Unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Strengthen the General Directorates in matters of - and approaches to gender, multiculturalism, youth and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td><strong>Name of the law</strong></td>
<td><strong>VAWG content</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Guatemala  | Strategic Plan of the Public Ministry of Guatemala 2015-2019 | General Policy of Attention to Victims  
  - Specializes in addressing needs of victims according to types of victims and crimes, with special emphasis on groups of people with specialized care needs: Women in gender crimes, indigenous peoples, children and LGBT.  
  - Population groups with specific requirements  
    - Women  
      - Strengthen, through a specialization policy, strategic criminal prosecution of crimes against women, particularly those that involve criminal organizations.  
      - Increase technical capacities to investigate crimes of human trafficking.  
      - Increase technical capacities to investigate crimes of sexual violence.  
      - Increase technical capacities to investigate crimes of femicide and other forms of VAW. |
|           | National Security Policy 2017 and National Security Council | Guiding principles:  
  - Gender equity  
  Within the framework of National Security, institutions commit to women’s full and equal participation in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in the efforts to maintain and promote security and peace. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name of the law</th>
<th>VAWG content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>2017 Institutional Annual Work Plan</td>
<td>Specific strategies and actions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ E.3.3.1. Strengthen inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination and action to deliver care to victims and people who have witnessed violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ E.3.3.2. Encourage the development of capacities and resources of institutions that provide specialized services to children and adolescents, women, older adults and people with disabilities who are victims of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ E.3.3.3. Encourage the review and strengthening of the protection regime for victims and witnesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ E.3.5. Strengthen capabilities in the institutions in charge of security and justice, and encourage coordination at an inter-institutional and regional level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ E.3.5.6. Strengthen and expand Central American and regional coordination mechanisms to combat criminal structures, which includes combating crimes such as violence against women and human trafficking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Comprehensive Policy for Coexistence and Citizen Security, 2011-2022</td>
<td>There is no content in this regard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretariat of Security</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governmental Strategic Plan 2018-2022</td>
<td>2.3 Strengthen municipal authorities and local networks, as a strategy to reduce violence against women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government of the Republic of Honduras</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015-2020 Strategic Plan Public Ministry Office Republic of HONDURAS</td>
<td>There is no content in this regard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Name of the law</td>
<td>VAWG content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>2019-2023 Institutional Strategic Plan</td>
<td>There is no content in this regard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Public Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>2017-2020 Institutional Strategic Plan</td>
<td>▶ Line of action 1.2.2. Ensure proper coordination and articulation between specialized institutions, community organizations and the population in general, in the design and execution of policies for the prevention, surveillance and prosecution of minor crime, major crime, and citizen violence, including gender-based violence and violence against children and adolescents, in order to build safe communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of the Interior and Police</td>
<td>▶ Line of action 1.2.2.4. Strengthen the institutional and regulatory framework to control practices that lead to crime and violence, particularly gender-based violence and violence against children and adolescents, such as the use of weapons, drugs and gambling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Belize           | 2017-2020 Strategy for National Security and Defense   | Strategic concepts  
2. Reduce local and transnational crime  
Strategic objective 1. Protect Belizeans from harm, violence, and exploitation by transnational criminal networks. Our priority is the safety and prosperity of Belizean citizens. We will focus on the networks that pose the most serious threat to the safety and protection of citizens, including those that traffic illicit drugs, weapons and people, especially women and children. |
|                  | Ministry of National Security                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on the contents of the strategic plans of each country

Despite these positive aspects, it is important to point out the need to deepen the inclusion of the gender approach in the central body of the strategic plans of citizen security institutions, for instance:
indicators disaggregated by sex, with actions for mainstreaming gender and the intersectional approach in the different institutional areas, providing gender-training for personnel and the inclusion of strategies or specific actions aimed at addressing important aspects for the safety of women — such as femicide/feminicide risk assessment, protective measures for women victims of violence, or attention and investigation into the disappearances of women, among others—.

3.2 Scope and challenges of including the gender and VAWG in monitoring and evaluating citizen security plans and policies

An important step forward in the inclusion of gender and VAWG in monitoring and evaluating citizen security plans and policies is that most institutions responsible for this matter currently have mechanisms to report advances and challenges in the response to VAWG, as shown in different countries responses when asked about this matter (See Graph 1).

These mechanisms are based on indicators that are regularly reported to different institutions, such as national systems, subsystems or inter-institutional commissions in charge of monitoring the response of the States to the phenomenon. However, not all institutions have such mechanisms, especially with regard to evaluations. Furthermore, in conducting them, institutions run into financial obstacles and shortcomings in their capacities.

**Graph 1**

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

*Does the institution have monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that contribute to understanding the progress and challenges in responding to violence against women and girls?*

The progress made in the inclusion of VAWG in monitoring the institutions in charge of citizen security is due to the existence of national subsystems of information on VAWG that make it possible to enhance the indicators generated and reported on by public institutions. In most cases, these subsystems are regulated by laws that provide a legal basis for institutionalizing the data-generation process, in order to monitor State actions in matters of prevention, attention, punishment and eradication of the VAWG.

As Table 2 shows, in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua there are national VAWG information systems. In the case of Costa Rica, there is the Observatory of Violence, the agency of the Ministry of Justice and Peace that gathers and systematizes the indicators on VAWG.
**Guatemala**

**Law:** Art. 20 Ley against el Femicide y Other Forms of violence against Women

**Information Subsystem:**
National Information System on Violence against Women

**Objective:**
- Generate indicators and statistical information on violence against women.

**Law:** Art. 18 Regulations for the Management of Courts and Tribunals with Competence in Crimes of Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura

**Nicaragua**

**Law:** Art. 52 Comprehensive Law against Violence against Women and Reforms to Law No. 641 of the Penal code

**Information Subsystem:**
Statistical information system to monitor and follow up on the behavior of statistics on violence against women

**Objective:**
- Monitor and follow up on the behavior of statistics on violence against women

**Panama**

**Law:** Art. 31 Law 82 adopting measures to prevent violence against women, and reforms the Penal Code to classify Femicide

**Information Subsystem:**
Computerized Registry of Aggressors and Disaggregated Statistics

**Objective:**
- Process queries from institutions directly involved in detecting, providing care, investigating and legal prosecuting violence against women

**Honduras**

**Law:** Art. 20-A15 Law against Domestic Violence

**Information Subsystem:**
Without its own name, it only refers to a measurement and monitoring instrument designed and provided by the National Women’s Institute

**Objective:**
- Establish the rate of domestic violence against women in society; evaluate the results of the Law against Domestic Violence and standardize statistical control.
An important improvement is that most of the information generated by institutions responsible for citizen security is disaggregated by sex. The following priorities should focus on disaggregating other relevant variables to improve the understanding of the characteristics of crimes and violent acts, and of the different people who participate in them (for more details on the quality of the data, see section 4.3). A civil servant from SEPREM stated the following:

**Disaggregation:** Sex, ethnicity, disability, place, event, marital status, victim-offender relationship.

The guideline is in place, the computer system is in place, the monitoring by the INE is already in place, but there are many institutions that do not enter these variables, or do not have the conditions to capture that information. A key issue is that there is no political will on the one hand, and on the other, the work overload of the State operators. (Civil servant at the SEPREM of Guatemala, personal communication, June 2019).

Information disaggregated by sex does not come from the judiciary. (Civil servant of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Honduras, personal communication, June 2019).

The lack of disaggregated, consistent data describing the characteristics and dynamics of violence and insecurity faced by women and girls who are served by citizen security institutions represents a barrier to performing evaluations to learn about both institution performance and policy impacts on the evolution of the problem. This deficiency is illustrated in the responses to the question presented in Graph 2.

**Graph 2**

Disaggregated data reported by Institutions in charge of citizen security

Does the institution record and report on its actions or services, providing data that is disaggregated by sex and any other sociodemographic and territorial variables?

11 YES 3 NO


There are important areas of opportunity for the inclusion of the gender and VAWG in the public security institutions’ mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. For example, incorporating sex-disaggregated indicators in the strategic plans of institutions engaged in citizen security, as well as variables, such as age and ethnic condition, and others, for more specific monitoring by population group. Also, include indicators on security and violence issues that affect women, particularly in domains for which there is little information, such as insecurity in public spaces. Similarly, strengthen the gender-sensitive evaluation with the results, effects and impacts of security policies in VAWG.
4.1 Gender offices or units in the institutions responsible for enforcing policies on VAWG

An important aspect to promote, guide and monitor gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of VAWG in public institutions linked to or responsible for citizen security is that each gender unit or mechanism requires to be **staffed with trained and sufficient personnel who have the appropriate tools, resources, hierarchy and attributions to effectively influence mainstreaming processes.**
As Table 3 shows, important progress has been made in the creation of gender units in the Ministries of Security, police, public defender’s office or the Public Ministries of El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala. Similarly, there are gender departments or units in the offices or institutions responsible for generating statistics in these countries.

The existence of these departments has led to significant progress in fostering conditions to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the institutions in charge of citizen security, for instance creating the conditions for equality and wellbeing of individuals — particularly women — working at these units that are historically male-dominated; or — in some cases, like El Salvador or Guatemala — to effectively influence the objectives, operational processes and staff training, in order to create services and provide care that are effective responses to women’s and girls’ needs in terms of security.

**Table 3**

**Gender units at institutions in charge of citizen security**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unit type</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministries of Security and Police</td>
<td>Public Ministry and Judiciary</td>
<td>Statistics Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Yes. Internal and external scope</td>
<td>Yes. Internal and external scope</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Yes. Internal scope</td>
<td>Yes. Internal and external scope</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the following examples show, where gender units have sufficient weight to influence the organizational and public policy spheres of citizen security institutions, important achievements have been made in mainstreaming gender and responding to VAWG, consequently strengthening the gender units is highly recommended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unit type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministries of Security and Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Yes. Internal scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND = No data available.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura, based on information provided by officials at public institutions, personal communications, June 2019

As the following examples show, where gender units have sufficient weight to influence the organizational and public policy spheres of citizen security institutions, important achievements have been made in mainstreaming gender and responding to VAWG, consequently strengthening the gender units is highly recommended.

**The case of EL SALVADOR is worth noting**, since the gender units have attributions that enable them to influence both the organization internally, advancing the conditions of equality for the people who work there, and influencing the external sphere, that is, the policies, actions or services they provide to citizens.

- The Ministry of Justice has provided the different units in its agencies with a working group, where they coordinate efforts to respond to VAWG (police, migration, justice, penitentiary centers, etc.).
- The Gender Unit in the PNC in El Salvador provides police officers with basic gender training.
- The Public Prosecutor’s Office has specialized care units for women.
- The femicide/feminicide protocol has been created and it is applied to all violent deaths of women.

In El Salvador, the Executive Branch agencies have gender units working on programs to promote actions to combat VAWG, both internally and in their substantive work, which has made the following significant achievements possible:
As for COSTA RICA, the Ministry of Public Security gender unit is empowered to act specifically in the internal sphere, where its influence resulted in the establishment of better conditions of labor equality, the realization of specific prevention and care actions to counter intimidation and sexual harassment among institution staff, the incorporation of inclusive language, the furtherance of conditions for conciliation and the establishment of joint responsibility between men and women in the area of care, among others (civil servant of the Ministry of Public Security of Costa Rica, personal communication, May 2019). Nevertheless, there is a striking restriction on this unit’s capacity to influence the substantive work of the institution, specifically, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

As already mentioned, the gender approach offers elements to deepen the understanding of the dynamics, expressions, causes and effects of violence, since it integrates gender as a factor in explaining people’s social and individual behavior.

With the exceptions of Costa Rica and El Salvador, there are still no permanent education and training programs in citizen security instances for staff to learn and apply gender and VAWG concepts, tools and regulations. As shown in table 3, some institutions carry out specific training activities for specific groups of staff, especially through gender units or in collaboration with women’s ministries or civil society organizations. A recurring theme in these training processes is gender awareness and sexual harassment and intimidation, in the context of the institutions’ actions for the prevention of sexual violence.

In the countries under study, most of the training efforts to incorporate gender in the substantive work of the institutions are directed at the personnel directly involved in dealing with cases of gender-based violence against women and girls (such as special office of the public prosecutor, medical personnel, specialized experts, police officers in charge of handling these cases). This practice is very important because it allows for the personnel directly responsible for the care of women victims of VAWG to acquire specialization.

4.2 Permanent gender and VAWG training and capacity building for staff at institutions engaged in citizen security

Ongoing gender and VAWG training and professional development processes are important to strengthen the work of prevention, providing care and repairing the harm that is caused by institutions responsible for citizen security,
The sustainability of this effort will be considerably strengthened with more comprehensive gender training and inclusion in the institution as a whole, so that the responsibility of responding to VAWG issues is no longer relegated to only specialized women’s units.

As Table 4 shows, with the exception of the Ministry of Public Security of Costa Rica, there is no information on the percentage of institutional staff that is trained in gender. Therefore, both the training and the strengthening of the mechanisms for verifying continuous and specialized gender training for the personnel of citizen security institutions are important challenges that need to be addressed.

It is essential to provide the majority of the personnel of the institutions responsible for public security with the conceptual and technical tools necessary to serve women and girls who are victims of crime and insecurity, in accordance with their rights and understanding the disadvantages and inequalities that they face.

Similarly, it is crucial for the staff to understand criminal phenomena from a more comprehensive perspective, encompassing the gender aspects involved. In practice, the lack of institutionalized, continuous and systematic training on issues of equality, gender overall, and gender perspectives in citizen security, makes it more difficult for mid- and senior level managers to deal with the patriarchal culture — characteristic of these institutions, and individual resistance — in order to position gender and VAWG as issues of relevance.

A notable case is that of the police in El Salvador, with its annual staff awareness-raising program, and a series of specialized courses, such as the Police Trainers Course on Gender Equity and Equality, the Course on Gender in the Administrative and Budgetary Management of the Police, and the Course on Gender in Police Work, among others.

These courses are intended to strengthen staff capacities to carry out their tasks, without discriminating by action or omission. The trainings are aimed at personnel from different areas of the police, thereby contributing to generating institutional capacities to make headway in gender mainstreaming.
Table 4
Gender and VAWG training and capacity building for staff at institutions engaged in citizen security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit type</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Guatemala</th>
<th>Costa Rica</th>
<th>The Dominican Republic</th>
<th>El Salvador</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statistics</strong></td>
<td>Permanent training on matters of gender and VAWG</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training is sporadic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participating unit areas or staff</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of staff with gender training</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police or Public Security</strong></td>
<td>Permanent training on matters of gender and VAWG</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training is ongoing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training is sporadic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Train on taking action against domestic violence, and awareness raising, and training for cases of intimidation and sexual harassment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness raising sessions are held annually and so are specialized gender mainstreaming courses for different police roles and investigative work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit type</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police or Public Security</td>
<td>Participating unit areas or staff</td>
<td>Staff from national delegations, staff from citizen service offices and staff from the Comprehensive Community Security Police Model (MOPSIC).</td>
<td>Personnel of the Public Force (police) and the Police School.</td>
<td>Public officials.</td>
<td>Members of the institution from the following areas: Public security, investigations, police intelligence, specialized areas, administration, women’s services, prevention and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of the institutional staff who are trained in gender</td>
<td>According to information provided by the police, study programs are designed to provide 100% coverage of career police personnel.</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4,481 men and 1,349 women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial Branch</td>
<td>Permanent training on matters of gender and VAWG</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes. Courses about the administration of legal instruments regarding VAWG. Awareness and training courses on VAWG.</td>
<td>Instructional curriculum for judges that specialize in Life Free from Violence for Women.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit type</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Continued) Judicial Branch</td>
<td>Participating unit areas or staff</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Public officials.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of the institutional staff who are trained in gender</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministries of Justice</td>
<td>Permanent training on matters of gender and VAWG</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes. Awareness raising and training about intimidation and sexual harassment, VAWG and masculinities.</td>
<td>Yes. Permanent program for strengthening internal capacities.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participating unit areas or staff</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Public officials.</td>
<td>Public prosecutors and staff specifically in charge of female victims or male aggressors.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of staff with gender training</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ND = No data available.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on answers provided by respondents at the public institutions consulted, personal communication, June 2019
4.3 Capacities to generate, analyze and use data about VAWG

4.3.1 Data generation

The generation of robust information on violence that affects women and girls has undergone significant advances in recent years in the subregion. Although, so far, decision-making for public policies depends to a large extent on the institutions’ own administrative records, such as the national police, the office of the public prosecutor, or the attorney general, and the judiciary. Despite being key sources of information, records are likewise insufficient in public-policy making, because they respond to the specific competencies of each institution in terms of services and care provided, but do not measure the prevalence of the problem (Essayag, 2017). In general, these institutions keep records of complaints and data on the institutional response to the cases like prosecutions, sentencing results, and dismissals.

One of the main challenges when only using reports of complaints to guide decision-making is that they constitute only an approximation of the incidence of the phenomenon, because not all acts of violence are reported to the authorities, whether they have occurred in private, or in the public spheres. The difference between actual incidents and the number of complaints filed is known as the “hidden figure,” this happens for various reasons, such as fear of re-victimization, fear of stigmatization, and mistrust of institutions; these aspects play a preponderant role, and compounding this is the fact that not all violent acts are currently classified as crimes.

For instance, estimates indicate that in El Salvador the number of women who reported having been a victim of some type of violence at some point in their life was 1,790,440. However, only 549 (0.03%) filed a complaint with the authorities (Directorate General of Statistics and Censuses [DIGESTYC], 2018). Other public entities also record VAWG indicators, such as the Ministries of Health and the national institutes responsible for the protection of children and adolescents, or of women. Some of these institutions conduct surveys and have their own information systems. However, the data they collect does not provide a complete and comprehensive view of the phenomenon, neither is it enough to propose policies, because their statistics are usually restricted to the services they provide; health surveys record characteristics of women treated in the system for beatings, injuries, rape and other forms of violence, while the institutes for the protection of children or women record those that have to do with girls, adolescents or women who come to their services when subjected to threats, mistreatment or violations of their rights. But there is an unknown number of women who face violence and do not go to any institution for help.
In this context, it is evident that one of complex issues in keeping records on VAWG through administrative channels is that information is fragmented, and it is limited to the data of women who have reached out to an institution.

Likewise, in the absence of an integrated system, the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic have before them an arsenal of data spread out across different institutions, that do not necessarily present a picture of the true magnitude of the phenomenon:

Given that the available information is restricted in multiple ways, the countries of the region have embarked on an important path towards improving the collection of statistical data on the issue in recent years (see table 5). Efforts range from the creation of observatories to monitor citizen security, gender and violence, and other issues at the national and local level, to conducting institutional surveys of violence against women, or the inclusion of specific modules on VAWG in institutional service surveys, like victimization surveys, for instance.

One of the countries that has made the most progress in this regard is El Salvador. Currently, government institutions and civil society actors have developed multiple information gathering tools. An outstanding development in this nation is the design and administration of the National Survey of Violence against Women by DIGESTYC, in coordination with the Ministry of Justice’s Office for Information and Analysis (DIA Spanish acronym). This effort has been possible thanks to the earmarked funds in the budget to ensure the continuity of the survey.

As shown in table 5, there are different tools and mechanisms for the production and integration of information on VAWG.

In addition, the problem with statistics provided by the social services is further compounded when there are none, or when authorities and societies are insensitive to VAWG:

In order to enhance data collection in this domain, there needs to be a parallel improvement of the quantity and quality of services for victims/survivors of violence, and efforts to reduce the stigma and discrimination to which they are subjected. (United Nations, 2006, p. 79).

In EL SALVADOR, there is the DIGESTYC Gender Statistics Observatory (OEG) and the Latin American Observatory on Trafficking and Trafficking in Persons, El Salvador Chapter hosted by the University Human Rights Institute (IDHUCA Spanish acronym).
For their part, authorities in Belize and the Dominican Republic have directed efforts towards the construction of national level citizen security observatories.

In the case of Honduras, there is the Violence Observatory of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH), covering 30 municipalities across the country, and promoted by academia; there is also a commitment by the INE to collect data on intrafamily violence, as part of the 2019 National Demographic and Health Survey (ENDESA Spanish acronym).

In the cases of Guatemala and Costa Rica, progress is also evident, notably the creation of the National Information System on Violence against Women (SNIVCM) promoted by the National Statistics Institute (INE) and the Unified System of Statistical Measurement of Gender-Based Violence (SUMEVIG), respectively. Although, in both cases, it should be noted that the integrated information comes from administrative records, as there is currently no specialized national survey on VAWG to generate more precise data about the real dimension of the problem.

It is worth mentioning that the Dominican Republic carried out a process to administer the Experimental Survey on the Situation of Women (ENESIM-2018).

### Table 5

Data gathering instruments focusing specifically on violence against women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>National Safety Council</td>
<td>Belize Crime Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>INAMU</td>
<td>Unified System of Statistical Measurement of Gender-Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(SUMEVIG Spanish acronym)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Justice and Peace</td>
<td>Observatory of Gender-Based Violence at the Violence Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Judicial Branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>MJSP, DIA, DIGESTYC</td>
<td>National System of Data, Statistics and Information on Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MJSP, DIA, DIGESTYC</td>
<td>Gender Statistics Observatory (funding earmarked for the creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of the Gender Unit in DIGESTYC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MJSP, DIA, DIGESTYC</td>
<td>National Survey on Violence against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ISDEMU</td>
<td>Report on the Situation of Violence against Women in El Salvador</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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38 This includes acts of violence carried out in the home, perpetrated by any member(s) of the family.
Despite significant progress, the countries still face the challenge of producing data that presents the real magnitude of the issue, such as behavior of certain types of violence or having to do with insecurity and social violence that affect women and girls differently because of gender issues, particularly at a young age. Such is the case with human trafficking and smuggling, violence in contexts of migration, high crime and the presence of gangs or organized crime, violence against women human rights defenders, forced displacement, disappearances of women, etc. The scarce data that is available on these issues, are generally collected by the news media, academia, non-governmental organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>ORMUSA</td>
<td>Observatory on Gender-Based Violence against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City Hall of Santa Tecla</td>
<td>Municipal Observatory for the Prevention of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Association of Women for Dignity and Life</td>
<td>Feminist Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDHUCA</td>
<td>Latin American Observatory on Human Trafficking and Smuggling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>INE</td>
<td>National Information System on Violence against Women (SNIVCM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Ministry</td>
<td>Women’s Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>INE</td>
<td>Registries for information on violence against women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNAH</td>
<td>The Violence Observatory at the National Autonomous University of Honduras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>Ministry of the Interior and Police</td>
<td>Observatory Citizen Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judicial Branch</td>
<td>Observatory of Justice and Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on Umana (2017) and personal communication with official sources.
It is also important to promote the use of specialized surveys to measure VAWG, since it is the most effective and reliable method for measuring the issue. As Table 5 shows, only El Salvador has a survey of this type, while Guatemala and the Dominican Republic have begun with the preparatory tasks to carry out such a survey. This may be due to the high cost of these surveys, to the limited understanding of the relevance of the issue; the National Statistical Institutes need to include, among their main functions, the development of tools of this type or, instead, incorporate modules that address the topic in existing surveys (Essayag, 2017).

4.3.2 The great challenge: Going from telling to understanding

Central America and the Dominican Republic have taken significant steps toward designing quantitative tools to measure violence against women. These have been used to gather more information and measure the pervasiveness of the problem, although there are still significant shortfalls. However, the challenge nowadays is not only to generate sufficient information but also to better understand the problem, discover how women experience violence, the context in which it occurs, the links between certain expressions of violence against women and other types of social violence, and the obstacles faced by victims or their families when trying to access justice.

The challenge is further complicated by the wide differences between the countries in terms of the frequency and methodology in calculating their indicators, as well as in terms of the presentation and quality of the data reported. For example, there are countries that record some relevant data on the place of occurrence of crimes, or on the relationship between victims and perpetrators, but others have yet to do so, as can be seen in Chapter 2 of this report.

Along these lines, one of the main barriers in the study of the problem of violence against women and girls in the region has been the registry of femicides/feminicides. There are important differences among the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic in the ways in which these offenses are recorded, due to the different ways of classifying offenses on the one hand, and, on the other, to the methodology used to produce statistics, making it complicated to compare data from the different countries, and consolidating regional data.
El Salvador refers to “feminicide,” while Costa Rica calls it “femicide” and makes a distinction between “legal femicide” and “expanded femicide” when reporting statistics.

The former is typified in the Law Criminalizing Violence against Women Article 21, punishing the death of a woman at the hands of the current spouse or partner, while the second covers the murders of women because of their gender, occurring in dating relationships, after a divorce, after the termination of a de facto union, those that occur in the public sphere, and those that result from sexual assault, among others (Judiciary, 2018).

For its part, Belize still has no definition of the crime of femicide/feminicide.

As for keeping regional statistics of cases, the problem is the variety of methodologies used in the different countries to account for the number of femicides/feminicides.

For instance, in the case of Costa Rica, there are two figures, one for legal femicide generated by the Judicial Branch that is based on the sentencing records of femicide, and there is the expanded femicide data that is the result of analysis carried out at an inter-institutional board that sees all cases of violent deaths of women and determines whether they meet the characteristics defined in the conceptualization of femicide from a more sociological point of view, that is, not the criteria established in the law where it is circumscribed to the sphere of the couple, but based on the theoretical concept of femicide. As a result of inter-institutional agreements, both sets of data are official.

In El Salvador, official statistical data on femicide is the result of inter-institutional work between the General Prosecutor, the police and Legal Medicine, with analysis of data on violent deaths of women provided by these three institutions, then it is classified and consolidated, in such a way that it is not judicial data recorded in a specific administrative record, but rather inter-institutional data agreed to by consensus.

For its part, in Guatemala there are two sets of data, one provided by the Public Ministry based on the case number recorded in the file, and the data set generated with the Judicial Branch’s records of actual sentences.

The primary challenge in comparing and integrating data on femicide/feminicide in the region is that there are a great many definitions of this offense in legal instruments. Added to this, multiple institutions capture and measure the data, and go about this using very dissimilar criteria (the factors that determine the behaviors or circumstances that qualify the criminal offense as femicide/feminicide differ between countries). In this sense, a first major challenge, among others, is to reach a consensus on the definition of the crime of femicide/feminicide, so that the official figures can be compared.
In the context of each of the countries, an important challenge is consolidating the data on femicide/feminicide because an offense can be typified in different variations — starting with the moment the case is registered by the police, it is subsequently registered in the investigation file by the Public Ministry, and then it is registered in the processing and conclusion of the judicial process in the administration of justice — so that the same case can be reclassified during any of these stages, and the data are not consolidated, which could clarify the exact number of femicides or femicides there are in the countries.

Relevant variables are missing, such as: the place and conditions of occurrence, the relationship between victim and perpetrator, history of violence and the sociodemographic profile of the victim and perpetrator, among others; this is also hinders the production of robust statistics on femicide/feminicide in each of the countries studied.

Similarly, another drawback arises in the processes of registration, investigation and classification of violent deaths of women, because when protocols or judicial investigations are not carried out correctly, the crime can be classified inadequately, resulting in a actual underreporting of the problem.

In addition to the difficulties in generating data on femicide/feminicide, institutions in the Central American region and Dominican Republic recognize another cross-cutting challenge in the management of information in security, and that is the lack of data disaggregation. Although the countries present a global figure that reflects the number of victims or the number of complaints for almost all crimes, it is common to find that it does not delve into certain categories, such as: The circumstances of the crime, the place of occurrence, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator(s), victim occupation, or even the sex of the victim and the aggressor. Insufficient knowledge about these details hinders criminal investigation, with the resulting increase in the rates of impunity, and making it difficult to characterize the dynamics of gender-based violence.

This is consistent with assessments by experts such as Julia Monarrez, who states:

> The analysis of femicide may present some problems in relation to obtaining the data. The drawbacks include the exact number of murdered women is unknown, the causes or motives that led to such deaths are undetermined, and the statistics are unreliable. This is so, because statistics fail to record the motive, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, or the different types of violence suffered by the women before being murdered, as well as their address or the place where the body was found. Faced with this situation, there is a need to find alternative methods, in order to more precisely understand femicide. (Atencio, 2011).
One of the crimes with the greatest gaps in this regard is **sexual crimes**.

In the **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**, for example, the data series provided by the Office of the Public Defender of the Republic do not include the sex of the victims.

**IN HONDURAS**, the data generated by the Technical Inter-Institutional Coordination Unit (UTECI) observatories are limited to 30 municipalities, making it impossible to run a comparative analysis of the magnitude or evolution of this crime in men and women over any given period. Neither is it feasible to know whether there has been progress or setbacks in eradicating VAWG.

As for **BELIZE**, it is striking that the Police Department files do not include cases of sexual violence against men. While there may be none, this is unlikely. Instead, this gap is may be the product of the limited institutional capacity to register an underreported crime, due to the stigma and discrimination suffered by its victims; or, of the inadequate institutional sensitivity to recognize these violations, given their low incidence as compared to the cases of women, or with other crimes that affect men to a greater extent, such as murders.

Therefore, the production of disaggregated information is particularly relevant in a gender-sensitive study of violence that affects women, as it allows for more precise formulation of hypotheses about the causes, effects and dynamics of the problem, and constitutes key evidence in case investigation. In this sense, it is imperative to record a series of characteristics about the victims, the perpetrators, the crimes and the institutional performance on the subject, as proposed in Box 2.
Some countries in this study have not yet broken down the available information by territorial and temporal variables that would help contextualize the crime, that is, by department, province, place of occurrence, date and time. Clear examples of this are femicides/femicides in Costa Rica and Honduras, where no evidence was found to determine whether these crimes predominantly occur in public spaces such as the street, school, work, a shopping center, etc., or in private spaces such as a home, an apartment, or a hotel room.

In the countries under study, most of the statistics on gender-based violence against women focus on violence that occurs in the private sphere, since several typify the crime of domestic or intra-family violence, but it is relevant that there are statistics on gender-based violence faced by women in other areas such as school, work or public spaces.

Administrative records also show inconsistencies and numerous “undetermined” cases. These vary from country to country, however, they tend to be excessively high in the case of sexual offenses, especially in terms of the relationship between the victim and the aggressor. One possible cause may be the fact that the victims refuse to share this information with the authorities for fear of being subjected to re-victimization, since what little evidence is available reveals that this type of violence is carried out by people close to them. Another reason could be that the people who record the primary information limit themselves to noting the information they consider essential for the submitting the complaint, and fail to complete all the variables considered.

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**Box 2**

**Data required in disaggregated information records**

**Regarding the victims:**
Sex, age, ethnicity, educational level, occupation, marital status, relationship with the perpetrator, socioeconomic status, nationality, history of violence, etc.

**Regarding the perpetrators:**
Sex, age, ethnicity, educational level, occupation, marital status, relationship with the victim, socioeconomic status, nationality, criminal record, ties to criminal organizations, complicity of others in committing the offense, etc.

**Regarding the offenses:**
Place of occurrence, department/municipality/province of occurrence, area of occurrence (urban/rural), weapon or method used to perpetrate the crime, date of occurrence, time of occurrence, motive or circumstance, etc.

**Regarding institutional performance:**
Cases filed, cases typified (femicide/feminicide), dismissed cases, acquittals, sentences (conviction/absolution) and justification, the penalty, enforcement of the penalty, etc.

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39 Data is recorded as “not available” when correct information cannot be obtained.
On the other hand, some countries such as Honduras and Belize also present short time series and data is not updated to the most recent year. The lack of this information hinders analysis of trends that reveal the behavior of the problem and the impact of public interventions over time. As noted in previous sections, the lack of updated data also means that the planning of public policies and citizen security strategies lacks a strong foundation. In this regard, it is important to remember that among the factors that contribute to the lack of gender-sensitive information on security are institutional aspects in areas in charge of public security, such as: Little investment in the capacities of specialized human resources, high staff turnover, and the lack of a specific agenda to inform security statistics with a gender perspective.

In addition to the above situation, there is a lack of statistical information needed for evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness of State authorities’ actions in protection and administration of justice in cases of VAWG. For instance, there is a lack of data on requesting and granting protective measures for women victims of violence, and the link to reiterated complaints of violence, or subsequent femicides or femicides; also, in terms of the percentage of reported VAWG-related crimes that end in convictions, among other relevant data on the effectiveness of government actions.

In addition, the findings of this study point to the need to design new methods to be able to delve into the ways violence affects specific groups of women who are exposed to multiple vulnerabilities due to the discrimination or social exclusion to which they are subjected. This is the case of women with disabilities, indigenous women, poor women, adolescents and young women, lesbians and trans women, victims of trafficking and migrants, among others. In general, countries of the region seem to overlook the registration of physical limitations, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic conditions, and identity or sexual orientation of victims when preparing their files.

**Leaving out these identity factors and differentiating conditions, means there is no information to put in an intersectional lens to reveal different forms of discrimination and oppression that various groups of women are subjected to, which could help generate inclusive and focused policies that effectively contribute to the eradication of the problem.**

In summary, there have been substantial advances in the production of data and indicators on VAWG, as well as in the existence of inter-institutional mechanisms to integrate and monitor these data. However, it is highly recommended that the crime, victimization and violence statistics produced by citizen security institutions be strengthened, in order to understand the ways that women experience violence in the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic, and, consequently, how this should be incorporated in citizen security policies for a comprehensive and effective response.
4.3.3 Resources earmarked for VAWG in institutions responsible for citizen security policies

In the process of preparing this study, the different citizen security institutions in the countries of the region in this report were contacted. However, data obtained on the existence and number of resources that these institutions earmarked for the response to VAWG was insufficient. In the Dominican Republic, the PGR, the Ministry of the Interior, and the National Police reported that there are such resources, although not the amount. Likewise, the INE of Guatemala reported that it did have resources, but did not specify the total. As for the rest of the institutions, there is no information available.

In the interviews conducted as part of the study, respondents reiterated the point that citizen security institutions lacked sufficient resources to fully respond to VAWG and strengthen actions to mainstream gender. Some civil servants even pointed out that there are legal mandates for citizen security institutions to allocate funds in their budgets to respond to VAWG, but that this is not necessarily done:

- **The law already indicates the need for earmarked funding in the budget. The congress approved the resources, but the designated budget was not granted.** (Civil servant at the FGR of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).

- **More resources are needed to strengthen gender units.** (Civil servant at the Ministry of Justice of Costa Rica, personal communication, May 2019).

- **Resources are needed to carry out plans to address violence.** (Civil servant at the SEPREM of Guatemala, personal communication, June 2019).

- **Progress has been made in that the Defense and Public Security budget has funding that is earmarked to carry out activities on gender issues. But they don’t report using them. For example, Ciudad Mujer has several service modules, but the Institute is only responsible for 2 of them. The other 3 are not implemented, because the other institutions do not allocate resources.** (Civil servant at the National Women’s Institute [INAM] of Honduras, personal communication, June 2019).

Table 6 shows the information available in terms of resources that are earmarked for VAWG in the different budgets in each country.
## Table 6
Resources earmarked for VAWG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Ministries of Security and Police</th>
<th>Public Ministry and Judiciary</th>
<th>Statistics Offices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>El Salvador</strong></td>
<td>Availability of resources earmarked for actions to address VAW</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of resources earmarked in the budget over the last 5 years</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costa Rica</strong></td>
<td>Availability of resources earmarked for actions to address VAW</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of resources earmarked in the budget over the last 5 years</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guatemala</strong></td>
<td>Availability of resources earmarked for actions to address VAW</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Yes, very little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of resources earmarked in the budget over the last 5 years</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Dominican Republic</strong></td>
<td>Availability of resources earmarked for actions to address VAW</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of resources earmarked in the budget over the last 5 years</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = Data is not available
Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on personal communications with representatives those contacted

Although the agency has used resources to carry out surveys, there is no information available on the amounts allocated for these, or other activities.
In the interviews, several effects of the lack of earmarked funding were noted, some affecting the institutions’ ability to generate statistics and prepare analysis, because of limited capacity in recording disaggregated and specialized information. Others had to do directly with the capacity to respond to the needs of women victims, for example the need to set up protective measures in situations of risk; in these cases the measures are not applied for lack of sufficient personnel.

It is highly advisable for public security institutions to designate resources for a timely and effective response in cases of VAWG, and for the operation of monitoring and accountability mechanisms in executing those resources, in order to strengthen the work of the institutions in charge of citizen security as regards prevention, attention, punishment and reparation of damages of VAWG. One Salvadoran civil servant stated:

“the issues that come up for the police when addressing violence against women and providing support in cases that need protection, is the shortage of officers” (Civil servant at the FGR of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).

4.3.4 Inter-institutional coordination mechanisms in the citizen security sector and the approach to VAWG

Coordination between government institutions is essential for the achievement of better results in public policy implementation, since all the issues or public needs that the Government addresses are the result of the confluence of multiple social, economic, cultural, political and other factors that a single institution is unable to address on its own.

In the domain of VAWG, inter-institutional coordination is particularly necessary in providing a comprehensive response to the issue, because, as indicated in Chapter 1, it is complex, multi-causal and multifactoral, and effective response is only possible through the confluence of the institutions that are in charge of the different causes, manifestations and effects of the problem: Health, education, public security, law enforcement and administration, social development and economy, among others.

The institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women in the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic have, for the most part, formalized mechanisms to coordinate the response to VAWG. As Table 7 shows, in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Panama there are inter-institutional coordination mechanisms to address VAWG, responding to national legal mandates.
Table 7

Inter-institutional coordination mechanism to respond to VAWG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Mechanisms for the advancement of women (MAW)</th>
<th>Hierarchical order</th>
<th>Mechanism for inter-institutional coordination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>National Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Autonomous institution of public law with its own legal status and assets. Has ministerial rank</td>
<td>No inter-institutional coordination mechanism created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>National Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Office of the President of the Republic</td>
<td>High-Level Executive Commission (political)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Presidential Secretariat for Women</td>
<td>Office of the President of the Republic</td>
<td>National Coordinator for the Prevention of Intrafamily Violence and Violence against Women (CONAPREVI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women</td>
<td>Office of the President of the Republic</td>
<td>Specialized Technical Commission (STC) and Executive Technical Unit of the Justice sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>National Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Autonomous institution of public law with its own legal status and assets. Has ministerial rank</td>
<td>National System for the Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women and Intrafamily Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>Ministry of Women’s Affairs</td>
<td>Office of the President of the Republic</td>
<td>National Commission on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (CONAPLUVI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>National Women’s Institute</td>
<td>Decentralized entity under the Ministry of Social Development</td>
<td>National Committee against Violence against Women (CONVIMU)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on Essayag (2017) and information collected in the field in 2018
The information collected in the field shows that the inter-institutional coordination strategy to specifically promote the prevention, care, punishment or elimination of VAWG, in practice has focused more on operational coordination for the implementation of actions or procedures in which different institutions converge. An example of this is what is achieved through the implementation of protocols and models, or the enforcement of specific measures that involve more than one institution, such as protection and specialized comprehensive care measures. But this exercise shows there are significant areas of opportunity for it to become a strategic mechanism for planning, monitoring and evaluating national policies on VAWG.

The following comments shed light on some of the limitations pointed out by the respondents, including the following:

- **a.** Lack of consistency in holding meetings.
- **b.** Lack of attendance by Senior management or high-level civil servants.
- **c.** High turnover in meeting attendees.
- **d.** Inadequate positioning of VAWG issues in national agendas, resulting in a lack of political leverage for the women’s mechanisms, which are themselves the convening bodies.

*The Ministry of Security is the governing body on the matter. But there are other institutions that become involved in different areas and procedural moments, complicating the enforcement of gender principles for VAWG and for public security.* (Civil servant at the Ministry of Justice of Costa Rica, personal communication, May 2019).

*There is one coordinator with more of an operational role. There are no coordinators for planning actions.* (Civil servant at the Guatemalan PNC, personal communication, May 2019).

*In operational terms, there is coordination. There is the national referral network. Although there is operational level coordination, there is no strategic planning on VAWG.* (Civil servant at the AG of Guatemala, personal communication, June 2019).
In the same way, the citizen security sector has inter-institutional coordination mechanisms to address security issues in the countries, bringing together all the institutions involved in the matter, such as those of public security, law enforcement, the Judiciary and Government agencies, among others. In the countries analyzed, these mechanisms are embodied in the National Security Councils (Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic) or in the National Council for Citizen Security and Coexistence (El Salvador). These mechanisms constitute a strategic instrument for defining and monitoring national security policies and they deal with relevant issues of citizen security in the countries of the region, such as homicides, robberies, disappearances and organized crime, among others, monitoring and coordinating actions for its prevention and care.

Additionally, the citizen security institutions have other inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, of an operational nature, where coordination is the basis for implementing programs, models, protocols or specific response actions, based on the different agencies involved, and they interact to respond, within the framework of their attributions, to a specific process. Table 8 shows current operational mechanisms between the citizen security agencies to address VAWG in Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras; these countries that provided information in this regard. These mechanisms are the basis for the different government institutions to together to provide responses to women victims of violence.
## Table 8
### Coordination mechanisms to respond to VAWG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Participating Institutions</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costa Rica</strong></td>
<td>Local Committees for Immediate Care and Monitoring Cases of High-Risk Violence against Women (CLAIS Spanish acronym)</td>
<td>- National Women’s Institute&lt;br&gt;- Ministry of the Interior and Police&lt;br&gt;- Ministry of Public Security&lt;br&gt;- Ministry of Justice and Peace&lt;br&gt;- Judicial Branch</td>
<td>Provide an inter-institutional response for the immediate protection of women in high-risk situations and concurrently take actions to prevent femicide and attempts to commit it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreement to contribute to reduce impunity</td>
<td>- Judicial Branch&lt;br&gt;- National Women’s Institute&lt;br&gt;- Professional Association of Lawyers of Costa Rica</td>
<td>Facilitate greater and more effective access to justice for women who seek redress the criminal justice system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inter-institutional protocol for comprehensive care for victims of rape in the first 72 hours after the incident</td>
<td>- Ministry of Public Education&lt;br&gt;- Costa Rican Social Security Fund&lt;br&gt;- Ministry of Public Security&lt;br&gt;- Judicial Branch&lt;br&gt;- Public institutions that provide care services to minors, adolescents, youth and adults who have been victims of rape&lt;br&gt;- National Children’s Board&lt;br&gt;- National Women’s Institute&lt;br&gt;- Emergency 9-1-1</td>
<td>The objective is to provide interdisciplinary, comprehensive and timely care to victims of rape within the first 72 hours after an incident of sexual assault, to reduce the probability of HIV infection and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and revictimization, as well as obtaining legal evidence, guaranteeing the rights of the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk assessment intervention protocol for situations of violence against women</td>
<td>- Costa Rican Social Security Fund&lt;br&gt;- Ministry of Health&lt;br&gt;- Ministry of Public Security&lt;br&gt;- Judicial Branch&lt;br&gt;- National Children’s Board&lt;br&gt;- Ministry of Justice and Peace&lt;br&gt;- Municipal women’s offices</td>
<td>This protocol enables the provision of timely care for women whose life is at risk. The risk is determined by administering an instrument with risk indicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive Health Care Model for Victims of Sexual Violence</td>
<td>- Ministry of Health&lt;br&gt;- Costa Rican Social Security Fund</td>
<td>This model provides counseling for women to address the issue of sexual violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Mechanism</td>
<td>Participating Institutions</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| El Salvador    | Ministry of Justice Specialized Technical Commission on Gender            | ▶ Secretariat of Social Inclusion  
▶ National Civil Police  
▶ National Public Security Academy  
▶ Inspectorate-General of Public Security  
▶ General Directorship for Immigration and Foreigners  
▶ General Directorate of Penal Centers | A priority issue is law enforcement: The Special Comprehensive Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free from Violence for Women (LEIV) and its policy; Law of Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination against Women (LIE). |
|                | Ciudad Mujer (one stop health, legal, job and other govt. services for women) | Violence Prevention and Attention Module:  
▶ Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women  
▶ National Civil Police  
▶ Prosecutor General of the Republic  
▶ Legal Medicine Institute  
▶ Public Defender of the Republic  
▶ Secretariat of Culture | Contribute to improving the living conditions of Salvadoran women, by providing services that satisfy their basic needs and strategic interests. |
|                |                                                                           | Economic Self-Reliance Module:  
▶ National Commission for Micro and Small Business  
▶ Salvadoran Institute for Professional Training  
▶ Solidarity Fund for Families Microenterprise  
▶ Agricultural Development Bank  
▶ Ministry of Labor and Social Provision  
▶ National Registry of Persons Consumer Advocate  
▶ Ministry of Education  
▶ Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock  
▶ Development Bank |                                                                                                                                  |
<p>|                |                                                                           | Territorial Management and Knowledge Module: Coordinates with local actors in the area of influence of each site, both municipal governments and women's organizations and associations, NGOs, schools, cultural centers, and private companies, among others. |                                                                                                                                                                       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Participating Institutions</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supreme Court of Justice Public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Defender of the Republic Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Civil Police</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretariat for Social Inclusion/Ciudad Mujer, Legal Medicine Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical Specialized Unit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Solidarity Fund for Health</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soyapango Municipal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Government various civil society organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Ciudad Mujer (one stop health, legal, job and other govt. services for women)</td>
<td>Secretariat of General Coordination of the Government</td>
<td>Improve living conditions for women in Honduras offering integrated services. In cases of violence, operate a comprehensive care model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretariat of Health</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretariat of Security</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary of Labor and Social Security</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretariat of Finance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Women's Institute</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Directorate for Children, Adolescents and Family</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National Institute for Vocational Training</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary of Agriculture and Livestock</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary of Development and Social Inclusion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public Ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secretariat of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Office of the First Lady</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ciudad Mujer Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country</td>
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</table>
| (Continued)      | Economic Commission for Inter-institutional Monitoring the Investigation of Violent Deaths for Women and the Feminicide | ▶ Public Ministry, through the Technical Criminal Investigation Agency And the Criminal Prosecutor against life  
▶ Secretariat of Security  
▶ Secretariat for Human Rights and Justice  
▶ Secretariat of Governance and Decentralization  
▶ National Women's Institute  
▶ National Commissioner for Human Rights  
▶ Institute of Women Studies (Honduras)  
▶ Women's Movement Peace “Visitacion Padilla”  
▶ Quality of Life Association | Advisory and technical support for the Technical Criminal Investigation Agency (ATIC), the Special Prosecutor for Offenses Against Life, the Secretariat of State in the Office of Security of Security and the National Women’s Institute, and the other agencies of the state linked to eradication of crime against women’s lives. In addition, a space for coordination of strategies and consensus between different institutions in the sector public and representatives of Women’s organizations working on the matter of feminicide. |
| Economic        | Commission for Inter-institutional Monitoring the Law against Violence (July 1998). | ▶ Judicial Branch, through the Family Courts responsible for enforcing the Law against Domestic Violence and the Second Court of Appeals  
▶ Public Ministry, through the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Women  
▶ National Women’s Institute  
▶ National Commissioner for Human Rights  
▶ Secretariat of Health, through the Family Councils  
▶ Secretariat of Security  
▶ Municipal Government of Distrito Central  
▶ Human Rights Center of Women (NGO) | Monitoring the enforcement law against Violence Domestic Violence.                                                                                                           |
<table>
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<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Participating Institutions</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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</table>
| Guatemala  | Isabel- Claudine Mechanism          | ▶ Public Ministry  
▶ Ministry of Governance  
▶ Public Defender of the Nation  
▶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
▶ National Civil Police  
▶ General Migration Director  
▶ Secretariat against the Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking  
▶ Secretariat for Social Communication of the President  
▶ Social Pastoral of Alta Verapaz  
▶ Civil-Political Convergence of Women | Immediate search for missing women. |
|            | Panic Button installed at the Public Ministry | ▶ Public Ministry  
▶ Ministry of Governance  
▶ National Civil Police | Immediate assistance for women in a situation of violence. |

Fuente: Elaboración de PNUD Infosegura con base en comunicaciones personales con representantes de las instituciones

These different mechanisms currently in the countries in this study represent a breakthrough in the capacity in the institutions in charge of security for inter-institutional coordination, and to respond to need for security and protection of women and girls in the region under study. However, there are still important opportunities for strengthening coordination between institutions to provide comprehensive response to VAWG in citizen security policies, as well as in the process of mainstreaming the gender perspective in the bodies responsible for citizen security.

*Interviews in the field with men and women civil servants show that there are still challenges in incorporating VAWG as a relevant matter for the National Security Councils, and advocate for the gender mainstreaming in their strategies.*
Different respondents are of the view that relevant matters that are integrated as a priority in the council’s agenda, are issues identified as being of national relevance, such as homicides or robberies. In their consideration, these issues are reported internationally in the security indicators. In certain countries, national women’s mechanisms participate in these security councils, as is the case in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras. However, they note that they have limited capacity for advocacy. In El Salvador, it is relevant to note that the National Security Council took an important step forward in 2018 by installing the technical table on gender-based violence, but it did not continue in 2019.

**Civil servants in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica stated the following:**

*In the Security Council, when talking about violence (they) talk about robberies, homicides; but not incidents of rape, femicides, etc.* (Civil Servant at the Guatemalan MP, personal communication, June 2019).

*The field of citizen security has been very recent, and to incorporate gender-based violence in that field is complicated. In fact, the technical work group on gender-based violence has just been installed.* (Civil servant at the PGR of El Salvador, personal communication, May 2019).

This is is how an important matter is transferred from an inter-institutional coordination of an operational nature to a strategic inter-institutional coordination to prevent, provide care, punish and reparations for women victims of violence. To achieve this, it will be important to position the VAWG issue and mainstream the gender perspective in the National Public Security Councils themselves.

*INAM attends meetings of the National Security Council, but has no impact. Proposals were made to expand budgets to open spaces for investigating women’s safety, but there is still nothing.* (Civil servant at INAM Honduras, personal communication, June 2019).

*The Ministry of Justice coordinates with the Court, with Governance, with the INAMU in matters of citizen security. Coordination is not that strong, there is no council, no regular meetings.* (Civil servant at Ministry of Public Security of Costa Rica, personal communication, May 2019).
5.1 Mechanisms for discussion and involvement of women’s organizations in citizen security policies

In practically all the countries studied, there are formal spaces for civil society participation in matters related to the elimination of VAWG. These spaces are created in the provisions of the laws or decrees that mandate the national mechanisms for the advancement of women, and also the commissions or coordinators specifically in charge of VAWG (for example, in Guatemala). These have consultative bodies or include participation by civil society organizations, specialists, and in some cases, academic institutions and also international cooperation agencies (Costa Rica and Guatemala).
The spaces for citizen participation operate at the national level in all cases; they also operate at the local level, but only in the cases Costa Rica and Guatemala.

**COSTA RICA** achieves this with institutionalized networks where government and civil society participate; these are created under the mandate of the National System for the Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women and Intrafamily Violence\(^{40}\). This model of providing care in cases of VAWG, the participation of the national and local level citizen security institutions is also contemplated.

**IN GUATEMALA**, there is a System of Urban and Rural Development Councils (SCDUR), which organizes and coordinates the public Administration at the departmental, municipal and local levels, where there are women’s commissions:

...where women’s organizations coordinate with public institutions on the ground, proposing and promoting initiatives for the benefit of the sector, based on local needs, to bring them into decision-making bodies where development management decisions are made (Presidential Secretariat for Women [SEPREM], nd).

In this administrative arrangement, the participation of citizen security instances at the local level is also considered.

However, as for institutions such as the police, office of the public defender, office of the public prosecutor, and other bodies there is no evidence of the participation of civil society organizations for the purpose of eradicating VAWG, either at the national level or public defender’s office locally. Contact with these types of institutions exists only for the specific purposes of awareness-raising and training, particularly for operational staff, but not to leverage their knowledge, for example, on the dynamics of the issue, experiences of community involvement, the strategic use of information, etc. This could be limiting the possibility of carrying out more effective actions in the matter of citizen security, insofar as these organizations respond to the specific needs and problems of women who experience the problem of gender-based violence.

\(^{40}\) For details of the management model that they operate with, and the progress achieved, see the National Policy for the Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women of all Ages Costa Rica 2017-2032 (National Institute of Women [INAMU], 2017, pp. 29, 145 y ss.).
5.2 Mechanisms of accountability to population

Accountability to the population regarding the result of the actions that the institutions that govern citizen security carry out to eliminate VAWG varies in the group of countries being studied.

On the one hand, COSTA RICA publishes reports it sends to the CEDAW and Belém do Pará committees, as well as the resolutions of such bodies. This is done as part of the State’s obligation to publish information in the transparency section on the page of the national gender mechanism on the internet. It also issues an annual report for the mentioned system, as part of its implementation of the national policy on the elimination of VAWG 41.

For its part, EL SALVADOR’s ISDEMU issues reports to various newspapers on the situation of VAWG, for example, the Annual Report on the situation of violence against women in El Salvador, which is not called for in the respective program, but in the law (LEIV). This type of information is widely available on its internet site, in the transparency page, in a section for “Legally Mandated Reporting” (Transparency Portal, nd).

El Salvador also has the DIGESTYC Gender Statistics Observatory, with its internet site where the general public can access relevant information on VAWG; for instance, results of the National Survey on Violence against Women, and access to the National Data System, with statistics and information on violence against Women, and multiple documents on different current aspects of the issue (http://aplicaciones.digestyc.gob.sv/observatorio.genero/).

This is not the case in the rest of the countries. The respective country plans and programs against VAWG described before, contain no express mandates on regular issuance of information as an exercise in accountability. Consequently, no other country issues public information that would make it possible to monitor and evaluate the actions contemplated in those plans and programs. This is so, despite the fact that two countries (Guatemala and the Dominican Republic) have transparency obligations in this regard, as noted in the portals of the respective national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

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41 In the stated policy document, it is stated that “this mechanism also includes the procedures for the delivery of periodic reports and the rendering of accounts to the citizens, including the progress and challenges in the implementation of PLANOVI and its action plans” (p. 149).
Regarding the (law enforcement) institutions that converge under the citizen security policies and actions in the countries under study in the region, Costa Rica and Guatemala are the only cases where a substantial amount of information on VAWG is shared in terms of broad accountability.

**In the case of COSTA RICA,** the Observatory on Gender-Based Violence against Women and Access to Justice web page has information on the Costa Rican Judicial Branch actions for prevention, care and punishment of VAWG, as per applicant type (woman or specialist) ([https://observatoriodegenero.poder-judicial.go.cr/quienes-somos/bienvenida/](https://observatoriodegenero.poder-judicial.go.cr/quienes-somos/bienvenida/)).

**In the case of GUATEMALA,** the information is made available to the public on the Public Ministry Women’s Observatory web page, ([http://observatorio.mp.gob.gt](http://observatorio.mp.gob.gt)).

**IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,** the The Citizen Security Observatory that is under the National Council for Citizen Security, issues a quarterly statistical bulletin on the main security indicators, none of which refers to VAWG specifically, but the information can be broken down by sex. They are not issued as part of scheduled monitoring of institutional actions, but as “open data”, so they cannot be considered accountability actions, but only government transparency ([http://www.oscrd.gob.do/](http://www.oscrd.gob.do/)).
This chapter shows that in the last decades the countries of the Central American region and the Dominican Republic have taken important steps towards the consolidation of public policy on citizen security. No doubt, legal frameworks at the international level have been used to create or reform national laws, and, this way address insecurity and violence that are multi-causal and multi-dimensional problems that affect different population groups in a differentiated manner.
Current public laws and policies on citizen security form the legal basis for various plans and programs under implementation in the countries of the region, guiding state action to make headway in the elimination of insecurity and violence, including that which specifically and disproportionately affects women and girls.

The study showed that currently VAWG has yet to become one of the priority issues in citizen security, there is a significant separation between the work carried out by the institutions in charge of citizen security and those areas or institutions responsible for VAWG.

In the region, however, there has been significant progress in the specific legal instruments covering VAWG, providing a framework for public action that increases the possibilities of a better response to the problem and its causal factors. That is why, in their assessments most respondents noted that they were adequate to deal with the problem of VAWG. Despite these advances, some areas of opportunity have been identified in terms of regulations; for instance, some national laws focus on domestic violence and there are few laws that typify other forms of VAWG in the public and private spheres, or specific expressions of violence, such as sexual harassment in public spaces or forced displacement, and the classification of femicide/feminicide.

The research shows that in the countries in this study, national citizen security policies include objectives or actions to respond to VAWG; this favors actions in the matter by institutions engaged in security. However, on the issue of women’s security, the response needs to shift from concentrating on particular objectives like attention to expressions of VAWG traditionally addressed (such as domestic or intrafamily violence) towards mainstreaming the gender approach in national security policy as a whole. Thus, the different problems of insecurity and violence that women and girls face also need to be made visible and to be centrally integrated.
Likewise, research shows a fundamental aspect, which is that there are areas of opportunity to more adequately implement the legal and public policy framework governing citizen security. These opportunities emerge from the limitations institutions engaged in citizen security current face in their capacities to mainstream gender and VAWG (see Box 3).

To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen national, regional and local diagnostic assessments on the state of VAWG, in order to understand its magnitude and dynamics in all areas of social interaction, the causality and risk factors, and the profiles of victims and perpetrators, among other substantive aspects. This will make it possible to guide a sufficient number of effective actions to prevent and address VAWG in its multiple manifestations, particularly when there are incidents in public or community spaces; there is much to be done in this matter, and little structured knowledge.

**Box 3**

**Legal frameworks and public policies.** Elements for a roadmap

**a. Legal frameworks**

- Legally classify femicide/feminicide in those countries in the study that have not yet done so, and strengthen the classification according to the highest international standards in those countries that have.

- Enact comprehensive laws for the eradication of VAWG in those countries in the study where they do not yet exist.

In addition, the following laws and regulations for citizen security are recommended to be binding for governments:

- Mainstream gender in citizen security policies, plans and programs for the elimination of VAWG.

- Include strategies and actions for the elimination of VAWG in the policies, plans, programs and in the strategic planning documents.

- Promote gender and VAWG training and professionalization for personnel working in the areas of citizen security.
Monitor and evaluate public security strategies and actions that address VAWG, and ensure they are used, in order to obtain feedback in this regard.

Issue an annual report on the results and include monitoring as part of accountability to citizen participation bodies and the general public, through access to public information systems.

Systematically generate relevant information on VAWG from the perspective of citizen security and carry out diagnostic studies on the characteristics and evolution of the issue.

Earmark resources for the eradication of VAWG within the framework of citizen security policies.

Define principles, guidelines, and mechanisms for institutional coordination, ensuring that there are efficient and effective public governmental efforts.

As a matter of course, national mechanisms for the advancement of women need to be included in the cabinets or institutional spaces engaged in citizen security.

Open up spaces for participation by organized civil society, to specialists and scholars for discussion, monitoring and evaluating policies covering citizen security for the elimination of VAWG.

Regarding the legal frameworks that regulate gender policy, it is recommended that the national mechanisms for the advancement of women, which are the lead agencies in this area:

Have the powers to promote, monitor and evaluate the mainstreaming of gender in the areas of citizen security.

Provide the areas of citizen security support in designing, administering, monitoring and evaluation of strategies and actions for the elimination of VAWG in citizen security policies.
**b. Policies and plans**

Regarding the policies and plans whose the strategies and actions address citizen security, it is recommended to ensure that they include:

- Gender Mainstreaming Diagnostic assessment of the issues for an evidence-based description of the different causes and effects of insecurity, violence and crime have on the lives of women and men, as well as its manifestations in VAWG. The objectives, strategies and actions must be targeted to impact the causes and effects indicated in the diagnosis, through means and instruments as per the condition and position of women, keeping women’s empowerment as a substantive objective at all times, an indispensable condition for gender mainstreaming.

- The goals and expected results in the components and throughout the different periods of execution of these programs and plans, and the specific contribution that each of the institutions involved seeks to achieve to eliminate VAWG in the framework of citizen security policies.

- The terms for including organized civil society, specialists and scholars in spaces open for participation to monitor and evaluate policies covering citizen security for the elimination of VAWG.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
6.2 Strategic planning

Regarding strategic planning, it is important to have specific assessments on the link between problems related to insecurity (organized crime, gangs, crime incidence, etc.) and the magnitude, manifestations, seriousness and intensity of VAWG. It is also necessary to shore up gender-sensitive knowledge about insecurity. This will allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, and to identify and characterize the main issues women and girls face in terms of insecurity, making it possible to strengthen strategic lines of response (see box 4).

Currently there is a dearth of diagnoses on the differentiated effects of insecurity and violence on women and men, and on the gender factors that intervene in criminal phenomena; therefore, the gender perspective is not transversally included in the strategic plans of institutions engaged citizen security in the countries of the region. However, there has been progress in the sense that, in some cases, they include specific strategies or actions to respond to particular VAWG problems or the needs of women victims of violence. Nonetheless, a more comprehensive response to the problems of insecurity that women and girls face is needed, and monitoring and evaluation indicators need to be disaggregated into the variables required to run gender and intersectional analysis that in order to assess progress and challenges in the response to VAWG.

As regards monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the response to VAWG by institutions engaged in citizen security, there has been significant progress in generating indicators that are reported to the national systems or subsystems for monitoring VAWG; this contributes to identifying achievements and areas of opportunity in the performance of the institutions, essential aspects in planning adequate actions. However, one challenge in this area is conducting outcome evaluations, assessing the effects or impacts of said performance on the magnitude and severity of VAWG and insecurity.

There are several factors involved in challenges in evaluation, for example: Lack of relevant data for to run gender analysis of violence and insecurity; there are technical and financial difficulties in conducting impact evaluations; and the fact that the issue of VAWG is still not central to institutions engaged in citizen security.
BOX 4

Strategic planning. Elements for a roadmap

Involving gender and VAWG in the strategic planning for citizen security, requires keeping the following elements in mind:

- Gender-sensitive diagnostic studies of citizen security.
- Objectives, strategies and actions that respond to the security needs and problems faced by women and girls.
- Methods for producing gender-sensitive information on various aspects of the VAWG phenomenon within the framework of citizen security and efforts to eliminate it (such as diagnostic studies, evaluations, surveys, etc.), as well as guidelines for its strategic use by the institutions in charge of addressing the problem.

- Goals and results to reach in the matter of training and professionalization in gender and VAWG, by staff working in the areas of citizen security.
- Indicators and targets to assess progress in the response to VAWG.
- The terms under which the institutions in charge of the citizen security policy must participate in order to comply with the obligations of transparency and accountability to citizen participation bodies and the general public.
- Institutional coordination mechanisms operating to ensure their efficient and effective management.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
6.3 Institutional administration

For more than 10 years, gender units have been incorporated into citizen security institutions in different countries of the region under study. The duties and responsibilities of these institutions include promoting and advising on mainstreaming gender in the agencies’ organizational sphere, and in public policies, or both.

This practice has led to important progress in some countries, where there has been a positive impact on improving the response to VAWG, such as the police in El Salvador or the Public Ministry in Guatemala. There have been important changes in these institutions, both in developing operational tools and training the personnel, and in the information on record, and VAWG indicator monitoring.

However, it is important to go further, and strengthen the attributions and capacities of these gender units, because their efforts in mainstreaming the gender perspective throughout the institution are restricted, including the production of gender-sensitive data on security. In certain cases (such as Costa Rica) these limitations are in their attributions, limiting them to the organizational sphere. In others (El Salvador or Guatemala), it is due to limited resources or to the relevance these issues have to the institutions’ priorities.

Regarding the production of data on VAWG in the countries in the subregion, there has been important progress in the development of indicators and data to monitor the dynamics of the problem. However, areas for improvement have been identified. Something needs to be done about the current limitations on generating information on issues other than domestic violence. In this sense, it is necessary to make strides in generating information on violence against women in public spaces, teachers (educational), work, etc. It is also important to further disaggregate information, and include useful variables, such as schedules, places of occurrence, relationship between victims and perpetrators, and others, to run gender and intersectional analysis; this will contribute to enhanced understanding of- and insight into the phenomena of crime, insecurity and violence.

Furthermore, there needs to be progress in creating data and indicators that will make it possible to know strategic aspects regarding the effectiveness of the State’s response to the violence, particularly through institutions responsible for public health: For instance, to see law enforcement effectiveness in administering precautionary measures and protection orders for victims, and in the quality of care, among other relevant aspects.
With respect to the production of data on femicide/feminicide or violent deaths of women, most of the countries examined show important advances, such as: the existence of inter-institutional groups to validate the information, discussion of the problem in order to have progress in its measurement\(^\text{42}\), and production of data based on administrative records of the judiciary that provide information on cases of femicide/feminicide prosecuted as a crime.

However, there are currently various circumstances whose impact leads to the underestimation of the real dimension of femicides/feminicides in the region under study:

- **a.** Limitations in the legal classification of crime, such that, several cases of violent deaths are not classified as femicide/feminicide, although their characteristics may identify them as such.

- **b.** Difficulties in the initial classification and investigation of murders of women, which affects the basis to classify them as femicide/feminicide.

- **c.** Factors associated with the way statistical information is documented by research and law enforcement institutions, leading to contradictions between the information generated by different agencies.

Making progress toward a more reliable registry of the magnitude of femicides/feminicides in the region involves strengthening aspects like the legal classification of the crime, training the personnel responsible for investigation, prosecution and administration of justice, the statistical information systems at the different agencies, and the coordination between them to produce consolidated data.

The generation of national VAWG surveys is also a key area of opportunity. Currently, El Salvador has a specialized and specific survey on the matter. In the cases of Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, there are initial exercises of this nature, while Costa Rica has conducted a survey that has not been updated.

The specialized surveys on VAWG are the most important tools to know the magnitude, severity and dynamics of the problem, therefore they are indispensable in strengthening the assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies that respond to it.

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\(^\text{42}\) This is particularly clear in Costa Rica and El Salvador, where there are inter-institutional groups in charge of consolidating national data on femicide/feminicide.
Another fundamental challenge that institutions engaged in citizen security face when implementing actions to respond to VAWG has to do with financial resources. In most of the countries in the study, the effort these institutions dedicate to VAWG is not matched with adequate budgetary allocation, making it difficult to implement far-reaching actions, or to provide the priority attention that the problems faced by women require.

The training and education of the personnel in the institutions engaged in citizen security in the countries of the subregion is a significant challenge. There is a need for permanent education and training programs for staff to understand and apply gender-related concepts, tools and regulations, particularly those involving VAWG. Training processes on gender need to be provided beyond the agencies that specialize in addressing VAWG, otherwise gender continues to be a segregated matter, and institutions continue the practice of providing a differentiated approach and treatment to other issues and matters involving citizen security. It would be better if training is provided to the personnel of all institutions in general, so that all matters are addressed from a gender perspective, and everyone acquires the knowledge and tools they need to respond to VAWG.

It is also essential that the National Security Councils, coordination mechanisms that comprise the institutions responsible for security, and are responsible for defining national strategies and priorities for security, address violence against women and girls as a relevant matter of primary concern.

The investigation found that the current priorities are other crimes or issues such as homicides, robberies, extortion and car theft. Along these lines, the institutions that specialize in addressing VAWG, and the gender mechanisms in general, need a permanent place on these National Security Councils and their standing needs to be enhanced.

Box 5 has a summary of the elements that should be taken into account in a roadmap for institutional management.
BOX 5

**Institutional administration.**

**Elements for a roadmap**

- Set up gender units in all governmental institutions engaged in citizen security, with attributions, responsibilities and sufficient resources to promote and advise on the issue of the inclusion of the gender approach, both in the agencies’ organizational sphere, and in public policies.

  Earmark specific resources, so that institutions engaged in citizen security are adequately funded to respond to VAWG.

  Enhance the information on VAWG gleaned from public, educational, work spaces, etc., through surveys and administrative records, as well as preparing gender-sensitive quantitative and qualitative assessments.

  Carry out studies and research on the relationship between social violence, insecurity, state violence and violence against women, as well as on specific needs and issues women and girls have in relation to insecurity.

  Administrative records and the statistics on security need more robust disaggregation of information, and the inclusion of useful variables (such as time, places of occurrence and relationship between victims and perpetrators, among others) to run gender and intersectional analysis, which will contribute to enhanced understanding of and insight into crime, insecurity and violence.

  Achieve progress in the creation of data, indicators and evaluations that make it possible to understand strategic aspects about the effectiveness of the State responses to violence, particularly through the institutions that are responsible for citizen security.

  Establish criteria and inter-institutional coordination mechanisms for keeping accurate records of cases of femicide/feminicide.

  Design, implement and evaluate permanent and institutionalized training programs on VAWG and gender for all personnel at institutions engaged in citizen security.

  Ensure mechanisms for the advancement of women have a permanent and substantive participation on the National Security Councils and strengthen the positioning of VAWG.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
Another factor that has an influence on the implementation of the legal framework governing citizen security and VAWG is the participation of civil society and other non-governmental actors in policies that respond to violence against women within institutions engaged in citizen security. Civil society organizations are a strategic actor in the design and implementation of public policies to respond to VAWG, since, among other things, they work systematically to address the direct needs of women and girls; therefore, their accumulated knowledge informs and provides feedback for government action.

Currently, the participation of civil society organizations in the institutions engaged in citizen security in this study, focuses on providing institutional staff with certain training or technical support, but they are not incorporated as critical, accompanying and vigilant collaborators. Civil society participation is more active in cases like institutions that specialize in addressing violence against women and girls, or the mechanisms that provide women with support, where these organizations play an important role in defining the public agenda, in conducting studies that contribute to expanding knowledge about the issues, integrating data, delivering training and monitoring government actions.

A related issue is that of accountability, which is currently limited in the countries under review, except for some institutions engaged in citizen security in Costa Rica and Guatemala, and the national gender office in El Salvador, because their own plans and programs do not include it as part of their monitoring and evaluation efforts. In addition, generating information and making it available to the public in reader-friendly formats, publicizing the results of the implementation of policies and plans on VAWG and citizen security, has not yet been institutionalized as a mandatory practice in each institution.

Box 6 provides a number of elements for a citizen participation and accountability roadmap.
6.5 Overview

In general terms, the information reviewed in this report reveals that, historically, the countries of the region have treated VAWG as a problem far removed from citizen security. In this sense, they have pursued parallel agendas to engage them as two issues that are believed to be separate, when in reality they are interrelated.

This is largely due to the fact that in the region under review, citizen security institutions still have no clear and systematic process for mainstreaming gender; this is evident in the lack of studies to identify the effects of gender on the dynamics of insecurity and violence, and in the concrete expressions of insecurity in women and girls, as well as the interrelationship between the problem of social violence and gender-based violence.

This shows that it is still a challenge to incorporate VAWG as a priority issue in citizen security policies, a lot remains to be done to achieve significant positive changes in the dimension and severity of VAWG. Currently, there are several factors that only allow partial and limited inclusion of VAWG in matters of citizen security:

- Unawareness of the magnitude, severity, characteristics, and complexity of VAWG

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BOX 6

Citizen participation and accountability. Elements for a roadmap

- Adopt the principle of maximum publicity for governmental citizen security actions to eliminate VAWG, so that all laws, programs, plans, protocols, studies, reports, minutes and others, that result from planning, follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation documenting government compliance in this matter, are made available to the general population for viewing in formats that allow remote access; and this is classified as “open access” information, for routine release.

- Create and strengthen spaces for citizen participation within institutions engaged in citizen security, in order to monitor policies to eradicate VAWG, with participation of women from civil society organizations, specialists and academics.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
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<td><strong>b.</strong></td>
<td>The prevailing view of security issues is androcentric.</td>
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<td><strong>c.</strong></td>
<td>Insufficient knowledge about gender and its ties to security</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>d.</strong></td>
<td>Need to apply gender approach in the security policies diagnostic assessments.</td>
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<td><strong>e.</strong></td>
<td>VAWG response segregated to specialized areas, generally understaffed and inadequate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>f.</strong></td>
<td>Definition of international security indicators that focus on crimes such as homicides or robberies, among others; the institutions give them priority over crimes that mainly affect women.</td>
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The States have gradually recognized the need to place VAWG as a priority issue, but as this issue has been slow to gain relevance on the political agendas, there has been insufficient progress in its inclusion on the citizen security agenda. The institutions engaged in citizen security continue to be limited in their institutional capacity to address the issue. Furthermore, although the approved policies have produced multiple efforts — such as gender-awareness workshops with communities, gender-based violence training for police officers, prosecutors, judges, and other institutional personnel — these continue to be marginal. In addition, it is important to underscore that one of the main challenges institutions face is the cultural resistance of the institutions’ staff, mostly male, and whose organizational culture is traditionally male and androcentric; thus, it is essential to strengthen cultural transformation processes, encouraging attitudes and social norms favorable to gender equality.

Similarly, the progress made in giving relevance to gender-sensitive citizen security policies at the national levels, and their enforcement through different strategies, have not necessarily produced specific actions to address the particular characteristics of the territories, or the needs of the most vulnerable populations, such as indigenous women and those living in precarious conditions. **Instead, VAWG has been generally blurred in the prioritization and subsequent implementation of initiatives at the local level.**


SEPREM. (s. f.). Presidential Secretariat for Women Guatemala City: Coordination Mechanisms. Retrieved from http://seprem.gob.gt/mecanismos-de-coordinacion/


Conclusions and recommendations
This chapter offers a synthesis of the main conclusions, findings and recommendations that emerge from the research presented in this report. As initially noted, this report seeks to contribute elements for a new gender-sensitive understanding of citizen security that includes acknowledging violence against women and girls (VAWG), and its central role in effective initiatives for addressing the prevention and control of crime and violence. This is also expected to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), so that certainly no one is left behind.

The objective of this report is also to analyze the issue of VAWG in Central America and the Dominican Republic and, based on the characteristics, propose a new framework of action to integrate this issue into the core of citizen security policies, so it is no longer a marginal issue, or in a separate field of action.

This is an unprecedented and multifaceted challenge, and the institutions need technical, financial, human, and regulatory capacities to advance a new approach to bring about significant changes in the magnitude and seriousness of violence and insecurity in its multiple dimensions.

As noted in the introduction to Chapter 1,

“The rise in extreme violence also has a female side to it, and turning a blind eye prevents firm steps from being taken toward the construction of peaceful and more just societies.”
1.1 Importance of integrating VAWG as a matter of citizen security

Violence against women is a violation of the basic core of human rights protected by citizen security, including the right to life, respect for the individual’s physical and material integrity the right to a decent life, and the right to a life free of violence. This phenomenon also affects human development, with profound implications on women’s health and economic, educational, social and cultural opportunities.

Moreover, violence against women affects three core components of citizen security: victimization, the perception of security and securitability. Therefore, this issue falls within the purview of citizen security and it must be fully addressed by the authorities responsible for guaranteeing it.

However, at present, the violence that women face is not included in the set of central issues that are addressed by citizen security, since the gender dynamics that underlie this violence, as well as the relevant expressions of insecurity and violence that women face are not integrated in either the conceptual corpus or in the central aspects of the legal, institutional and programmatic framework that support the actions of citizen security.

The Governments of Central America and the Dominican Republic have increasingly enhanced the institutional architecture in the citizen security sector, allowing for greater understanding of important parts of the issue of crime. However, the use of violence to solve conflicts of all kinds has not been dealt with in a sustainable way over time, and there is a significant lag in the mainstreaming of gender in citizen security policies, as well as in the full incorporation of violence against women and girls in the fields of prevention, control and rehabilitation.

Citizen security initiatives need to be passed on to a new generation that will actively incorporate gender and VAWG as cross-cutting components of intervention. In this sense, it is indispensable to move forward with comprehensive mechanisms that ensure that violence against women becomes structurally incorporated into citizen security work, and overcome the separation of spaces for debate and action. This requires delving into the approach of each of the current areas of emphasis of public security policy:
This framework for understanding needs to leave behind the traditional governmental vision of a separate response to social violence, on the one hand, and gender-based violence, on the other. This biased view has led to a consistent practice in which the areas of public safety or citizen security are in charge of social violence and high impact violence that occurs in public spaces, while the institutions engaged promoting the rights of women are responsible for preventing and addressing gender-based violence against women, chiefly domestic violence. This must be abandoned, not only because gender-based violence against women and girls occurs in multiple and different domains and overlaps with other violence and security problems; further, as noted, violence against women and girls is a central aspect of citizen security, as people living and traveling in the countries have no recourse to full citizen security if women are continually subjected to physical, sexual and emotional violence in the home, on the street, on public transportation, in parks and public squares, and in other spaces, because they are women.

To enhance understanding of the phenomenon of crime from the perspective of gender can provide greater understanding of the gender factors that intervene in the matter, as well as its repercussions, differentiated by sex, age, ethnic-racial condition, etc.

Consolidating official information systems disaggregated by sex and other relevant variables, including strategic data on women’s security, enhancing the way the phenomenon is understood, and the way institutions respond to the issue. This information needs to be collected, systematized, and delivered to the public policy decision makers, as it contributes to understanding the way crimes and violence affect men and women, and the vulnerability factors involved.

Strengthen crime prevention by including key gender issues that make it possible to dismantle the male mandates that are part of the structural causes of the problem.

Strengthening the legal and institutional architecture of citizen security to incorporate needs, specific problems and attention to women, girls and the different groups that comprise them.
1.2 The severity of the problem

The current data on VAWG presented in chapter 2 of this study show a situation of concern in Central America and the Dominican Republic. **Women in general, specifically adolescents, young women, and those who are subject to multiple forms of discrimination, face a series of violent acts in the different social spaces in which they interact.** Moreover, their rights — to physical integrity, mobility and a life free of violence — are grossly violated. This clearly shows how far they are from enjoying a full status of citizen security.

One of the main findings of this study is that violence affects women and men in different ways. Although lethal violence has a greater impact on men, women are victimized throughout their lives by a spiral of crimes that occur in different settings. These events threaten their physical integrity and their lives, and are often driven by gender inequalities and discrimination. The most representative case is sexual violence, with a nine to one female to male ratio, and considerable effects on the survivors. To a large extent, these antisocial behaviors go unpunished since they are not prosecuted, either because they are not considered crimes or because they are not considered a citizen security issue.

The data also show that, in the region under review, women between the ages of 15 and 19 are a sector of the population with high levels of victimization and are subject to a great variety of crimes. This group of women is the subject of sexual crimes, disappearances, domestic violence and violent deaths; therefore attention on this sector ought to become a priority.

This harsh reality is exacerbated by the high levels of insecurity, common crime, and organized crime ravaging the countries in the region, such that, upon close inspection, a close link emerges between criminal violence and gender-based violence against women. This connection has repercussions on particular expressions of violence and cruelty against women, with impunity and grievous social insensitivity to the problem. In other words, a hidden side of insecurity is revealed: Violence against women.

As analyzed in the study, **in contexts where conflict, violence and insecurity run high, women face greater risk of becoming victims of sexual violence and human trafficking, and of being subjected to novel expressions of more murderous**
This situation not only has an impact on the direct victims, but also reaches beyond the social and economic spheres, with profound repercussions on human development, human rights and human security. Therefore, state resources need to be committed to designing and implementing public policies for citizen security, in order to address the issue through social prevention, mitigate risk factors, provide support to victims, investigate cases, punish offenders and rehabilitate the population, activating social norms that are favorable to gender equality and non-violence.

The magnitude, severity, and characteristics of VAWG in the contexts in the countries of the region under review, point to the urgent need for a greater link between the response to VAWG and attention to problems of violence and insecurity, — such as the commission of crimes, the actions of criminal organizations, drug trafficking, the appropriation and use of public spaces, and prevention in all its dimensions — which up to now have been dealt with separately.

The conceptual areas and the areas of intervention both need more holistic and comprehensive theoretical frameworks, improved measurement systems, deeper qualitative analysis of the issue, and a historical view from the perspective of gender, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the different forms of violence and their transformations in the region, as well as a deeper understanding of gender factors that intervene in the development and characteristics of the most pressing problems of violence and insecurity (Imbusch Misse and Carrión [2011]; Auyero, Bourgois and Scheper- Hughes [2015]).

1.3 Progress and challenges in mainstreaming gender and VAWG in the institutions engaged in citizen security

In the region under study, there is an emerging process of mainstreaming the gender approach in citizen security institutions. This process provides significant areas for opportunity, such as the need to have security assessments showing the effects of gender in the dynamics of insecurity and violence, and making it possible to understand the specific issues women and girls face; another area of opportunity is the inclusion of prevention strategies that seek to transform models of violent masculinity.
It is only fair to acknowledge that important progress has been made in this field, mainly as a result of the efforts of organized and non-organized women in different regions of the world (Segura Villalva, 2006). However, accepting this implies not only formal recognition, but also its substantive incorporation into the institutions, policies, laws and budgets that are part of the scaffolding of citizen security; this has yet to be fully achieved.

At present, the documents that contain the national citizen security policies in the countries under study, include objectives or actions to respond to VAWG, favoring the actions of institutions engaged in security. However, on the issue of women’s security, the response needs to shift from concentrating on specific objectives like addressing the expressions of VAWG that are traditionally addressed, such as domestic or intrafamily violence, and move towards mainstreaming the gender approach in national security policy as a whole. Thus, the different problems of insecurity and violence that women and girls face also need to be made visible and to be centrally integrated.

As described above, the characteristics of security policies reveal the fact that gender mainstreaming is absent from the strategic plans of institutions engaged in citizen security in the countries of the region. One step forward in this regard is that, in some cases, they include specific strategies or actions to respond to particular VAWG problems. However, there needs to be a more comprehensive response to the problems of insecurity faced by women and girls; there also need to be monitoring and evaluation indicators disaggregated into the variables that are needed to perform gender and intersectional analysis, in order to assess progress and challenges in the response to this issue.

Regarding monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the institutions engaged in citizen security’s response to VAWG, significant progress has been made in generating indicators that are reported to the national VAWG monitoring systems or subsystems. However, a challenge in this area is conducting performance evaluations to assess the effects or impacts of such performance on the magnitude and severity of VAWG and the insecurity they face.

For more than 10 years, gender units have been incorporated into institutions engaged in citizen security in different countries of the region under study. Their functions and responsibilities include promoting and providing advice on the issue of gender mainstreaming. This practice has favored important advances in improving the response to VAWG.

However, it is important to go further, and strengthen the functions and capacities of these gender units, because their efforts in mainstreaming gender throughout the institution are restricted, including the generation of gender-sensitive data on security.
Regarding the **generation of data on VAWG**, important progress has been observed in the development of indicators and data to monitor the dynamics of the issue, although there are areas for improvement. For example, the current limitations in the generation of information on violence other than domestic violence need to be addressed. It is also important for the information contained in the administrative records of citizen security institutions to be further disaggregated, and variables that are useful in gender and intersectional analysis be included.

As regards **generating data on femicide/feminicide**, or violent deaths of women, there are actually a variety of circumstances that have an impact on underestimating the real scope of the issue in the region under study:

- **a.** There are limitations in the legal classification of crime, therefore a number of cases of violent deaths are not classified as femicide/feminicide, although their characteristics identified them as such.

- **b.** Difficulties in the initial classification and investigation of murders of women, which affects the basis to classify them as femicide/feminicide.

- **c.** Factors associated with the way statistical information is documented by research and law enforcement institutions, leading to contradictions between the information generated by different agencies.

**Conducting national VAWG surveys is also an important area of opportunity.** Some countries already use these tools to learn about the magnitude, severity and dynamics of the problem, and in others, this is in the planning stages. However, most lack institutionalized regular surveys, which are indispensable in strengthening the assessment, design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies that respond to the issue.

Another fundamental challenge that **institutions engaged in citizen security face when implementing actions to respond to VAWG has to do with financial resources.** Commonly, the services provided by institutions engaged in citizen security are not a budget priority, making it difficult to carry out far-reaching actions, or to provide the priority responses that the problems faced by women require.

**Permanent training and education of the personnel at institutions engaged in citizen security needs to be strengthened,** because it is essential for the civil service to be able to know and apply gender-related concepts, tools and regulations, and particularly those concerning VAWG. It is relevant that training or training processes on gender issues be provided not only in specialized areas for VAWG, but that it be provided in a general manner to all the personnel of the institutions, so that all matters are approached with a gender perspective and all people have the knowledge and tools necessary to respond to VAWG.
Likewise, it is important that VAWG be included as a relevant and primary topic in the national coordination mechanisms for the institutions engaged in public/citizen security (National Security Councils), because the national strategies and priorities in the matter are defined in these spaces.

Another factor that affects the proper implementation of the legal framework for citizen security and VAWG is the participation of civil society and other non-governmental actors in policy-based responses that institutions in charge of security give to the problem. Civil society organizations are a strategic actor in the design and implementation of public policies to respond to VAWG because they work systematically addressing the direct needs of women and girls, therefore, their accumulated knowledge informs and provides feedback for government actions.

Based on the previous findings, it can be said that incorporating VAWG as a priority issue in institutions engaged in citizen security is a challenge that needs to advance, in order to achieve significant positive changes in its magnitude and severity. The study showed that there are several aspects on which it would be advisable to work to get the issue incorporated substantively in the institutions responsible for citizen security:

 Currently, the public security institutions under review need to include civil society and other non-governmental actors as critical, accompanying and vigilant collaborators, as in the case of institutions that specialize in addressing violence against and women girls or in

- **a.** Expand knowledge of the magnitude, severity, characteristics, and complexity of VAWG.
- **b.** Overcome the androcentric vision prevalent in the positioning and conception of security issues.
- **c.** Increase and improve knowledge about the link between security and gender-based violence.
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<tr>
<td><strong>d.</strong></td>
<td>Produce data on security and crime with disaggregated variables that make it possible to run gender and intersectional analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>e.</strong></td>
<td>Reverse the practice of relegating VAWG into specific areas, and instead incorporate it as part of the core nucleus and simultaneously strengthen specialized care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>f.</strong></td>
<td>Define international security indicators to include offenses that mainly affect women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>g.</strong></td>
<td>Expand the range of issues addressed to include expressions of VAWG that have little visibility, such as sexual violence in public spaces or the disappearances of women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>h.</strong></td>
<td>Train all staff at the institutions engaged in citizen security.</td>
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</table>
1. **Consolidate or update political and action consensus**, bringing the security sector closer to the design, implementation and monitoring of institutional responses in the prevention, care, prosecution and punishment of violence against women and girls. Consensus must be reached on the budget, programming and evidence of results.

2. **Incorporate criteria for innovation**, focusing on institutional transformations, updating regulatory framework that take into account the multidimensionality of the issue, updating internal regulations of institutions engaged in security, and transforming services to be person oriented, so as not to repeat the sector’s usual approaches to security that contribute nothing to the expected result.

3. **Adopt international protocols, guidelines, methodologies and best practices** to ensure information is retrieved through standardized processes and with relevant disaggregation, making for a more comprehensive understanding of VAWG, and enabling comparability in the region.

4. **Put administrative data to strategic use** in planning institutional responses and evaluating the quality of the services provided by institutions, with an opportunity criterion.

5. **Shore up the institutional architecture** with mechanisms to integrate primary sources of information from institutions engaged in addressing violence, as a strategy to both strengthen the delivery of services and the management of information.
Actions that coordinate policies on citizen security and violence against women and girls, taking into account that in each incident and victim there are differences, reflecting on the implementation of public policy by mainstreaming human rights and gender, and the integration of indicators for different crime typologies that affect the different segments of the society.

Generate new analysis and solutions that involve a masculinities approach at different levels:

a. Evaluate the phenomenon and how it influences the expressions of gender-based violence.

b. Include policies on citizen security and VAWG in the interventions that are guided by a cultural change and institutional transformation.

c. Prepare new training for officials in the security sector.

Provide support to the areas of citizen security in designing, administering, monitoring and evaluating strategies and actions to eliminate VAWG based on citizen security policies, such as creation of national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

Ensure mechanisms for the advancement of women participate permanently and substantively on National Citizen Security Councils, and strengthen the positioning of the issue of positioning of VAWG.

Set up gender units in all governmental institutions engaged in citizen security, with functions, responsibilities and sufficient resources to promote and advise on the issue of the inclusion of the gender approach, both in the agencies’ organizational sphere, and in public policies.

Earmark specific resources in the institutions engaged in citizen security, so that there is adequate and sufficient response to VAWG.
Strengthen mechanisms for coordination and joint work of government agencies with academic and civil society organizations in the different public policy processes through:

- Civil society, particularly women’s and feminist movements that work on issues of violence, participate in the design of monitoring and in the implementation of monitoring and impact evaluations of citizen security policies with a gender perspective.

- Create spaces for critical analysis of the actions and hold dialogues on policies, with participatory mechanisms, in order to inform legal proposals and institutional transformation.

- Promote research initiatives, systematization of experiences and best practices to address violence against women and girls-citizen security.

- Hold awareness-raising and training processes on issues related to the prevention of violence against women and girls and policies of inclusion, for government agencies and the population as well.

- Opening of training and research spaces that reinforce institutional capacities for evidence-based response to the problems.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 4


Annex 1 | International and national regulatory frameworks

A. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979

Article 6. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

In 1989, through general recommendation n. 12, the CEDAW Committee established the obligation for States parties to “protect women against any type of violence that occurs in the family, at work or in any other sphere of life”43.

In 1992, the CEDAW Committee adopted general recommendation 19, defining violence against women and, in addition, expanding the content of its prescriptions in each article, relating them, in particular, to violence against women.

Likewise, General Recommendation 19 established specific recommendations that provide insight into the progressivity of women’s right to a life free of violence and the relationship with citizen security. Notable among them is, for instance, Recommendation 24, literal b):

States parties should ensure that laws against family violence and abuse, rape, sexual assault and other gender-based violence give adequate protection to all women, and respect their integrity and dignity.

In 2017, the CEDAW Committee adopted general recommendation 35, linked combating violence against women to the tasks of citizen security, noting for example that:

... Gender-based violence affects women throughout their life cycle and, consequently, references to women in this document include girls. This violence takes multiple forms, such as: Action or omission intended or facilitating causing or leading to women’s death or physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering, threats of such acts, harassment, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty 44.

43 To see the general recommendations from 1 to 22, access https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm-sp.htm
44 To see the general recommendations, access https://conf-dts1.unog.ch/1%20SPA/Tradutek/Derechos_hum_Base/CEDAW/00_4_obs_qrales_CEDAW.html
Also the Optional Protocol to the Convention (see https://www.ohchr.org/sp/professionalinterest/pages/opcedaw.aspx), adopted by the UN in October 1999, establishes procedures for individuals and groups of individuals to submit formal complaints to the CEDAW Committee when they consider that States parties violate the rights recognized in CEDAW.

**B. Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women or the Convention of Belém do Pará of 1994.**

The Third Hemispheric Report of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention contains important provisions to be taken into account in order to strengthen citizen security, from the perspective of reducing gender-based violence against women. For example, it proposes:

> “Approve protocols for action and care for victims of violence against women, in the police or entities receiving complaints, prosecutors and health services, in indigenous languages when appropriate, which clearly establish the procedures to be followed against to cases of violation of the right of women and girls to live a life free of violence” (MESECVI, 2017, p. 212.).

The Convention of Belém do Pará can be accessed at http://www.cidh.org/basicos/spanish/basicos6.htm

**C. Other binding international instruments**

- **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Palermo Protocol of 2000.**

It states, among other things, that:

The members States will establish policies, programs and other broad based measures in the interest of:

- **a.** Prevent and combat human trafficking.

- **b.** Protect the victims of human trafficking, especially women and children, against the risk of new victimization (see https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons_sp.pdf).
- **Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air of 2000.** This protocol established that:

  In implementing Article 6, the States shall consider the special needs of women and children (for their protection and assistance...), in order to preserve and protect the rights of individuals (...) in accordance with the applicable rules of international law, in particularly the right to life and the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (see [http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/tratados/sp_proto_cont_tr%C3%A1fi_l%C3%A7ADci_migra_tierra_mar_aire_comple_conve_nu_cont_delin_orga_transn.pdf](http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/tratados/sp_proto_cont_tr%C3%A1fi_l%C3%A7ADci_migra_tierra_mar_aire_comple_conve_nu_cont_delin_orga_transn.pdf)).

- **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2002)** (See [https://www.ohchr.org/SP/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPACCRC.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/SP/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPACCRC.aspx)).

### Table 1

#### Binding instruments and country’s compliance status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binding instruments and year of issue</th>
<th>Compliance status for the countries studied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979</td>
<td>Ratified by all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention), 1994</td>
<td>Ratified by all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Palermo Protocol of 2000</td>
<td>Costa Rica, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic have ratified it; while, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras have expressed their adherence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, 2000</td>
<td>Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic have ratified it. Honduras and Belize have indicated their adherence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, 2002</td>
<td>Ratified by all.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
D. Non-binding international instruments


- **UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency or Riyadh Guidelines** (1990) state that to prevent violence against women:
  
  the media in general, and television and movies in particular, should be urged to minimize the level of pornography, drug addiction, and drug use and violence in their messages, and to present an unfavorable image of violence and exploitation, avoiding degrading scenes, especially involving children, women and interpersonal relationships, and promote egalitarian principles and character models (see https://www.ohchr.org/sp/professionalinterest/pages/preventionofjuveniledelinquency.aspx).

- **United Nations Declaration on Crime and Public Security**, 1997. It provides that States shall create the mechanisms required to protect the safety and well-being of citizens, adopting effective measures to combat the manifestations of transnational crime, including organized crime, illegal drug and weapons trafficking, smuggling of illicit goods and human trafficking (see https://www.unodc.org/pdf/event_2006-03-20/RES-51-60%20S.pdf).


- General Assembly resolution 65/228 **Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women** (2010), urging States parties, among other important issues, to:

  ... review their legislation and their principles, procedures, policies, programs and legal practices in crime prevention and criminal justice, in line with their legal system and guided by the Updated Strategies and Model Practical Measures, in order to determine if they are appropriate to prevent and eliminate violence against women or if

45 Non-binding instruments are not mandatory for States parties. Nonetheless, when they are used in the framework of instruments that are, they are legally enforceable. In addition, they constitute general guidance for State actions in the respective matter.
they have negative repercussions for them and, if so, modify them in order to ensure that women receive fair and equitable treatment (see https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=es/e/2013/30).

- **Resolution 68/191 Adoption of measures against the murder of women and girls on the basis of gender** presented by the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and approved by the General Assembly in 2014. It contains general and specific recommendations for data gathering and analysis, as well as for the prevention, investigation, prosecution and the most effective sanctions for the murder of women and girls for reasons of gender; in addition, for the support and assistance to victims (see https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/15-07887_S_ebook.pdf).

- **SICA contains the Central American Security Strategy ESCA**, whose specific objectives include the following:

  “to develop policies, programs, strategies and actions enabling prevention in the following matters: (...) gender-based violence, illicit human trafficking and smuggling (…)”

  In addition, the prevention axis includes a strategy and specific actions aimed at the prevention of gender-based violence in general, and feminicide in particular (see https://www.sica.int/documentos/estrategia-de-seguridad-de-centroamerica_1_60860.html).

- **SICA also has the Regional Policy for Gender Equality and Equity** (PRIEG), as a primary objective, it establishes measures to advance institutional strengthening to position the eradication of violence. To achieve this, it proposes measures such as the standardization and alignment of national regulatory frameworks with regional and international commitments; the strengthening of sectoral policies to improve the assistance, protection and reparation of the rights of women who have been victims of violence; and the institutional strengthening of the sector — which involves the creation of spaces, mechanisms and instruments to exchange knowledge on gender-sensitive security policies, as well as the creation of information systems to monitor and address the problem, in addition to training civil servants in sectors like health, education and justice to evaluate institutional performance — (see http://www.cac.int/node/269).
F. National regulatory frameworks on violence against women

Table 2
Intrafamily Violence Law and comprehensive laws to address violence against women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Law against Intrafamily Violence *</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free from Violence for Women**</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Law against Domestic Violence and its Reforms*</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Law for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Intrafamily Violence*</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women**</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Law against Domestic Violence*</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law Criminalizing Violence against Women**</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>Law 24-97 on Intrafamily Violence*</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law 88-03, which institutes safe houses or shelters throughout the country to serve as a temporary safe haven for women, children and adolescents who are victims of intrafamily or domestic violence *</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>Domestic Violence Law *</td>
<td>2007</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* First generation laws  ** Second generation laws
Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
G. National legal frameworks for femicide/feminicide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of legislation and year</th>
<th>Typification</th>
<th>Penal Sentencing</th>
<th>Areas of enforcement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Comprehensive law of 1995</td>
<td>Femicide</td>
<td>Age 20-35</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Comprehensive law of 2012</td>
<td>Feminicide</td>
<td>Age 20-35</td>
<td>Public and private</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Comprehensive law of 2008</td>
<td>Femicide</td>
<td>Age 25-50</td>
<td>Public and private</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Penal Code of 1984</td>
<td>Femicide</td>
<td>Age 30-40</td>
<td>Public and private</td>
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<td>The Dominican Republic</td>
<td>It is not penalized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>It is not penalized.</td>
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Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura

H. National legal frameworks for human trafficking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of law</th>
<th>Protected legal right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador, 2014</td>
<td>Special Law against Human Trafficking</td>
<td>Serious offense to human dignity and the liberty and integrity of the individual. Consequently, in Salvadoran criminal law, human trafficking can be considered as a multi-offense crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala, 2009</td>
<td>Law against the Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking</td>
<td>In the crime of human trafficking, the protected right is individual freedom. However, the doctrine stipulates that, in addition to freedom, the State, by typifying the crime of human trafficking, protects sexual safety and privacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Type of law</td>
<td>Protected legal right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honduras, 2012</strong></td>
<td>Law against Human Trafficking</td>
<td>This is a multi-offense crime, consequently the legal rights that are threatened or affected when there is an offense, also is of interest to society and the State. The State emphasizes the protection of sexual freedom and privacy. However, it affects other legal rights in the field of fundamental human rights such as life, liberty and personal integrity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominican Republic, 2003</strong></td>
<td>Law 137-03 on Illegal Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking</td>
<td>Multi-offense crime that infringes the right to freedom and sexual integrity, and other legal rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belize</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>The dignity of the human being, with an emphasis on boys, girls and women, regardless of whether they are foreigners or nationals. Other protected rights are freedom and psychological health.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA: The data is not available.

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura based on Bravo Pérez (2014); Antezana (2008)
**Table 3**

National laws on citizen security and their relationship with violence against women and the gender perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of law and year it was enacted</th>
<th>Incorporation of VAWG and the gender perspective in the obligations for citizen security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Costa Rica**                | Law for Restorative Justice, 2018          | The purpose of the law is to establish “a conceptual and procedural framework to establish restorative justice in the Costa Rican legal system, as an instrument that contributes to solving legal conflicts generated by criminal acts.”  

In the case of VAWG, it does not apply cases of acts of this type that are not covered by alternative penalties to those prison, as well as those considered as domestic or intrafamily violence and that are indicated in the Penal Code. In addition, it establishes restriction in administering this type of law when it involves a problem of sexual violence.  

It has elements of the gender perspective in that it establishes that for the care of crime victims, the Public Ministry must “create psychosocial teams specialized in gender issues, to evaluate and provide comprehensive care to the victims of crimes under the Law Criminalizing of Violence Against Women sexual crime and domestic violence.” |
<p>| Law of Immigration and Foreign Citizens, 2010 | It only contains general provisions for the accommodations and treatment of detained migrants as per their gender.                                    |
| General Police Act of 1994 | None.                                      |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of law and year it was enacted</th>
<th>Incorporation of VAWG and the gender perspective in the obligations for citizen security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special Law for the Protection and Development of the Salvadoran Migrant and their Families, 2011</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organic Law of the Institute for Assistance and Attention to Victims of Crime, 2016</td>
<td>This establishes inter-institutional coordination to guarantee specialized comprehensive care for women victims, through the Comprehensive Support Centers for Women Survivors of Violence. The transitional provisions propose the amendment of articles of the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence in order to deal with issues life: Reinforcing the CONAPREVI (National Coordinator for the Prevention of Intrafamily Violence and Violence against Women), entity in charge of providing care for women victims. As well as strengthening and institutionalization of institutions created for the provide care for women victims. However, primarily to clearly establish that women who are victims of violence have the right to receive legal assistance from the State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law for the Immediate Search of Disappeared Women, 2016</td>
<td>The purpose of the Law is to establish a “mechanism for the immediate search for disappeared women, in order to guarantee the life, liberty, security, integrity and dignity of women who are missing, in order to have a mechanism that allows their prompt location and protection to avoid that after their disappearance they may be subjected to other types of harassment, assassination or may be transferred to other communities or countries.” It sets up coordination between various national government agencies, primarily those involved in citizen security and providing care for women, as well as their collaboration with departmental, municipal and communal governments. It notably places the rights of women at the center of the care protocol, therefore it does incorporate the gender perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Type of law and year it was enacted</td>
<td>Incorporation of VAWG and the gender perspective in the obligations for citizen security</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>(Continued)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guatemala</strong></td>
<td>Law on the Genetic Data Bank for Forensic Use, 2017</td>
<td>Its provisions cover preventing, eliminating and punishing any type of violence against children, adolescents and women; as well as to the administration of the Law Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking, to punish repeat offenders. Its articles also call for gathering genetic samples from child victims of abandon, in order to locate their parents, as well as to have elements to investigate whether they suffered sexual violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Museum Law of the National Police, 2016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law No.133-11, Organic Law of the Public Ministry (2011)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law for the Protection of Honduran Migrants and their Families, 2013</td>
<td>It considers support for victims of trafficking and support for women in vulnerable situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organic Law of the National Police, 2008</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law of the Public Ministry, 1994</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law to Protect Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Media Workers, and Justice Operators, 2015</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honduras</strong></td>
<td>Police and Social Coexistence Law, 2011</td>
<td>It does not have a gender perspective nor do any of its provisions address any form of violence against women, or trafficking or femicide specifically. It only mentions that two of its objectives are to combat trafficking and “to fight against the sexual exploitation of minors and migrant Honduran women.” Article 18: Addresses the purpose of the protection policy, but does not consider support for victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law of the Military Police for Public Order, 2013</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law for the Protection of Honduran Migrants and their Families, 2013</td>
<td>It considers support for victims of trafficking and support for women in vulnerable situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organic Law of the National Police, 2008</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Law of the Public Ministry, 1994</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Law to Protect Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Media Workers, and Justice Operators, 2015</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Dominican Republic</strong></td>
<td>Organic Law of the National Police, 2016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Law No.133-11, Organic Law of the Public Ministry (2011)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belize</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
Annex 2 | National policy framework on VAWG and citizen security

**A. Plans and policies for the elimination of VAWG**

**Table 4**

Plans and policies on violence against women and girls in Central America and the Dominican Republic and their relation to citizen security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Incorporates gender approach in the citizen security tasks and institutions</th>
<th>Linking the objectives for the eradication of VAWG with citizen security policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Yes, partially. Only to generate gender-sensitive indicators</td>
<td>The Plan views VAWG as a problem for citizen security. The actions proposed seek to transform some aspects of citizen security policies to further eradicate VAWG. In this sense, the following lines of action stand out:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Create units for investigating violent deaths of women at the national level and strengthen existing ones;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Create specialized regional teams to investigate crimes against women in the Public Ministry, the National Directorate of Criminal Investigation and the National Preventive Police and strengthen those that already exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ In addition, there are components for the detection, prevention, attention, legislation, information, investigation, monitoring and evaluation, and the participation of the Secretary of Security is considered, although tangentially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▶ There is a specific section in the diagnostic chapter regarding the issues of human trafficking and femicide, however there are no lines of action to impact the objectives and actions on Citizen Security, except what is mentioned above, where it mentions “violent death of women”, not femicide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plan type and year
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Incorporates gender approach in the citizen security tasks and institutions</th>
<th>Linking the objectives for the eradication of VAWG with citizen security policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Yes, partially. In the training of public service personnel.</td>
<td>The Program has 3 components. <em>Prevention, Care and Procurement, and Administration of Justice</em>. The Prevention component includes 8 Programs, one of which is the Citizen Security for Women Program, which seeks to incorporate the objectives of eradicating VAWG in the field of citizen security in the dimension of citizen security. In this sense, lines of action are proposed, such as the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan type and year</td>
<td>Nacional Policy Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence (2013)</td>
<td>▸ Define strategies to guarantee safe access to public and private spaces, including security audits, community risk maps of violence against women, and local security plans for women with strategies for the prevention of sexual harassment, workplace harassment, harassment on streets, educational centers and other public spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It also includes several specific lines of action in this regard. Notably the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▸ Incorporate the citizen security of women in municipal and national regulations, to guarantee women’s right to a life free of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▸ Implement standards, regulations to monitor the proper enforcement of the LEIV, and administrative sanctions for justice sector personnel for non-compliance and administrative and judicial errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▸ Define road maps to access and administer justice for different types of violence against women through the creation of inter-institutional networks, citizen networks and networks of women human rights defenders, at the municipal, departmental and national levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There are no objectives or specific lines of action to combat trafficking in women, or feminicidal violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Incororates gender approach in the citizen security tasks and institutions</td>
<td>Linking the objectives for the eradication of VAWG with citizen security policies</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guatemala</strong></td>
<td>Yes, partially. It has 12 Pillars, one of which is Institutional mechanisms, which has the specific objective:</td>
<td>The Program has a pillar that addresses the eradication of violence against women, proposing actions for its prevention, attention and punishment, some considering participation by the Ministry of Governance; however, it does not seek to transform central aspects of citizen security policy. For example, the problems of trafficking and femicide are only addressed in terms of seeking compliance with the provisions in the respective laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan type and year</strong></td>
<td>National Policy for the Advancement and Integral Development of Women, 2008-2023</td>
<td>The Program does not have a pillar for citizen/public/interior security, so the citizen security intervention is in this Pillar and in Pillar 4 Racism and Discrimination, which includes general actions to achieve citizen security of women victims of discrimination or racism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Incorporates gender approach in the citizen security tasks and institutions</td>
<td>Linking the objectives for the eradication of VAWG with citizen security policies</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Costa Rica   | Yes, through the incorporation of Human Rights and Women’s Rights approaches; of power relations and equality between men and women. Ministry of Public Safety is part of the National System for Attention and Prevention of Violence against Women and Intrafamily Violence, but there is no specification as to the aspects of the policy that will focus on the gender approach. | It has a specific section assessing insecurity. It conceptuallyizes the issue of violence against women as a matter of citizen security. Accordingly, it has a main line of pillar-objective linked to citizen security: “PILLAR FOUR: Effective protection, real access, due diligence, sanction and no re-victimization.” The Strategic Objective is as follows:  
- Increase access to public services for women affected by violence, providing: Effective protection, due diligence, punishment, reparation and no re-victimization. Effective protection includes police protection and the administration of protection orders. Based on these mandates, it proposes police officers be trained and specialized programs developed for police to address VAWG.  
- It also has another pillar for the “Prevention, comprehensive care and non-re-victimization of sexual violence” to improve the administration and enforcement of justice. However, there are no mandates for police work.  
- In addition, there is a specific pillar on combating femicide, to ensure that women at risk of femicide can access comprehensive services. It proposes a response to women at risk who need immediate protection. Also, care for the family of women victims of femicidal violence.  
- It contains an innovative management model that raises key aspects for administering the Program, for example:  
  - The creation of an Internal Commission in each of the institutions in the System to be in charge of the execution, monitoring and evaluation of compliance with the institutional goals of PLANOVI 2017-2032 with participation of the senior management or high-level representatives, Departments of Institutional Planning, highest level institutional operational-technical managers, departments of institutional communication and social education, gender unit, among others. This commission will be responsible for providing regular guidance and accompaniment through training, directives and monitoring the representatives in local networks on the tasks to be carried out in each period. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Incorporates gender approach in the citizen security tasks and institutions</th>
<th>Linking the objectives for the eradication of VAWG with citizen security policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Dominican Republic      | Yes, but to a limited extent. Only for training civil servants.               | The Strategic Plan for the Prevention, Detection, Attention and Punishment of Violence against Women and Intrafamily Violence (2011-2016) proposes 6 general objectives. Some of them propose that areas in charge of citizen security be more involved in the elimination VAWG. For example, in General Objective 1 on the progressive reduction of violence against women and within the family through the implementation of a prevention, detection and comprehensive care strategy, it states:  
  ▶ “7. Support the approval and enactment of a law that governs, defines and regulates the system of protection and defense of the rights of victims and witnesses;  
  ▶ 8. Strengthen the daily working relationships between the Public Defender’s Office of the Republic, the Adjunct Public Defender for Women, the prosecutors and inspectors at the national level and the comprehensive care units with the Directorate of Equality Policies, and the Coordinating Unit for the Ministry of Women Safe Houses or Shelters, in order to optimize the enforcement of the risk detection protocol and increase efficiency in referrals for the protection of women;  
  ▶ 9. Strengthen the joint work of the Public Ministry and the Ministry of Women at the local level and in each jurisdiction in addressing cases of violence against women and intrafamily violence.”  
  But it does not include anything to modify citizen security strategies and actions to incorporate the elimination of VAWG as a priority. |
| Belize                      | No                                                                            | The Program has 4 priority objectives: *Effective and sustainable government; Primary prevention of gender-based violence (GBV); Adequate response for victims of GBV and Effective monitoring and evaluation.* Regarding the first, it proposes raising the hierarchy level of the institution in charge of coordinating national policy, as a result, the Ministry of Security and other ministries are expected to be included in that coordination.  
  There is also a plan to open a National Office on Sexual and Domestic Violence in the Police Department. Along those same lines, the aim is to provide training to produce specialized Officers. This will strengthen the capacity to respond to the issue. |

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura
Table 5
Citizen security plans and policies and their incorporation of the gender perspective and the objectives for the elimination of VAWG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Objectives and strategies for the elimination of VAWG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Its central strategy is the establishment of a National Citizen Security System, in order to address the expressions and phenomena of violence, and to address those social factors that encourage its proliferation and reproduction. The system works with 5 central pillars: Prevention of violence and crime; the control and repression of crime and violence; rehabilitation and social reintegration; care for victims and strengthening institutions in charge of security and justice. As part of the former, it proposes the design and institutionalization of gender-based violence and intrafamily violence prevention strategies, including the promotion of awareness campaigns to generate greater awareness of and response to such violence, the generation of gender-sensitive care protocols in the security and justice sector, and the strengthening of inter-institutional coordination, both at the central and local levels. The rest of the pillars have no explicit mention of State actions to address violence against women, focusing on intrafamily violence. It seeks sustainable and concerted solutions to the situation of insecurity that the country is experiencing, and to help steer policies and plans for justice, citizen security and peaceful coexistence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Policy/plan   | Issued by the National Council for Citizen Security and Coexistence (CNSCC that brings together government, civil society, private initiative, and members of the international community), consists of 5 pillars and 124 priority short-, medium- and long-term actions to address violence and crime, and guarantee victims’ access to care, protection and justice. This Plan, with its national scope, focused on certain municipalities according to the seriousness of the problem, following its implementation phases. In the diagnosis, it noted gender factors associated with violence, as well as specific expressions of violence against women and girls, such as femicide. In some of its pillars of intervention, the PESS contained specific lines of action to address violence against women and girls. Pillar 1 dealt with violence prevention, for example, proposing that citizen care offices for women (ODAC Women) be set up in prioritized municipalities and communities, and training programs be delivered to ensure job placement for women heads of households and victims of violence. It also sought to reduce domestic violence and abuse against women through the implementation of awareness programs to transform relationships between women and men. Likewise, Pillar 2 aimed to increase the judicialization of cases of homicides, femicides, rapes and other crimes (CNSCC, 2015). It should be noted that one of its expected results was to increase the use of public spaces, so it was proposed to increase the percentage of women who feel safe there. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy/plan</th>
<th>National Policy/Plan for Justice, Public Safety and Coexistence 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy/plan</td>
<td>Plan El Salvador Seguro (PESS)</td>
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<td>Policy/plan</td>
<td>Plan El Salvador Seguro (PESS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy/plan</td>
<td>Objectives and strategies for the elimination of VAWG</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country Honduras</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy/plan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Policy for Coexistence and Citizen Security, 2011</td>
<td>It comprises two fundamental pillars: <em>Prevention and control of violence and crime</em>. Its strategic lines of action include the creation of a National System for Citizen Security and Coexistence to strengthen administrative capacities and institutional performance in the matter, as well as the creation of a National Council for Citizen Security. The latter was created in 2013, is composed of several institutions, and is responsible for monitoring the situation of violence affecting the country and adopting measures to confront it. On the other hand, this policy establishes that manifestations of intrafamily and gender-based violence become elements of production and reproduction of violence. In order to eradicate them, it proposes the strengthening of women’s offices and counsellors, as the main line of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy/plan</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safer Municipalities Program, 2012</td>
<td>Its objectives are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ 1. Improve national and local authorities’ capacities for the prevention of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ 2. Address crime and violence risk factors in the selected municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ 3. Improve the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to an emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The municipal plans implemented in the framework of this program are based on assessments of the local situation of violence and insecurity, including violence against women and girls as a matter of citizen security. Likewise, it is acknowledged that when women are subjected to a crime, this is accompanied by sexual violence, and it emphasizes that although women experience most violence in the home, public transportation and some public spaces are also usually unsafe for women. The actions to respond to violence against women include promoting the work of the Local Observatory of Violence as an monitoring instrument; develop comprehensive improvement initiatives in neighborhoods and blocks, considering use of their urban infrastructure for crime prevention; manage employability/entrepreneurship alternatives for women survivors of violence in order to guarantee their economic autonomy; deliver training to institutions and communities on issues related to violence against women and carry out awareness campaigns on violence against women, ways to file complaints and draw attention to cases. It should be noted that the institutional strengthening actions contemplated include training police officers to know how to assist women victims of violence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategic Plan of the Police Department 2014-2018

National Anti-Crime Strategy

It focused on addressing violence against children, adolescents and youth, women, armed violence and road violence and traffic accidents. That same year, the Action Plan for said policy was developed, which included a series of inter-institutional strategies to address the different factors that give rise to violence in the family, the community and society.

In 2017 the government updated its National Security Policy, considering a multidimensional and multisectoral scope, in order to “[...] consolidate the functions of the institutions and their coordination with other actors, to generate an impact on national objectives and the conditions that enable the country’s development, and the full exercise of the fundamental rights of the Guatemalan population.” One of the Policy’s guiding principles is gender equity, making it mandatory for the State to implement measures and mechanisms to promote the integral development of women and ensure their participation in the economic, political and social domains.

In the National Strategy for the Prevention of Crime and Violence 2017-2027, women are identified as a group that is vulnerable to violence, therefore it incorporates a specific strategic pillar, in order to “Prepare, arrange and execute inter-institutional and inter-sectorial coordinated and unified strategic measures in order to guarantee women can exercise the right to live free from violence and discrimination, and in the event of non-compliance, reduce the effects, focusing on the attention to its causes, reparation, rehabilitation and non-repetition of the facts.”

This Plan constitutes the main planning framework for the Belize Police Department and outlines certain objectives and strategies to protect liberty, property, maintain law and order, as well as prevent and detect crime and punish perpetrators. The Plan, among other objectives, seeks to contribute to improving the investigative processes in order to increase the rates of detection and apprehension of offenders; to increase the effectiveness of preventive interventions on the streets and elsewhere; to continue fighting organized crime; and improve the capabilities of the national police to better serve people. It does not cover objectives for combating VAWG.

In this national strategy, the Government commits to reducing crimes involving firearms, and to dismantle criminal gangs; to carry out legal reforms so that the police can fight crime more effectively; to strengthen the coordination and investigation capacities of the police; as well as to implement a surveillance system to monitor crime in Belize City. It does not cover objectives for combating VAWG.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>The Dominican Republic</th>
<th>Objectives and strategies for the elimination of VAWG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy/plan</td>
<td>Comprehensive Citizen</td>
<td>In 2013, the government of the Dominican Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security Plan, 2014</td>
<td>presented this Plan, in</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>conjunction with a reform of the National Police.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This Plan is based on two main</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>pillars: Persecution and prevention of crime.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The first aims for more security in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the streets, protecting citizen lives and</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>property, and to strike at the structures</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of organized crime, which constitute a</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>transcendental problem for the country.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As for the second pillar, this includes various</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strategies to attack the deepest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>causes of crime and violence in general, from a</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preventive approach.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Among the main lines of action contemplated in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>this Plan is the implementation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of the 911 Integrated Emergency System, the “Live</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Quiet” prevention program, road safety and control</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plans, a strategy for drug control, measures to</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>reinforce the Public Defender of the Republic, an</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>observatory of violence, among others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>This policy “seeks to contribute to human</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy/plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>development, improving the quality of life and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>well-being of the inhabitants of Costa Rica,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ensuring stable and supportive livelihoods</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>within the framework of due respect for human</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rights” (Government of Costa Rica, 2010: 5).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>POLSEPAZ involves addressing the conditions of</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>exclusion and vulnerability that give rise to</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>violence, enhancing the culture of social peace</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and human development through the strengthening</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of public institutions and communities,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>strengthening the capacities of the State to</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>guarantee security citizenship and strategic</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>State actions to eliminate all forms of violence,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>taking into account the specific vulnerabilities</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>that affect certain population groups, such as</td>
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<td></td>
<td>women. Achieving this involves a series of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>strategic actions focused on prevention, care</td>
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<td>and protection, punishment, control and</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>reparation, and reintegration.</td>
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<td>Policy/plan</td>
<td>National Plan for the</td>
<td>PLANOVI Women sought to give continuity to the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assistance and</td>
<td>first National Plan for providing Assistance and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prevention of Violence</td>
<td>Prevention of Intrafamily Violence and Extrafamilial</td>
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<td></td>
<td>against Women in</td>
<td>Sexual Abuse (PLANOVI); it was enacted in 1994,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationships and</td>
<td>as “[...] a pioneering experience in State and</td>
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<td>Families due to</td>
<td>civil society partnership to respond in a</td>
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<td>Sexual Harassment and</td>
<td>comprehensive, coordinated and systemic way to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rape (PLANOVI Woman),</td>
<td>violence experienced in families” (INAMU, 2010:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2010.</td>
<td>5), contributing to direct attention to the</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>different manifestations of</td>
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<td>violence against women at the national level.</td>
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<td>Policy/plan</td>
<td>National Policy for the</td>
<td>This policy seeks to respond to the new forms of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Attention and Prevention of</td>
<td>violence that affect the female</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Violence against Women of All Ages, 2017</td>
<td>population in Costa Rica due to the worsening of</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>the social crisis and the rise</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>in organized crime. Along these lines, the</td>
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<td>Policy focuses on primary prevention,</td>
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<td>that is, on promoting positive masculinities and</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>working in the context of family and community,</td>
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<td>where the behaviors and attitudes that</td>
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<td>legitimize and naturalize violence against</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>women develop (INAMU, 2017).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by UNDP Infosegura


THE HIDDEN FACE OF INSECURITY:
Violence against women in Central America and the Dominican Republic

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