

# PROGRAMS WITH MEN WHO HAVE COMMITTED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE HISPANIC CARIBBEAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# CREDITS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), within the framework of the Regional Spotlight Program, strengthened a knowledge platform called the Community of Practice of Essential Services for Women Survivors of Gender-Based Violence. This community consists of 18 countries in the region and has participation from government agencies, civil society organizations, United Nations System agencies and international cooperation agencies.

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

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

That same year, in response to the priorities identified by the Community of Practice, Promundo and EME-Fundación CulturaSalud worked together to map and systematize programs for men who commit gender-based violence in Latin America and the hispanic Caribbean, with the purpose of recognizing some promising practices that could generate technical guidelines and recommendations to inspire similar programs in the future.



# PROGRAMS WITH MEN WHO PERPETRATE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Violence against women and girls is a human rights and public health problem throughout the world. Men, in their role as partners and/or ex-partners, are the most frequent perpetrators of different types of aggressions (UN Women, 2015).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, depending on the country, between 13.4 % and 52.3 % of women in the age range of 15 to 49 years have experienced physical violence committed by their partner and/or ex-partner. Between 5.2% and 15.2% of women have survived sexual violence (Bott et al., 2012).

Faced with this problem, strategies have been developed that seek to prevent, punish and address these types of violence. These strategies are supported by international covenants such as the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" (United Nations General Assembly, 1979) and the "Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women" (Convention Belém do Pará, 1996). These conventions have primarily focused on assistance for women survivors/victims (Aguayo et al., 2016; Beiras et al., 2019).

In the fields of masculinities and gender-based violence studies in recent decades there has been a growing consensus regarding the need for interventions that target men who have perpetrated violence against women. This has led to the design of specific programs and policies around the world. The implementation of

these programs is seen as a strategy for the prevention of violence and the protection of victims. The programs have the goal of preventing new acts of violence by seeking accountability for their actions and the re-education of men so that they adopt non-sexist and non-violent attitudes and behaviors (Ponce Antezana, 2012).

The report titled: **"Programs with men who have committed gender-based violence in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean"** is an effort to contribute to knowledge about the systematization, research, evaluation and results of programs that work with men who have committed gender-based violence in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean. This report aims to contribute to policy guidelines and the design, implementation and evaluation of these types of interventions.

The report presents: (i) a review of scientific articles about the evidence from these programs that have been published in indexed journals and use a literature review methodology; (ii) a review of existing programs in the region that are mentioned in the scientific literature; (iii) a systematization of six programs that are considered innovative in the region; (iv) descriptive results of the mapping of programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was conducted using an online questionnaire that obtained a total of 148 responses; and, (v) a set of recommendations for the future design and implementation of these programs.



# RELEVANT FINDINGS

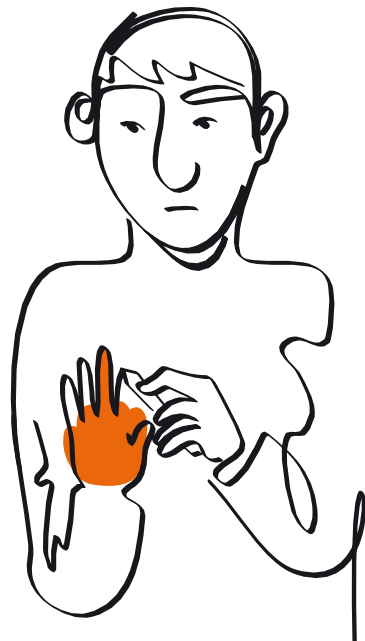
The literature review highlights findings in terms of advances and limitations in the field of implementation and research on programs that work with men who have committed violence. It is important to note that most of these programs were implemented in countries in the global North. This is largely due to the fact that evaluations or systematizations of interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean are scarce, are not published in indexed journals, or are published in gray literature including NGO, agency or government reports.

The analysis includes a total of 25 articles. The main finding identified is that most of these documents describe inconclusive results regarding the effectiveness of the programs. This may be due to the fact that effectiveness is usually measured based on the recidivism indicator, which generally has a lower rate for positive results, or methodological limitations with the studies. The programs have demonstrated promising results in that positive changes have been identified among male perpetrators of violence who participate in programs, particularly in actions such as a decrease in perpetrating intimate partner or domestic violence, taking responsibility for their actions, empathy, self-control, communication skills, conflict resolution and more active fatherhood.

In addition, it is noted that users value the group reflection methodologies contained in the programs. In relation to the difficulties and limitations of the interventions, there are recurrent

mentions of participants dropping out and the need for suitable follow-up mechanisms. It is also mentioned that an important challenge for these interventions is to make them more culturally relevant.

The literature review in Latin America identified a total of 26 programs, of which 13 have sufficient information about their methodologies, theoretical bases and evaluation mechanisms. Some of these programs were implemented by government agencies, others by civil society organizations and a minority are the result of an alliance between both sectors. The vast majority of these programs operate using small focus groups, which vary widely in terms of the number of sessions (between 15 and 56). In addition, there is variety in the theoretical approaches used, with gender and masculinities as recurrent topics. Finally, this review highlights the need for increased systematization and impact evaluation of existing programs in the region to learn about their results and lessons learnt.





For the chapter on innovative programs we selected those that were referred to as reference points by other programs and were implemented in Latin America and the hispanic Caribbean. These were highly sustainable experiences implemented by government agencies with a broad scope in the countries or States where they were implemented, or had a model that opened up participation to a broad population of men. This information is collected from the following programs: (i) the Walking Toward Equality Program; (ii) the WEM Method of Working with Men in Personal Growth Groups; (iii) the Program for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence from the Nuclei of Assistance to the Family and Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (NAFAVD); (iv) the Program for Men who Renounce their Violence; (v) the Re-education Component for Men who Commit Partner Violence in the program titled "Assistance, Protection and Reparations in Violence against Women"; and, (vi) the Program for Assistance to Men who Decide to Stop Committing Violence. Information is also presented on the trajectory, user population, theoretical and methodological bases, intervention strategies and evaluations that are available from these services.

The mapping was carried out through an online survey and participants registered 147 programs. The main findings from this process included::

- Most of the programs operate with government funding (n=82 out of 147). The rest, are operated by NGOs (n=26 out of 147) and academic centers (n=13 out of 147).
- 89% of the mapped programs offer their services free of charge to users. .

- The vast majority of the programs receive participants who are referred by courts of law (n=123), or by another program or institution (n=70). A significant proportion work with men who attend voluntarily (n=77).
- 53.7% of the programs reported dropout rates of below 25%; 29.2% reported dropout rates between 26% and 50%; 14.3% reported dropout rates between 51% and 75% and only 2.7% reported dropout rates above 75%.
- The need to improve the carrying out of impact evaluations and the systematization of existing initiatives has been identified. From the programs mapped by the questionnaire, almost three quarters carry out some type of evaluation, but only 15% carry out impact evaluations. In addition, 56.5% of the programs do not have any type of publication regarding the results of their intervention.

This literature review shows that working with men who have experienced violence in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is an emerging field. Although there is a range of programs and some have more than ten years of experience, only a few have rigorous systematization and impact evaluations. A relevant challenge is to make progress with the dissemination of the approaches, methodologies and results of existing experiences, as well as carrying out impact evaluations of programs to learn about their effectiveness and their limitations.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The review identified challenges in the field of working with men who have been perpetrators of violence. The following recommendations are suggested to address these issues:
- Include interventions with men who have perpetrated violence as a necessary component of policies to address gender-based violence and as part of the network of available services. Counselling and programs for men who have perpetrated violence should be a component of gender-based violence policies and articulated with their objectives.
- Ensure adequate funding and a sufficient technical-professional structure for interventions with male perpetrators of violence. Funding should not come from services for women survivors/victims, but should represent additional resources that are consolidated and permanent, preferably from governments.
- Generate an adequate public institutional framework so that programs with male aggressors can have stability and continuity, regardless of any changes in political administrations that may occur.

- Guarantee and increase the safety and well-being of women and children who are members of the families of male users. This should be defined or established as a primary technical and ethical objective. These programs should seek to reduce or eliminate all forms of male violence and promote the accountability of men who have committed violence, the redefinition of masculinity and the development of gender equitable attitudes and practices.
- Incorporate a transformative approach to gender and masculinities in interventions that challenge machismo, traditional gender norms and the use of violence against women, girls and boys, as well as violence against other men and people with diverse sexual and gender identities.
- Incorporate reflective and psychoeducational approaches for the design of the programs and the interventions, avoiding a psychologizing and/or pathologizing perspective of violence. In addition, consider a re-education or re-socialization approach and work with active, reflective and participatory methodologies.
- Design interventions that are relevant to the context and culture of the participants. Consider their needs, as well as their biographies and life stories. These types of services should reach diverse groups of men, such as migrants, indigenous, afro-descendants, rural populations, etc.
- Encourage men to join the programs in different ways, either by court order, referred by other institutions or voluntarily. In the case of men who have been legally ordered to attend a program, it is necessary to create coordination mechanisms with courts to ensure compliance with sentences.

- Incorporate an initial assessment that takes into account risk levels, mental health assessment and alcohol and drug use. Consider specific interventions for men with substance abuse issues, mental health problems or who have experienced violence in their life cycle.
- Carry out rigorous actions to evaluate compliance with the program's objectives and measure its results. Take into account the voices of different informants when carrying out impact evaluations, especially the participants' partners and/or ex-partners and other people in their affective networks. Consider evaluating their progress at different time intervals following participants' completion of the program evaluation (for example: six months, one year, two years).
- Consider informing, supporting and intervening with participants' partners and/or ex-partners in separate spaces and with different professional teams. The partners of men who have committed violence should be informed of the objectives of the program and its limitations.
- Provide training, support and specialized supervision for professional intervention teams. Staff training should include topics such as: gender approach, masculinities, violence

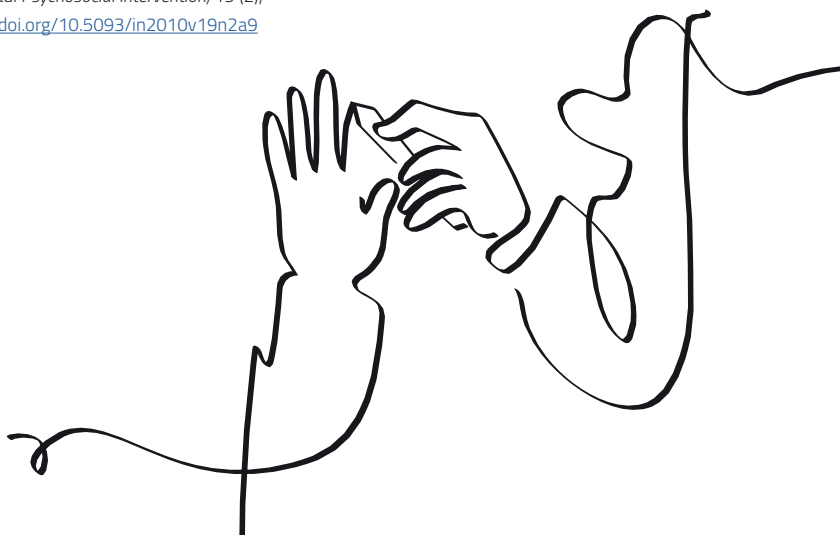


against women and girls, group facilitation methodologies and intervention tools. In addition, staff should review, reflect and engage in critical thinking regarding their own gender attitudes and masculinities.

- Network with other teams and/or services that work with women survivors of intimate partner or domestic violence and survivors of child abuse. In particular, form networks with the services located in the same neighborhood, municipality or city where the work is being carried out.
- Conduct monitoring at least six months to one year after the completion of the program that includes both participants and their partners and/or ex-partners. It is important to review their communication with care services, police and courts of justice to identify possible cases of recidivism of violent actions.
- Invest in mapping, systematizing and evaluating the impact of programs designed for men who have committed gender-based violence and raise funds for research to evaluate the impact of these programs.
- Disseminate knowledge from each intervention and its evaluation to contribute to the design and intervention of other programs and teams working with male perpetrators of gender-based violence.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the three transformative results of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is to end gender-based violence against women and harmful practices against girls and adolescents. To achieve this goal, UNFPA has promoted the implementation of the Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

As part of its regional actions, in 2018 it created the Essential Services Community of Practice with the objective of having a quality multisectoral response centered on the needs of survivors. This community is made up of 18 countries in the region and includes the participation of government agencies, civil society organizations, agencies of the UN System and international cooperation.

In 2020, the Spotlight Regional Programme, an initiative launched by the European Union and the UN System to end all forms of violence against women and girls and femicide/feminicide in Latin America, strengthened the Essential Services Community of Practice through the systematization of promising practices on challenging issues in the response to violence against women and girls, with the aim of developing technical guidelines countries can use to provide a differential and inclusive response with an intersectional approach.

In this context, UNFPA, in partnership with PROMUNDO and EME/CulturaSalud, promoted the systematization project entitled: *Programs with men who have committed gender based violence in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean.*

