WORKING DOCUMENT

REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Foreword

"Hope in Latin America has a female face".
(Pope Francis 7 September 2017)

We have recently lived an unprecedented experience: the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean. An arduous process of listening, dialogue and discernment, which sought to involve the People of God who walk on our continent. This process brought us closer together, showed us that we are more united than we thought and that we share common challenges to face together. For this reason, we are filled with joy and gratitude for the synodal power of the Holy Spirit.

In the midst of a society that generally does not listen, it is significant that a women's organisation is dedicated to listening to the women of our region. In line with the Church Assembly process, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) with its World Observatory of Women, in alliance with the Pastoral Socio-Anthropological Observatory of CELAM's Department of Knowledge Management, produced this study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the lives of women in Latin America and the Caribbean, their families, communities and villages.

Pope Francis in Dear Amazonia, in describing the ecclesial dream, aspires to "that women have a real and effective influence in the organisation, in the most important decisions and in the guidance of the communities, but without failing to do so with the style proper to their feminine imprint" (QA 103).

As I read through the pages of this report, passages from the Gospel came to mind, such as Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, or the one who was caught in adultery and He delivers her from her persecutors and makes her dignity reappear in her, or the women running to the tomb looking for the body of Jesus, or Mary standing near her Son on the cross... in short, so many echoes of these Gospel examples embodied in the sufferings and resilience of the women of our region.

That is why we are publishing this report which, developed with scientific seriousness, presents the feelings and concrete proposals of thousands of women. At the same time, we renew our commitment to work to **promote the active participation of women in the life of the Church, as well as their irreplaceable role in society**, challenges that we have assumed in the Ecclesial Assembly, among others.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us, following this "listening", to produce the "overflow" at the impulse of the Spirit, in order to generate on our continent, pastoral proposals that overcome the current crisis and promote creative responses to the groans of the most vulnerable and of the planet.

P. O. Jorge Eduardo Lozano
Archbishop of San Juan de Cuyo, Argentina
Secretary General of CELAM

General introduction

The Global Observatory for Women

Just as we can hear without listening, we can also see without looking. An Observatory, on the other hand, consists of an attentive gaze that stops before what it sees and hears and delves into that reality as if it were focusing on the eyes of the person in front of it. If we broaden "our gaze, starting from the eyes of the poor person in front of us (...) we look at reality in a different way from the way it is in our mentality". (Pope Francis, 26 June 2021)

The World Observatory for Women (WMO) tries to listen to and look at women from various regions of the planet, particularly the most vulnerable, who do not have the power to speak out or, if they do, it may be that no one notices and their expressions are diluted in the sea of globalisation of indifference.

The objective of the WMO is to **give visibility to women, especially the most vulnerable, who seem "invisible", both in terms of their suffering and their potential, in order** to inspire and generate pastoral strategies on the part of the Church, synergies on the part of civil society NGOs, public policies on the part of States and contributions to the international agenda, which favour the integral human development of women and that of their families, communities and peoples.

The World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) is dedicated to the promotion of women in order to foster their co-responsibility in evangelisation and integral human development; with its 8 million women it extends - through its almost 100 member organisations - to all continents[1] . It is an existential observatory of women in the world.

In June 2021, WUCWO created, on an experimental basis, the OMM, with the encouragement of the Holy See's Dicasteries for the Laity, Family and Life and for the Service of Integral Human Development. In order to proceed with the scientific rigour that would enhance its methodology and results, it sought links with academic centres that shared the human and Christian values that characterise its theoretical framework.

In alliance with CELAM's Knowledge Management Centre and its Pastoral Socio-Anthropological Observatory, the WMO carried out the work: ***Impact of Covid-19 on women in Latin America and the Caribbean***, whose main, but not exclusive, value is qualitative. Carried out between June and December 2021, it aims to be the **first stage of a journey to be made together with the women of the continent**.

This presentation consists of three parts. In the ***State of the Art,*** data published by international agencies (UN, ECLAC, etc.) and by complementary sources are collected to show the state of the question from the quantitative perspective of these agencies. The ***Experts' Report*** offers the result of the dialogue established with 25 female experts from 14 countries in the region, with different profiles, languages and roles. They are "experts" because of their experience of concrete insertion in the community they lead and/or in which they serve. The ***Survey Report reflects*** the representations of a non-statistical sample of women from 23 Latin American and Caribbean

[1] WUCWO is the only international public association of the faithful dedicated to women, recognised as such by the Holy See of the Catholic Church, was founded in 1910 and has international representation at UNESCO, FAO, ECOSOC, the UN Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe (www.umofc.org).

countries, with testimonies collected through open-ended questions about their experiences during the pandemic. Each part concludes with a theological-pastoral contribution.

The 1st Ecclesial Assembly for Latin America and the Caribbean (November 2021), a historic event in which more than 70,000 believers participated, included some of the results of this research in its working documents. Throughout this report there are notable coincidences with the Narrative Synthesis of the listening process that preceded the Assembly, even though this research includes women who do not consider themselves to be Catholics.

Executive Summary

LUPA" EFFECT: this could be called the holistic and principal effect of the pandemic caused by Covid-19 on the situation of women in LAC, since the studies collected, the experts consulted and the surveys report the "deepening", "aggravation" and "aggravation" of structural and pre-existing social, economic and cultural iniquities in the continent.

Main findings

- **Notable absences**
  - Women in LAC as a whole have not been the subject of the extensive studies conducted by international agencies in researching the impact of Covid-19 and state measures to contain and prevent its spread. The findings presented below refer only to a few countries in the region or to particular studies.
  - At the conclusion of the State of the Art, in August 2021, no figures were found on femicides in the LAC region as a whole in 2020 that would make it possible to establish the difference with 2019. However, some cities and countries provided official measurements noting their increase during the pandemic (in Bogotá they increased 8.6% over the previous year and in Argentina, in the first 9 months of 2020, they rose to one every 32 hours, leaving 231 children without a mother).
  - The findings referring to particularly vulnerable population groups, such as migrant women, indigenous women, victims of trafficking, women in prisons, women in peripheral or poor rural areas, and mothers or carers of children with disabilities, come from the experience of "expert" women, inserted and serving in these contexts, because no studies by regional public entities were found aimed at these sectors.

- **Gender-based violence**
  - Reporting increased in several countries, both through dedicated hotlines and by neighbours and family members rather than by the victims locked up in their homes. In other countries, during confinement, the number of reports decreased because the victims were living with their aggressor and did not have a place of refuge to avoid further aggression or femicide.
  - During the period of restriction of movement and quarantine, the lack of state presence in the territory made it difficult for women in situations of domestic violence to flee. Psychological and social assistance was also weakened by the impossibility of accessing such services.
  - With the closure of schools, churches and public and private help centres, women - old, old and young - lost spaces for expression, listening, support and support. Not being able to develop their spiritual dimension in such settings contributed to increased pain and anguish.
  - The complaints cover physical, psychological, economic and symbolic violence, as well as violence by the State in the workplace and in failing to fulfil its obligations.
  - Specifically during the first year of the pandemic: in Brazil, 25% of women over the age of 16 suffered some kind of aggression (35.2% increase), 5 out of 10 Brazilians have seen a woman suffer violence, 46.7% of the victims also lost their jobs and began to consume more alcohol; in the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, since the beginning of the pandemic, pregnancies among girls from the age of 10 have increased; in Venezuela, although statistics are lacking, it is estimated that feminicide has increased fivefold.

- **Deterioration of economic autonomy**

- A large percentage of women in LAC tend to be employed in the sectors that have suffered the greatest negative effects in terms of employment and income, such as tourism, manufacturing, commerce, health and education, in addition to their severe structural inclusion in the informal economy. The fall in employment levels and the increase in unemployment added to the pre-existing wage gap between men and women that characterises the sexual segregation of labour.
- According to the ILO, 70.4 per cent of domestic workers were affected by the quarantine measures, through reduced economic activity, unemployment, reduced hours or loss of wages.
- In countries where the government provided time-limited subsidies to the poorest, who were unable to do their temporary jobs, the economy of women and their families temporarily improved, but when the income was withdrawn and inflation rose, the economic emergency worsened compared to the pre-pandemic period.

➢ **Worsening feminisation of** poverty

- Impoverishment placed a superlative burden on the situation of women whose households are deprived of safe drinking water and who spend 5-12 hours a week more on unpaid domestic and care work than women living without such deprivation.
- The deterioration was accentuated among rural, indigenous, migrant and peripheral women, due to barriers to selling their food and handicraft products in markets or on the streets, and obstacles to accessing productive resources such as drinking water, agricultural inputs, fuel for transport, etc.
- Indigenous entrepreneurs have seen their community production, on which hundreds of families depend for their livelihoods, affected and a high percentage of their small and large enterprises are disappearing.
- Migrant women denounced further discrimination during the emergency, with the closure of day care centres forcing them to leave their jobs to care for their children and/or the reduction of their jobs as caregivers or domestic workers in family homes.

➢ **Physical and mental health impairment**

- The prioritisation of health services for the virus led to a 40 per cent decrease in pregnancy check-ups in 11 countries in the region, according to PAHO. This led to maternal distress and an increase in maternal and infant mortality in childbirths.
- The telemedicine implemented did not allow the most vulnerable women to be attended to, as they often do not know how to use mobile technologies for this type of practice. The electronic mental health system became almost inaccessible to them as they did not have a reserved space in their homes or had to share their mobile phones with the rest of their families.
- The lack of treatment of the sick in health centres meant that women generally took care of them at home, with the obvious risk of increased transmission of the virus.
- Access to vaccination has been hindered for indigenous women's families, as priority is given to cities and they do not receive adequate information regarding the effects of vaccines in their territories.
- A number of studies from different countries have found high levels of fear, distress and depression in women, as well as psychological and emotional burnout in those who faced intensified pace and higher productivity demands in remote work.

➢ **Increased care work**

- The structural inequality affecting women in terms of unequal distribution of care work was accentuated due to the permanence of children and adolescents in households with access to remote classrooms, the disruption of other care networks and resources, and the limited coverage of the health system that shifted the burden of care to households. Responsibilities tripled.
- In general, remote work increased the burden of care and domestic work. Only some groups of professional women or women with university or graduate education expressed that remote work brought them closer to their husbands and children and gave them more time for physical activity and leisure.
- UNICEF reports reveal a 51% higher burden of care work for women. In many of the responses to the survey, indicators of stereotypes and traditional mandates for the roles of men and women within the household can still be detected, as if the roles assigned to each could not be transformed over the centuries.

➢ **Difficulties in education and social inequalities**

- The closure of the schools exacerbated multiple social inequalities such as the digital divide in knowledge and access to the use of information and communication technologies, as well as the lack of policies for the reconciliation of family life and work for women, among others.
- Many mothers were unable to understand school instructions and explain them to their children, nor were they able to access virtual classes due to lack of internet connection. According to ECLAC, the cost of broadband service for the poorest sectors is on average 13% of their income, and 39.1% of women in households in this sector have no income of their own.
- The problems of having to share a mobile phone in vulnerable families with insufficient technology to store homework, ... resulted in many of the pupils subjected to the remote system not achieving their educational goals and the consequent distress of their mothers.
- For teachers, distance education meant an extraordinary effort, particularly for teachers in rural areas. Not only did they not have the required support, but the work material was often developed for virtual teaching in cities and not in rural or multicultural contexts.
- The "collapse" of education in the region due to the pandemic has not yet been strictly estimated, but a negative effect of "simulated education" and school dropout due to lack of encouragement is estimated. For example, in the midst of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, 50 per cent of children were not re-enrolled in school by 2021.
- On the other hand, the survey responses from highly educated women in charge of accompanying children reflect a positive experience, even though adapting to the distance learning system was not always easy and a certain percentage reported fatigue and stress.
- These women said they had taken advantage of the emergency to take virtual courses, or to continue or resume their studies and training in communication technologies (ICTs).

➢ **Rise of organised crime for trafficking in women**

- When the borders of countries in the region remained closed, migrants and/or refugees needed irregular and/or informal ways to move, which increased their exposure to organised crime with a high impact on the commodification of women.
- The pandemic did not stop trafficking networks but, on the contrary, trafficking increased due to absent or prostituted governments and collusion or inactivity of law enforcement and police forces. Traffickers and demanders of services have established new strategies of recruiting and "marketing" victims through social networks and by transporting victims to clients and returning them to their homes.

- Families made destitute by hunger and destitution during the pandemic accepted that their daughters, girls or adolescent girls, would provide sexual services to bring home money. Seventy-six per cent of trafficked and sexually exploited persons are women. Of every 10 persons trafficked, 6 are minors.
- There was also an increase in the number of marriages of indigenous children, exchanged for money or animals. In addition, many girls and adolescents living in extreme poverty began to work as domestic servants, suffering abuse and exploitation.
- The pandemic has even had a strong impact on the lives of women living "on" or "of" the street. There is a cultural, moral and religious stigma that considers them as drug addicts, crazy or prostitutes. To survive during the crisis, they risked prostitution, violence and becoming "mules" transporting drugs. With the curfew, many women ended up being arrested by the police for not having documents - a very common situation for people on the streets. The police are often very violent and brutal towards them.

➢ **Increasing xenophobia and racism towards women**

- Migrants often arouse xenophobia and racism, but women even more so if they fall into the hands of "coyotes", who smuggle illegal immigrants across the border, particularly between Mexico and the United States. Millions of Venezuelan women have crossed other countries in the region, such as Colombia, to reach the north of the continent, suffering discrimination and abuse. Lately there has been a growing influx of Haitian men and women.
- The crisis, among its negative effects, led to an increase in xenophobia in fundamentally welcoming peoples such as Brazil. Women from the LGBTQIA+ community were seriously assaulted or raped.
- Many women as migrants and others as indigenous migrants - recognised as refugees in destination countries, but not as members of indigenous communities or indigenous peoples - were denied certain government benefits during the pandemic and continue to struggle to maintain their culture and identity.

➢ **Death in solitude and deepening of grief**

- Death was the worst experience according to the women who responded to the survey: the loss of loved ones, the impossibility of saying goodbye and the prohibition of funerals and religious rites due to contagion.
- Particularly acute was the suffering of mothers, wives and children of prisoners in Peru, who died during riots demanding health and medical care in the first three months of the pandemic.
- The experts affirm that the deaths of those close to them have left a deep mark on women because of the mourning processes that have not been accompanied or ritualised during the pandemic.

➢ **Support and gaps**

- The survey responses indicate that among the categories: family, friends, church, neighbours, NGOs and government, women felt the most support from family, secondly from friends and church, and lastly from government.
- Coexistence within the home, according to the women surveyed, improved or remained the same, with better communication and dialogue between family members, being able to get to know and/or value the children or the partner more. In a smaller percentage, it was conflictive and risky due to the aggressions and violence to which the women were subjected.
- In terms of deprivation, the most felt need was for health, followed by education, psychological aspects and care.

- **Lights and shadows in the woman-Church relationship**
  - The bond with God is what most often characterises the experience of women during the pandemic, both Catholic and of other Christian faiths, equally. It was an opportunity to find strength and encouragement to live in the midst of the chaos of the pandemic.
  - During the emergency, different ways of living the faith, of receiving formation from the Church through virtual means and of developing listening and spiritual guidance, as well as spaces for help and support, where to offer support to others, were re-evaluated. Everything helped to deepen personal and community spirituality.
  - The increase in social action and solidarity through the organisation of women's networks for the particular care of others in times of pandemics is especially highlighted. Most of them consider that the Church was creative in strategies to serve its faithful.
  - Most of the women said they had grown closer to God and the Church. They also highlighted online celebrations and prayers as a very positive point. What they regret most is the ban on face-to-face celebrations and the consequent impossibility of receiving communion and the sacraments.
  - The women also witnessed the importance of the online formation meetings and the expansion of study possibilities, both personally and in groups. They perceive that the Church has sought ways to accompany; it has become closer and more committed to reality.
  - They acknowledged the special service that the Church provided to those sick and affected by Covid-19. However, some felt loneliness and lack of fraternity or lack of care and closeness in their illness.
  - Women lost their spaces and their protagonism in prayer groups, catechesis, etc. The virtual masses reinforced the role of the clergy and made the role of women in the communities invisible, relegating them only to a rather passive participation.
  - The interruption of the activities of religious groups and some activities was frustrating, resulting in the paralysis of the attention to people and the service provided by the pastoral care centres.

Proposals made

- **Where to go from here**
  - Towards the eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination against women in order to establish equal rights for men and women in practice.
  - Towards the application and promotion of the principle of solidarity and the cultivation of community ties where the role of women is highlighted.
  - Towards the generation of a culture of care, in which female leadership is historically notorious, as a new form of exercising citizenship.

- **How to proceed**
  - Developing the spiritual-ecclesial dimension: with trust in God, the support of family and faith community, the hope that comes from prayer and perseverance in the teachings of Jesus.
  - Empowering women's resilience: living the pandemic as an opportunity to "reinvent" oneself, without letting oneself be discouraged, facing the crisis with creativity in order to emerge stronger.
  - Organising in solidarity networks: joining together to help others, establishing alliances with cooperation agencies, fostering synergies between groups and growing a collective conscience.

- **What needs to be done**
  - Research and dissemination on structural and symbolic violence.
  - Reflection on gender theories and prioritisation of gender "permeating" pastoral efforts and actions.
  - Creation of spaces for accompaniment, listening and support, where women feel safe when they need help.
  - Formation for women's leadership, intensifying pastoral and theological education, strengthening their training as pastoral agents, instituting ministries that legitimise and strengthen their mission.
  - Representation of women in public spaces, focusing on collaboration rather than competition and austerity in the lifestyles of public policy decision-makers.
  - Intervention to humanise relationships through intergenerational conversation circles, including the elderly so that older people can collaborate with the new generations.
  - Creation of mourning spaces to share experiences and pray together, adding popular religiosity as a healing factor.
  - Preventing violence by working, from childhood onwards, for equal rights for men and women, which also implies strategies to reverse the problems of access to education - including digital education - and overcoming poverty.
  - Reform of the justice delivery system in order to provide a comprehensive and effective response to the serious problem of violence against women. Its complexity requires a multi-sectoral approach and the professionalisation of justice system operators.

Part I - State of the Art
State of the Art

1- Introduction

It is clear that the emergency caused by Covid-19 goes beyond a health crisis because it constitutes a pandemic whose effects on individuals, communities, societies and economies have increased levels of educational deterioration, inequality and poverty. For this reason, WUCWO's Global Observatory on Women and CELAM's Knowledge Management Department have set out to study and understand the impact of Covid-19 on women in Latin America and the Caribbean. The data collected are read from the perspective of the Word of God and from the social teachings of the Church and of the Latin American magisterium in particular.

The present state of the art aims to compile and analyse the main and recent research papers and technical reports[2] that address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Latin American and Caribbean women from the outbreak of the virus in the region in February 2020 until mid-2021. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean (hereinafter referred to as LAC) is composed of 33 countries[3] and dependent territories of other States, with a total population of 659,743,614 people, of which 50.82% (335,313,058) are women.[4] This population group includes women of different origins and backgrounds, with different profiles, whether they live in urban or rural centres, and whether they are peasants, Afro-descendants, migrants, etc.

The information gathered is mainly descriptive and the most frequently studied variables are: gender violence, employment, informality in employment and time spent on care tasks. The main objective of these studies is usually to influence public policies to improve the situation that afflicts women.

We consulted works published by: the World Bank (WB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Organisation of American States (OAS), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Women, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), the Global Compact, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Electronic Journal of the Human Rights Council (REC), the Catholic University of Argentina (UCA), among others.

Firstly, the impact of Covid-19 on women in LAC is presented by systematising the main effects that have been identified in the studies surveyed. Secondly, the main theoretical and methodological approaches used in these studies. Thirdly, the objectives and type of proposals of these studies and concludes with some final considerations.

2- Latin American women in figures and concepts

There is an absence of figures for the Latin American region as a whole regarding the variables affecting women in the reports of international organisations, which does not allow for a comparison

[2] For the elaboration of this state of the art, 122 reports and research papers were surveyed, 56 of which were selected for writing.
[3] Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.
[4] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. **Interactive Demographic Indicators**. 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/indicadores-demograficos-datos-interactivos Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

between 2019 and 2020. However, in these reports there is access to figures for some countries, which make it possible to appreciate or predict the increase in the negative impacts of the pandemic caused by Covid-19 on women in the region.

● Increase in reports of gender-based violence

Reporting of gender-based violence increased, particularly through virtual means and telephone hotlines. For example: in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, there was a 32% increase and in Bogotá, Colombia, there was an increase of 187% for telephone lines and 774% for virtual lines.

●Feminicides

No figures have been found for the whole region provided by international organisations on femicides during 2020 that would allow us to establish the difference with 2019 (in August 2021).

● Greater income inequality

The crisis shows that the contraction in employment is greater for women than for men. This difference increased by 2.6% in the first months of the pandemic and is expected to increase further in the following months, according to ECLAC.

●Unemployment problems

Highly feminised sectors, such as food services, accommodation service activities and domestic service, have been the hardest hit by the Covid-19 crisis. The drop in the number of people employed in the domestic services sector due to the pandemic is around 40% in countries such as Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica.

●Gap in Internet access for teleworking

Lower-income women face a double obstacle: the lack of economic autonomy and the Internet access gap for teleworking. In the region, the cost of broadband service for the lowest income sectors is on average 13% of their income and 39.1% of women in households in this sector have no income of their own.

●Detrimental to domestic workers

Domestic workers have been affected by 70.4 per cent of the quarantine measures, through reduced economic activity, unemployment, reduced hours or loss of wages, according to the ILO.

● Deteriorating health coverage

A 40 per cent decline in pregnancy checks has been noted in 11 countries in the region, according to PAHO.

The increase in poverty forecast

Due to the pandemic, poverty and extreme poverty will reach levels not seen in the last 12 and 20 years, respectively. ECLAC projects that in 2020 there will be 22 million more poor people than in 2019 and 8 million more in extreme poverty .

3- Impact of Covid-19 on women in LAC

From the beginning of the pandemic to date, its effects have been the focus of concern for states, international organisations, social movements, civil society organisations and academics specialising in gender, human rights and human development, among other actors. Attention has

been focused not only on the possibility of analysing how the virus has affected women's health and lives, but also on how state measures to contain and prevent its spread have had a significant impact on the different dimensions of their lives.

Most of the studies and reports consulted point to **negative impacts** of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequences of state measures on women, highlighting:

- a significant worsening of their quality of life and subjective wellbeing
- their impoverishment and job insecurity
- the deepening of discriminatory practices
- the sexual segregation of work and care
- the restriction and/or denial of their rights such as the protection of their life, health and psychological and physical integrity.

Few studies incorporate positive impacts of the pandemic on women's lives.

As a common denominator, the studies surveyed recognise a structural situation of inequality in women's lives that predates the onset of the pandemic, which explains why they describe its impact in terms of "deepening", "aggravation", and "aggravation" of historical social, economic and cultural inequalities.[5] and "aggravation"[6] of historical social, economic and cultural inequalities.

Based on these preliminary considerations, the studies reviewed indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic and its containment measures have had the following effects on women in LAC:

a. Increased gender-based violence and security and safety risks

b. Gender Inequality and Deterioration of Economic Autonomy

c. Increased exposure to the impact of Covid-19 on health and life due to the sex segregation of work.

d. Mental health impairment

e. Increasing digital divide for access to education and teleworking

f. Impoverishment and lack of access to care and hygiene resources

g. Deepening of inequalities in particularly vulnerable groups of women

Outline of the main points relevant to the above-mentioned effects:

[5]OLIVEIRA, Anderson Eduardo Carvalho de; TONCHE, Juliana; POSSAS, Mariana Thorstensen. Vitimização de mulheres e Covid-19: entre permanências e agravamentos. **O Público e o Privado** - vol. 18, nº 37 - set/dez - 2020. Available at: https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/opublicoeoprivado/article/view/3934. Accessed on: 23 July 2021).

[6] For example, there is talk of "sharpening" of the critical knots that affect gender inequality (*see:* BÁRCENA, Alicia. **América Latina y el Caribe ante la pandemia del Covid-19** - efectos económicos y sociales e impacto en la vida de las mujeres. 2020, p.7. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/america_latina_y_el_caribe_ante_la_pandemia_del_covid-19_efectos_economicos_y_sociales_eimpacto_en_la_vida_de_las_mujeres.pdf Accessed on: 23 July 2021).

a. Gender-based violence

"Today, there are still women who suffer violence. Psychological violence, verbal violence, physical violence, sexual violence. The number of women who are beaten, offended, raped is staggering. The different forms of mistreatment suffered by many women are a cowardice and a degradation for all of humanity. For men and for all humanity. The testimonies of victims who dare to break their silence are a cry for help that we cannot ignore. We cannot look the other way.

Pope Francis, 1 February 2021

Recent studies on the situation of gender-based violence in LAC report a significant increase in violence against women, as a direct consequence of mandatory social isolation measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

An OXFAM study on the impact of Covid-19 on women argues that "when social stress increases, so do cases of violence against women. As has been shown so often, the home is not a safe place for women and the system and institutions are focused on addressing the crisis to the neglect of other vital areas of women's rights." [7]

Both at the local and national level, comparative studies have been carried out by period to evaluate the increase or not of complaints of gender violence in the context of the pandemic. According to a report by the Catholic University of Argentina (UCA) and the Ombudsman's Office of the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina[8] , complaints of gender violence increased by 32% compared to the same period of the previous year, through the specific telephone line, between April and September 2020. This shows a variation with respect to the number of complaints in the period prior to Covid-19. In 2020, the highest percentage of reports were made by neighbours and family members and not by victims locked in their homes. Likewise, the number of complaints made in police stations and hospitals decreased. The Human Rights Council explains how cases of violence increased in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. [9]

Similarly, a study carried out in Bogotá taking data from the beginning of the confinement, from March to June 2020, shows an increase in calls referring to violence against women of 187% on telephone lines and 774% on virtual lines. It also indicates that femicides increased by 8.6% compared to the previous year.[10]

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[7] OXFAM, The Regional Women's Rights Group and Damaris Ruiz. **6 reasons why the impact of the Coronavirus affects women**. 2020. Available at: https://www.oxfam.org/es/blogs/6-razones-por-las-que-el-impacto-del-coronavirus-afecta-las-mujeres Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

[8] TINOBORAS, Cecilia. **Domestic violence against women in contexts of Covid-19 pandemic** - an exploratory look at risk factors and effects associated with violence against women in the period of preventive and compulsory social isolation (Technical Report). 2021. Available at: http://wadmin.uca.edu.ar/public/ckeditor/Observatorio%20Deuda%20Social/Documentos/2021/2021-Informe-tecnico-Violencia_Intra_DefPBA_V16_6.pdf Accessed 23 July 2021.

[9] In similar terms, *see:* PENNELLA, Silvina. Género, desigualdades y violencias en tiempos de COVID-19. Lo que nos dejará la pandemia. **Electronic Journal of the Human Rights Council (REC).** 2020, Available at: https://rec.defensoria.org.ar/2020/07/23/genero-desigualdades-y-violencias-en-tiempos-de-covid-19-lo-que-nos-dejara-la-pandemia/ (Accessed on: 23/07/2021). BÁRCENA, Alicia. **América Latina y el Caribe ante la pandemia del Covid-19** - efectos económicos y sociales e impacto en la vida de las mujeres. 2020, p.7. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/america_latina_y_el_caribe_ante_la_pandemia_del_covid-19_efectos_economicos_y_sociales_eimpacto_en_la_vida_de_las_mujeres.pdf Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

[10] CHAPARRO MORENO, Liliana; ALFONSO, Heyder. Impacts of Covid-19 on violence against women. The case of Bogotá (Colombia). **Nova**, Bogotá, v. 18, n. spe 35, p. 115-119, Dec. 2020 . Available at: http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1794-24702020000300115&lng=en&nrm=iso> . Accessed on 15 August 2021.

However, it should be noted that the data does not always reveal the reality of what happens in the context of gender-based violence due to the obstacles that may exist for women to file a complaint. For example, an analysis carried out in Panama with an identical approach to those cited above has detected a drop in the number of complaints of gender-based violence during periods of confinement. This is due to the fact that "the victims lived 24 hours a day with their aggressor, which prevented them from filing a complaint, in addition to the fact that in most cases they did not have a place where they could take refuge and thus avoid situations of aggression or femicide".[11]

The lack of state presence in the territory, due to movement restrictions and quarantine measures, makes it difficult for women to flee violent situations or to access protection and/or services essential to preserving their lives. [12]

Moreover, isolation weakens psychological and social assistance to women who suffer violence because of the impossibility of accessing such services.[13] It also increases women's risk of becoming victims of serious crimes against their integrity, such as human trafficking and sexual and labour exploitation. The fact that the borders of the countries in the region remain closed during the pandemic means that migrants and refugees need irregular and/or informal means of movement, which increases their exposure to organised crime. [14]

Confinement is presented as a "great advantage for the perpetrator to violate the rights of women victims of gender-based violence".[15]

b. Inequity and deterioration of economic autonomy

The effects of the pandemic on the deterioration of women's economic autonomy have been, together with the increase in gender-based violence, the aspects most highlighted in the literature.

The following critical nodes of Covid-19's impact on women's economic autonomy are highlighted[16] :

- greater difficulties in accessing economic resources and the labour market due to informality
- precariousness and unemployment[17] which affects women most severely

[11] BECERRA, Johana Garay. The Covid-19 pandemic: the reality of Panamanian women. **Revista Panameña de Ciencias Sociales**, (5), pp. 27-35, June 2021, Available at: https://scholar.google.com.br/scholar?hl=pt-BR&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=28.La+pandemia+del+covid-19%3A+La+realidad+de+las+mujeres+paname%C3%B1as&btnG= Accessed on 15 August 2021.

[12] UN WOMEN. **Covid-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: how to mainstream women and gender equality in crisis response management, BRIEF** v 1.1. 2020, Available at: https://lac.unwomen.org/es/digiteca/publicaciones/2020/03/covid-como-incorporar-a-las-mujeres-y-la-igualdad-de-genero-en-la-gestion-de-respuesta. Accessed on 15 August 2021.

[13] BÁRCENA, Alicia. **Latin America and the Caribbean facing the Covid-19 pandemic** - economic and social effects and impact on women's lives. 2020, p.7. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/america_latina_y_el_caribe_ante_la_pandemia_del_covid-19_efectos_economicos_y_sociales_eimpacto_en_la_vida_de_las_mujeres.pdf Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

[14] CARE, UN Women. **Rapid Gender Analysis for the Emergence of Covid-19 in LAC,** May 2020, p.34. Available at: https://lac.unwomen.org/es/digiteca/publicaciones/2020/05/analisis-rapido-de-genero-de-america-latina-y-el-caribe. Accessed on 15 August 2021.

[15] QUEMAC, Rosa Evelyn Chugá; MAFLA, Bélgica Ibana Lara; PAUCAR, Jairo Mauricio Puetate. Confinement: nightmare for women victims of gender violence during Covid-2019. **Journal Contemporary Dilemmas: Education, Politics and Values**. Year: VIII Number: Special Edition. Article no.: 29 Period: June, 2021. Available at: https://www.dilemascontemporaneoseducacionpoliticayvalores.com/index.php/dilemas/article/view/2709. Accessed on 15 August 2021.

[16] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Women's Economic Autonomy in Sustainable and Equal Recovery. **Special Report Covid-19,** 10 February 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46633-la-autonomia-economica-mujeres-la-recuperacion-sostenible-igualdad. Accessed on: 15 August 2021; See also: UN WOMEN. The impacts of COVID-19 on women's economic autonomy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at: https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/es/home/library/womens_empowerment/los-impactos-del-covid-19-en-la-autonomia-economica-de-las-mujer.html

[17] UN WOMEN; ILO; NU. ECLAC**. Paid Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean in the Face of the Covid-19 Crisis.** June 2020. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/45724-trabajadoras-remuneradas-hogar-america-latina-caribe-frente-la-crisis-covid-19. Accessed 15 August 2021.

- overburdened care responsibilities and domestic work[18] , coupled with the difficulty in reconciling work and family life.
- pressure to attend the workplace despite Covid-19 restrictions at risk of contracting the virus
- deepening of the wage gap.

With regard to women's access to the labour market, ECLAC notes that 51.8% are employed in precarious sectors, taking into account formalisation, economic income (wages), social protection and/or job security.[19] Of the total number of women working in the domestic sphere, it is estimated that 77.5% operate in the informal sector and 17.2% are migrants. [20]

In terms of unemployment, ECLAC data for 2020 on the impact of the crisis on the labour market shows that the contraction in employment is greater for women. The total figure is that the unemployment rate reached 10.7% in 2020, an increase of 2.6 percentage points compared to the value recorded in 2019 (8.1%).[21]

In terms of care responsibilities, it is estimated that before the pandemic, women in the region spent three times as much time as men on domestic and care work. To gauge the impact of the economic, social and health crisis on women's lives, it is worth noting that in "Latin America, 78 per cent of single-parent households are headed by single mothers, who assume responsibility for the care of children and adults".[22]

The structural inequality that affects women in terms of unequal distribution of care work restricts women's ability to use this time to generate their own livelihoods.[23]

Factors in the pandemic that have contributed to reinforcing inequalities in the equitable distribution of domestic work and care work include: children and adolescents remaining in households with access to remote classrooms, the disruption of other care networks and resources due to the pandemic's restrictive measures, and limited health system coverage that shifts the burden of care to households.

According to Barros and Oliveira (2020), the home ends up being a place where responsibilities are tripled, having to take care of children, the elderly and the home, in addition to teleworking and virtual schooling, leading to situations of exhaustion and inequality.[24] A similar situation is observed

[18] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. **Care and women in times of Covid-19:** the experience in Argentina**.** 2020. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46453-cuidados-mujeres-tiempos-covid-19-la-experiencia-la-argentina. Accessed on 15 August 2021. See also: UNDP. **WORKING MOTHERS AND COVID-19**. 2021. Available at: http://americalatinagenera.org/newsite/images/cdr-documents/2021/03/210309_MadresTrabajando.pdf. Accessed on: 24 June 2021. See also: UNDP. **Coronavirus and the Challenges for Women's Work in Latin America.** 2020. Available at: https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/es/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/el-coronavirus-y-los-retos-para-el-trabajo-de-las-mujeres-en-ame.html. Accessed June 2021

[19] BÁRCENA, Alicia. **Latin America and the Caribbean facing the Covid-19 pandemic** - economic and social effects and impact on women's lives. 2020, p.7. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/america_latina_y_el_caribe_ante_la_pandemia_del_covid-19_efectos_economicos_y_sociales_eimpacto_en_la_vida_de_las_mujeres.pdf Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

[20] UN WOMEN; ILO; NU. ECLAC. Trabajadoras Remuneradas del Hogar en América Latina y el Caribe frente a la crisis del Covid-19, **BRIEF.** June 2020. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/45724-trabajadoras-remuneradas-hogar-america-latina-caribe-frente-la-crisis-covid-19. Accessed 15 August 2021.

[21] ECLAC, **Social Panorama of Latin America 2020.** March 2021 available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentation/files/version_final_panorama_social_para_sala_prebisch-403-2021.pdf Accessed 4 August.

[22] BÁRCENA, Alicia. **Latin America and the Caribbean facing the Covid-19 pandemic** - economic and social effects and impact on women's lives. 2020, p.7. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/america_latina_y_el_caribe_ante_la_pandemia_del_covid-19_efectos_economicos_y_sociales_eimpacto_en_la_vida_de_las_mujeres.pdf Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

[23] OXFAM, The Regional Women's Rights Group and Damaris Ruiz. **6 reasons why the impact of the Coronavirus affects women**. 2020. Available at: https://www.oxfam.org/es/blogs/6-razones-por-las-que-el-impacto-del-coronavirus-afecta-las-mujeres Accessed on: 23 July 2021. See also: WORLD BANK. **COVID-19 and the Latin American and Caribbean labour market: gender-differentiated impacts.** 2021. Available at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/228601614807224809/pdf/The-Gendered-Impacts-of-COVID-19-on-Labor-Markets-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf

[24] BARROS, Valquíria da Siva; OLIVEIRA, Rosane Cristina de. Desigualdades de gênero e espaço doméstico: o isolamento social e seus impactos no cotidiano das mulheres em tempos de Covid-19. **Almanaque Multidisciplinar de Pesquisa**. Universidade UNIGRANRIO. Ano VIII - Volume 7 -

in a study conducted in May-June 2020 in Santa Catarina, Brazil.[25] In another study conducted in Mexico, Diaz and Cisneros (2021) argue that "many women lost their jobs, others saw their income reduced, leading them to seek strategies to survive and thus to experience negative emotions and feelings that put their health condition at risk and alter their social behaviour".[26] In the region of Cúcuta, Colombia, the impact of isolation on women's new ways of living their daily lives has been detected. [27]

A study with journalists in Ceará, Brazil, with the aim of understanding the changes that these workers face in order to reconcile their professional routine with their domestic activities, found: intensification of the pace of work, greater demand for productivity and psychological/emotional exhaustion on the part of the professionals. The conclusion of the study records a worrying reality: "among the fears related to the post-pandemic, some participants mentioned the permanent adoption of the home office - interpreted by them as an interesting measure (profitable for the companies), but problematic for many of them. " [28]

While most papers highlight negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, some studies point to **positive impacts**.

Nogueira (2021) analyses the impact on the reconciliation of work and family life of women who had to implement teleworking[29] describing some positive aspects such as some flexibility in working hours, the possibility of healthy eating, time savings and reduced risks by not having to travel to the workplace. Lemos and Barbosa also find positive impacts, and in one of their conclusions they state that remote work brought women closer to their children and husbands and gave them more time for physical activity and leisure.[30]

An investigation in Lima, Peru, with a group of women who work in the soup kitchens shows how the crisis has led to the intensification of neighbourhood organisation by Peruvian families and the reactivation of the soup kitchens in Lima, mainly managed by women. Religiosity is seen as the driving force behind women's survival strategies, which is also manifested in their language.[31]

Number 2 - 2020 - Dossiê Covid-19 - pages 123-142 . http://publicacoes.unigranrio.edu.br/index.php/amp/article/view/6746/3374 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[25] BERTELLI, Edilane; MOSER, Liliane; GELINSKI, Carmem Rosario Ortiz Gutierrez. Famílias, mulheres e cuidados: efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19 no estado de Santa Catarina. **Oikos: Família e Sociedade em Debate**, v. 32, n. 1, p.35-54, 2021 Available at: https://periodicos.ufv.br/oikos/article/view/11335/6590 Accessed on 15 August 2021.

[26] DÍAZ, Dora del Carmen Yautentzi; CISNEROS, José Luis. Sobretrabajo en tiempos del Covid19: desvelando las jornadas de mujeres en el confinamiento. **Journal of the Academy**, nº 4, 6-25. 2021. Available at: https://www.journalacademy.net/index.php/revista/article/view/42/3 Accessed 15 August 2021.

[27] PARADA RICO, Doris Amparo; ZAMBRANO PLATA, Gloria Esperanza. Reinvención de la vida cotidiana en mujeres cucuteñas en tiempos de Covid-19. **Psicoperspectivas** [online]. 2020, vol.19, n.3, pp.41-51. Available at: < http://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0718-69242020000300041&lng=es&nrm=iso > Accessed on 03 August 2021.

[28] SOLON, Marina; ARAÚJO, Mayara; RODRIGUES, Naiana; NUNES, Márcia Vidal. O trabalho de mulheres jornalistas durante a pandemia da Covid-19: um estudo de caso dos reordenamentos produtivos no Ceará. **INTER-LEGERE**. v.3, n. 28. 2020. Available at: http://repositorio.ufc.br/handle/riufc/53780. Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[29] NOGUEIRA, Claudia Mazzei. Mulheres Trabalhadoras em tempos de Covid-19. **O social em questão** - Revista do Departamento de Serviço Social da PUC-Rio, Nº 49, Ano 2021. Available at: https://www.maxwell.vrac.pucrio.br/rev_OSQ.php?strSecao=Artigos&secao=11&FASC=50909&nrSeqCon=51130 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[30] LEMOS, Ana Heloísa da Costa; BARBOSA, Alane de Oliveira; MONZATO, Priscila Pinheiro. Mulheres em home office durante a pandemia da Covid-19 e as configurações do conflito trabalho-família. **RAE - Revista de Administração de Empresas**. FGV EAESP. V. 60, n. 6, nov-dez 2020, p. 388-399. Available at: https://www.scielo.br/j/rae/a/9WS6pYzLdhWY6qWwDXTKTsN/?lang=pt. Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[31] CUADRA LAZARTE, Maria Paz; SOTO, Delia; MEZA, Ariadna; MIRANDA, Ariana; DE LAS CASAS, Felipe. "Nosotras también estamos en primera línea": las mujeres de las Ollas Comunes de Lima Metropolitana durante la crisis de la Covid-19. **Revista Latinoamericana Liderazgo, Innovación y Sociedad**, Año 2, Nº 1., 2021. pp. 66- 81 Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3832329 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

In July 2020, the Mujeres Ladrilleras Organizadas, in Paraná, Argentina, started to provide regular lunch and snacks.[32]

The positive impacts of the pandemic can be seen mainly in several experiences where women organise themselves voluntarily and in solidarity to respond to the needs of their communities.

c. Sex segregation of work and impact on health and life

> **"Women have been the most affected and the most resilient in this crisis. They are the ones who tend to work in the sectors most affected by the pandemic - globally, around seventy per cent of those working in health are women - but they are also the ones who, through their involvement in the informal or unpaid sector, suffer the strongest economic impact.**
>
> **Pope Francis, *Let us dream together the way to a better future*. (2020)**

In a recent report, ECLAC reports that a large percentage of women are employed in sectors that are expected to have a greater negative impact on employment and income, such as tourism, manufacturing, commerce, health and education. In the health sector 73.2 per cent of all employed persons are women and in education 70.4 per cent.[33] In countries such as Panama, Brazil, Chile and Colombia, women health workers earn at least a quarter less than men.[34]

With the health sector being the most essential service in response to the pandemic, women are affected by increased intensification of their working hours, work overload from combining work and domestic duties and the persistence of the pay gap. [35]

In this regard, mention has been made of the high health risk exposure of nurses and social workers who are in constant contact with the population. [36]

From a positive point of view, it has been shown how the role of women in the care and health sector contributes to outline strategies that contribute to the preservation of life and health. A study carried out in popular sectors of Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina, shows, on the one hand, strategies driven by women social referents in control and care actions deployed in the neighbourhood, and on the other hand, new therapeutic itineraries outlined in the family management of care and health.[37]

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[32] VERBAUWEDE, Viviana Marcela. Mujeres Ladrilleras Organizadas. Estrategias comunitarias ante las consecuencias del Covid-19. **Cuadernos Fronterizos**, Núm. Especial. June, 2021. Available at: http://erevistas.uacj.mx/ojs/index.php/cuadfront/article/view/4424 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[33] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Women's Economic Autonomy in Sustainable and Equal Recovery. **Special Report Covid-19**, 10 February 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46633-la-autonomia-economica-mujeres-la-recuperacion-sostenible-igualdad . Accessed on: 15 August 2021. See also: BÁRCENA, Alicia. **Latin America and the Caribbean facing the Covid-19 pandemic - economic and social effects and impact on women's lives.** 2020, p.7. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/america_latina_y_el_caribe_ante_la_pandemia_del_covid-19_efectos_economicos_y_sociales_eimpacto_en_la_vida_de_las_mujeres.pdf Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

[34] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. **Women's economic empowerment in sustainable and equal recovery.** 10 February 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46633-la-autonomia-economica-mujeres-la-recuperacion-sostenible-igualdad . Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[35] BÁRCENA, Alicia. **Latin America and the Caribbean facing the Covid-19 pandemic - economic and social effects and impact on women's lives**. 2020, p.7. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/america_latina_y_el_caribe_ante_la_pandemia_del_covid-19_efectos_economicos_y_sociales_eimpacto_en_la_vida_de_las_mujeres.pdf Accessed on: 23 July 2021.

[36] NOGUEIRA, Claudia Mazzei. Mulheres Trabalhadoras em tempos de Covid-19. **O social em questão** - Revista do Departamento de Serviço Social da PUC-Rio, Nº 49, Ano 2021. Available at: https://www.maxwell.vrac.puc-rio.br/rev_OSQ.php?strSecao=Artigos&secao=11&FASC=50909&nrSeqCon=51130 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[37] APARICIO, Matías Javier; BILBAO, Sofía; SAENZ VALENZUELA, Ma. Macarena; BARÁN ATTIAS, Taly. Entre barbijos, ollas populares y grupos de WhatsApp: mujeres, salud y cuidados ante el Covid-19 en los barrios del Gran Buenos Aires, Argentina 2020. **TESSITURAS - Revista de Antropologia e Arqueologia**. Vol. 8, Nº 1, JAN-JUN 2020. Pelotas-RS. Available at: https://periodicos.ufpel.edu.br/ojs2/index.php/tessituras/article/view/19701/12141 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

The role of women working in health and education is thus linked to the "ethic of care".

d. Physical and mental health

The impact on women's mental health is mainly negative.[38] Access to health services, such as pregnancy check-ups, is restricted by prioritising those linked to care for the virus. [39]

According to ECLAC "there is a decrease in the coverage of sexual and reproductive health services which is expressed in the reduction in the number of prenatal check-ups and births in health centres attended by qualified personnel"... "PAHO has warned of a 40% decrease in pregnancy check-ups in 11 countries in the region. This could lead to complications in pregnancy, childbirth and newborn health, and even to an increase in maternal and neonatal mortality."[40]

In the Azogues region of Ecuador, a study was conducted to identify symptoms of anxiety and depression associated with isolation. It was found that 71% of women had anxiety and 77% depression. Ramírez-Coronel et al. (2020) highlight the increase in cases of psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression nationally and globally.[41]

A study from Lima, Peru, addresses the psychological impact focused on perinatal depression during the Covid-19 pandemic in pregnant women in a health facility. [42]

A study with a group of women in Londrina, Brazil, assesses self-perception, health conditions, quality of sleep, level of concentration and interference with mental health. It observes that women concentrate on coping with basic survival needs and do not adopt the activities proposed to them to improve their quality of life.[43]

In Colombia, López-Jaimes et al. (2020) assess the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of women victims of the armed conflict. These women show a high degree of resilience to the emergency caused by the virus due to their previous life experience. [44]

[38] NOGUEIRA, Claudia Mazzei. Mulheres Trabalhadoras em tempos de Covid-19. **O social em questão** - Revista do Departamento de Serviço Social da PUC-Rio, Nº 49, Ano 2021. Available at: https://www.maxwell.vrac.puc-rio.br/rev_OSQ.php?strSecao=Artigos&secao=11&FASC=50909&nrSeqCon=51130 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.
[39] UN WOMEN. **The Impact of COVID-19 on Women's Health**. 2020. Available at: https://mexico.unwomen.org/es/digiteca/publicaciones/2020-nuevo/julio-2020/el-impacto-del-covid-19-en-la-salud-de-las-mujeres Accessed on 18/August-2021.
[40] ECLAC. **The risks of the COVID-19 pandemic for the exercise of women's sexual and reproductive rights.** December 2020. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/46483/1/S2000906_es.pdf
[41] RAMÍREZ-CORONEL, Andrés Alexis et al. Impacto Psicológico Del Confinamiento por Covid-19 hacia un Nuevo constructo clinimétrico ansioso-depresivo en mujeres adultas de Azogues. **Archivos Venezolanos de Farmacologia y Terapeutica** Vol 39, Nº 8, 2020. Available at: http://saber.ucv.ve/ojs/index.php/rev_aavft/article/view/21310. Accessed on: 29 July 2021.
[42] NUNTON MARCHAND, Jennifer; ALVARADO RÍOS, Vanessa; PÉREZ LLANOS, Arcenio. **Impacto psicológico de la pandemia del Covid-19, en gestantes de un establecimiento de salud nivel III-2**, Lima-2020. Ágora **-** Journal of Scientific Research. Vol. 07, nº 02, p. :94-100. 2020. Available at: https://revistaagora.com/index.php/cieUMA/article/view/123 Accessed on: 15 August 2021.
[43]GONÇALVES, Letícia; ROSA, Renata Silva; FERREIRA, Giovana; LOCH, Mathias Roberto. Saúde de mulheres de dois grupos de atividade física: estudo de acompanhamento durante a Covid-19. **Revista Brasileira de Atividade Física & Saúde**. vol. 25. 23 de novembro de 2020. Available at: https://rbafs.org.br/RBAFS/article/view/14422. Accessed on 03 August 2021.
[44] LÓPEZ-JAIMES, Ruth-Jimena. Bienestar Psicológico en Mujeres Víctimas del conflicto armado durante el confinamiento en pandemia por Covid-19. **Archivos Venezolanos de Farmacologia y Terapeutica.** Vol 39, Nº 8, 2020. Available at: http://saber.ucv.ve/ojs/index.php/rev_aavft/article/view/21323 Acesso en 29 de julho de 2021.

Romero et al. (2020) restrict their study to women members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups in Mexico. Although overall alcohol consumption increased during the pandemic, none of the participants in this particular group reported relapses in alcohol consumption.[45]

From the cases surveyed, it can be hypothesised that women who have developed resilience due to previous traumatic situations have mental health resources that allow them to lessen the impact of the crisis provoked by Covid-19.

e. Digital divide related to education and work

Women's lack of access to economic resources is also closely related to the deepening of the digital divide, at a time when access to the internet is a prerequisite for the exercise of other basic social rights such as education and work.

Lower-income women face a double obstacle: lack of economic autonomy and the Internet access gap for teleworking. In the region, the cost of broadband service for the lowest income sectors is on average 13% of their income and 39.1% of women in households in this sector have no income of their own[46] .

Women have long been struggling to reconcile long working hours with domestic and family responsibilities. The pandemic and social isolation intensified this challenge. While access to technologies has helped to address this situation by enabling remote work, women's unpaid work overload has become more acute. Fernandes de Oliveira et al. (2021) believe that this reorganisation of women's daily activities will continue in the post-pandemic, enhanced by technologies. [47] On this aspect it has been pointed out that access to technology does not occur in an equitable way so that many women are disadvantaged in fulfilling their work responsibilities.

Bucio (2021) presents the shortcomings of the digital divide. She states that with respect to women there is also inequality in access to technologies. This inequality is the result of a social order that limits women's basic resources and rights, such as education, paid employment, political participation and health, among others. In addition, it produces a differentiated socialisation that conditions access to, use and appropriation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by the female population. [48]

[45] MÉNDEZ ROMERO, Nancy Araceli; ROMERO MENDOZA, Martha Patricia, SALINAS URBINA, Addis Abeba. "I'm going to be there as long as God gives me life". Women in Alcoholics Anonymous groups during the Covid-19 health emergency. International Journal of Addiction Research. Vol. 6, no. 2, p. 35-44. 8 November 2020. Available at: http://riiad.org/index.php/riiad/article/view/riiad.2020.2.05 Accessed 29 July 2021.

[46] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. **Women's Economic Empowerment in Sustainable and Equitable Recovery.** 10 February 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46633-la-autonomia-economica-mujeres-la-recuperacion-sostenible-igualdad . Accessed on: 15 August 2021

[47] FERNANDES DE OLIVEIRA, Marcia Maria; NASCIMENTO, Laureane Nascimento Aparecida; MATOSO, Rubiane Bakalarczyk; SOARES, Elisangela Pinheiro Pechim. O isolamento social imposto pelo Covid 19, a jornada diária de mulheres e a utilização das tecnologias. **SCIAS - Educação, Comunicação e Tecnologia**, Vol. *2, nº* 2, 2021, p. 251-263. Available at: https://revista.uemg.br/index.php/sciasedcomtec/article/view/5115 Acesso en 15 de agosto de 2021.

[48] BUCIO, Claudia Ivette Pedraza. La brecha digital de género como vértice de las desigualdades de las mujeres en el contexto de la pandemia por Covid-19. **LOGOS - Journal of Philosophy**. Vol. 136, nº 136 (49), January-June 2021. Available at: http://revistasinvestigacion.lasalle.mx/index.php/LOGOS/article/view/2873 Accessed on 15 August 2021.

f. Impoverishment and lack of access to care and hygiene resources

The loss of women's income impacts on their further impoverishment and thus their lack of sufficient means to meet their basic needs. It also makes it difficult for them and their families to access hygiene supplies to prevent the spread of the virus.

In precarious housing, water is often a scarce resource and its increased need for hygiene in pandemic contexts is evident. In addition, impoverishment carries a superlative burden, as "women living in households deprived of access to safe water spend 5-12 hours more per week on unpaid domestic and care work than women living in households without such deprivation".[49]

Impoverishment is most pronounced among rural, indigenous and Afro-descendant women. In order to carry out their productive activities, they face inequalities that make them work informally and an overload of unpaid domestic chores in their homes. They also face obstacles in accessing productive resources such as water, land, agricultural inputs, financing, insurance and training, among others. Added to this are various barriers that make it difficult for them to market their products. The situation has become even more adverse with the Covid-19 pandemic. According to projections, 6 million rural women in the region are at risk of falling into extreme poverty. With the advent of the pandemic, many indigenous people's businesses and women's enterprises have been affected. "A high percentage of small and large businesses are disappearing and with them the possibility of generating income for many indigenous entrepreneurs has fallen, affecting community production on which hundreds of families depend," explains Maria Tuyuc, president of the Global Network of Indigenous Entrepreneurs for Latin America." [50]

Domestic workers are 70.4 per cent affected by quarantine measures, through reduced economic activity, unemployment, reduction of hours worked or loss of wages, according to the ILO.[51]

> **"At this time in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is urgent to listen to the cry, so often silenced, of women who are subjected to many forms of exclusion and violence in all its forms and at all stages of their lives. Among them, poor, indigenous and Afro-American women have suffered a double marginalisation. It is urgent that all women be able to participate fully in ecclesial, family, cultural, social and economic life, creating spaces and structures that favour greater inclusion".**
>
> **Aparecida Document, 454**

g. Particularly vulnerable women

[49] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**. The Covid-19 pandemic deepens the care crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean.** Covid-19 reports. April 2020. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/45335-la-pandemia-covid-19-profundiza-la-crisis-cuidados-america-latina-caribe. Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

[50] UN WOMEN. **The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.** 2 November 2020, Available at: https://lac.unwomen.org/es/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2020/11/impacto-economico-covid-19-mujeres-america-latina-y-el-caribe Accessed 15 August 2021.

[51] UN Women, ILO, ECLAC**.paid domestic workers in latin america and the caribbean in the face of the covid-19 crisis.** June 2020. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/45724-trabajadoras-remuneradas-hogar-america-latina-caribe-frente-la-crisis-covid-19

Although we know that the pandemic affects the whole of humanity, its effects have a differentiated impact on sectors of the population immersed in pre-existing situations of exclusion and where different factors of discrimination converge.[52]

Because of the pandemic, poverty and extreme poverty will reach levels not seen in the last 12 and 20 years, respectively. It is projected that there will be 22 million more poor people in 2020 than in 2019 and 8 million more in extreme poverty.[53]

In terms of the physical and mental health of migrant women[54] , the impact of Covid-19 has been analysed in the context of Haitian migrant women living in different municipalities in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. Among the study's findings, it is noted that before the pandemic, all of them were working, but with the closure of day-care centres, more than half of them had to leave their jobs to care for their children. The scarce economic resources, coupled with the pandemic situation, had a major impact on the mental health of these women, with the emergence of fear, worry, sadness and insomnia. [55]

Defendi Oliveira (2020) highlights the suffering experienced by transgender people. Covid-19 is not the main concern of these people, "the viral pedagogy that plagues us with the coronavirus shows us that social injustices continue, and that for trans people diseases will never be their only enemy, since even their own identity has been pathologised".[56]

Women who have children with disabilities face major challenges on a daily basis during the pandemic. Matos and Da Silva (2020) observe, based on reports from women caregivers of children with Congenital Zika Virus Syndrome (Zika Virus Congenital Syndrome, SCZV) in Brazil, that the situation experienced by them in the Covid-19 pandemic centres on problems of isolation, suspension of rehabilitation of therapies needed for these children, and death during the pandemic. The authors conclude that the situation of impoverishment, anguish, uncertainty and fear experienced by these women because of the situation of their children was aggravated by the pandemic.[57]

Regarding the reality of women living in rural areas, Ramírez-Quirós (2020) described the results of a forum promoted by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), which aims to provide a virtual space to hear from this audience about the impact of the pandemic on their lives. The main factors reported were: 1) widening of the digital divide; 2) declining incomes due to restricted market access for the sale of food and handicraft products; 3) difficulties in carrying out

[52] GUAJAJARA, Maria Judite da Silva; SANTOS, Samara Carvalho. Tecidos, Linhas e Agulhas: Mulheres Indígenas e a "Costura" de Interlocuções no Contexto da Pandemia. Apresentação: A pandemia de Covid-19 na vida dos povos indígenas. **Vukápanavo: Revista Terena.** nº 3, p. 1-400, out./nov. 2020. Available at: http://ds.saudeindigena.icict.fiocruz.br/handle/bvs/4207 Accessed 15 August 2021. See also. UNITED NATIONS. **The Impact of COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean.** 2020. Available at: https://lac.unwomen.org/es/digiteca/publicaciones/2020/07/informe-el-impacto-de-covid-19-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe

[53] ECLAC. **Social Panorama of Latin America 2020.** March 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46687-panorama-social-america-latina-2020. Accessed on: 15 June 2021

[54] On the impact of the pandemic on migrants See: IOM, UNHCR, UN WOMEN. **Migrant and refugee women in the context of Covid-19.** 2020. Available at: https://www.acnur.org/es-mx/5eb5ac714.pdf Accessed on 15 July 2021. Also: IOM. **Migrant Women in the Context of the Pandemic.** 2020. Available at: https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/n-11-mujeres_migrantes_en_el_contexto_de_la_pandemia.pdf

[55] SOUZA, Jeane Barros de *et al*. Determinantes sociais da saúde de mulheres imigrantes haitianas: repercussões no enfrentamento da Covid-19. **Revista Eletrônica de Enfermagem.** 20 December 2020. Available at: https://www.revistas.ufg.br/fen/article/view/64362 Accessed on 08 August 2021.

[56] DEFENDI OLIVEIRA, Alessandra Mawu. La realidad de Mujeres Transexuales y sus movimientos sociales en Sudamérica en tiempos de Covid-19. **Ciencias Y Humanidades Journal.** Vol.10, nº 10. 2020. Available at: https://www.revistacienciasyhumanidades.com/index.php/home/article/view/105 Accessed 16 August 2021.

[57] MATOS, Silvana Sobreira de; SILVA, Ana Claúdia Rodrigues da. Quando duas epidemias se encontram: a vida das mulheres que têm filhos com a Síndrome Congênita do Zika Vírus na pandemia da Covid-19. **Cadernos De Campo (São Paulo - 1991),** Vol. 29, nº supplement, p. 329-340, 2020. Available at: https://www.revistas.usp.br/cadernosdecampo/article/view/170360 Accessed on 16 August 2021.

financial transactions such as withdrawals, credit applications, among others, due to limitations in going to urban centres; 4) increased workload of dedication to domestic services and family care; 5) increased gender-based violence; 6) loss of financial autonomy; 7) non-recognition by the state that they are key actors in the development of agriculture in their countries and, consequently, of the economy. The reports showed that they perceive themselves only as wives or helpers, and these stereotypes impede the recognition of their role as workers, producers, entrepreneurs, etc. Finally, the author concludes that women's contribution to global food security, already threatened before the pandemic, will be one of the most regrettable losses. If public policies do not rethink the agricultural and business model, including creative practices, agroecology, bioeconomy, women's self-organisation, financial autonomy, differentiated technical assistance and rural extension policies with a focus on equity and equality, this will be one of the worst consequences for society after Covid-19. [58]

In Brazil, a study was conducted with women leaders in rural areas to learn about community coping strategies in times of pandemic. Moraes et al. (2020) state that "the Covid-19 pandemic requires survival strategies that are not the same for all people (...). When we refer to rural and traditional peoples, as our interlocutors, the patriarchal culture that exploits and burdens women is compounded by the state violence of the extermination of peoples and their ways of life and the lack of access to basic services that resignifies the sexual division of labour and also women's political participation. In this context, rural women leaders take the lead in the fight against the virus, making care and self-care a daily struggle for resistance in the sustainability of community life." [59]

As for indigenous peoples, given their socio-epidemiological vulnerability, it is possible to note that the virus reaches the communities, generating an impact at both the health and psychosocial levels. Guajajara and Santos (2020) assess how this reality was experienced by some indigenous women in Bahia, Brazil. A group of women organised territorial protection barriers, others created online collection campaigns to collect items such as alcohol gel, food and masks. Through alliances with a women's collective in Salvador, Brazil, work began on the manufacture and distribution of cloth masks for indigenous elders. The authors emphasise that these alliances "have been successful in the field of visibility, as they have involved various groups to join the struggles of indigenous peoples, as they learn about their multiple realities, and discover that the Covid-19 pandemic is one of the many battles waged by indigenous peoples".60

4- Theoretical and methodological approaches to the approach

[58] RAMÍREZ-QUIRÓS, Leana. Mujeres Rurales y equidad ante la pandemia Covid-19 - Foros Regionales, 2020. **Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture**. Available at: https://repositorio.iica.int/bitstream/handle/11324/14097/BVE21011206e.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 15 July 2021.

[59] MORAES, Lorena Lima de; SAMPAIO SIEBER, Shana; NASCIMENTO FUNARI, Juliana. Mulheres Lideranças Rurais, participação política e trabalho de cuidado durante a pandemia de Covid -19. **Inter-Legere - Revista da Pós-Graduação em Ciências Sociais da UFRN**, v. 3, n. 28, Dossiê a pandemia de Covid-19 na vida de mulheres. p. c21574, 1 set 2020. Available at: https://periodicos.ufrn.br/interlegere/article/view/21574 Accessed on: 16 August 2021.

[60] GUAJAJARA, Maria Judite da Silva; SANTOS, Samara Carvalho. Tecidos, Linhas e Agulhas: Mulheres Indígenas e a "Costura" de Interlocuções no Contexto da Pandemia. Apresentação: A pandemia de Covid-19 na vida dos povos indígenas. **Vukápanavo: Revista Terena.** nº 3, p. 1-400, out./nov. 2020. Available at: http://ds.saudeindigena.icict.fiocruz.br/handle/bvs/4207 Accessed on 15 August 2021.

The systematisation of the impact of Covid-19 on women, presented in the previous chapter, shows the authors' own perspectives, which allows us to detect the different approaches used in the studies.

The human rights approach has as its starting point the recognition of people as rights holders and, therefore, analyses the problem with special emphasis on the full access and enjoyment of these rights with respect to a specific population. Thus, for example, the increase in violence against women in the context of confinement due to their greater exposure to the aggressor within their own home is explained in terms of the violation of their rights to live a life free of violence, to their physical and psychological integrity, and to the protection of their lives.

The gender approach used in most of the reports seeks to account for the differentiated impact of the pandemic according to gender, due to the structural inequality[61] between men and women, which exacerbates the negative impact on this population. In this sense, several studies start from the consideration of some aspects such as the over-representation in informal employment, the wage gap, the concentration of women due to their gender roles in certain sectors and occupations, the overload of unpaid and care work, among others.

With regard to intersectionality, some studies make special reference to the greater vulnerability of certain women who, due to their gender and other factors such as their status as migrants, indigenous women, peasant women and/or their situation of economic exclusion, are unable to access decent working conditions and health services and are more exposed to situations of violence.

Other frameworks have also been used within the human rights approach, such as the theories of human development that conceive of "human development as the full realisation of human capabilities, placing quality of life at the centre of concerns, promoting the enrichment of human capabilities and the expansion of people's real freedoms as a development objective...". From this perspective "well-being is understood as an integral phenomenon, comprising not only the material conditions of life, but also sociability and the sense of well-being and satisfaction with life that people experience".[62] From this theoretical framework, the problem of violence against women is understood not only as a "fundamental obstacle to the development of human capabilities"[63] , but also as a violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms and a public health problem.

The methodology used in the technical reports of international organisations is mainly quantitative, based on data on the situation of women in the region from a rights-based perspective. The rest of the studies employ both a quantitative and qualitative methodology using interviews and questionnaires.

5- Some proposals from the studies surveyed

[61] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Women's Economic Autonomy in Sustainable and Equal Recovery. **Special Report Covid-19**, 10 February 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46633-la-autonomia-economica-mujeres-la-recuperacion-sostenible-igualdad . Accessed on: 15 August 2021

[62] TINOBORAS, Cecilia. **Domestic violence against women in contexts of Covid-19 pandemic** - an exploratory look at risk factors and effects associated with violence against women in the period of preventive and compulsory social isolation (Technical Report). 2021. Available at: http://wadmin.uca.edu.ar/public/ckeditor/Observatorio%20Deuda%20Social/Documentos/2021/2021_Informe%20Tecnico_Defensoria_Prov_BsAs_Violencia_intradomestica_junio.pdf Accessed 23 July 2021.

[63] Idem

"...the organisation of societies around the world is still far from clearly reflecting that women have exactly the same dignity and rights as men. One thing is affirmed with words, but decisions and reality shout another message".

Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti* 23

Specific works have been found with proposals to address the suffering and anguish of women in the region due to the pandemic.

The following are alternatives for changes that coincide with fundamental themes of the Church's teaching, including:

- the need to eradicate all forms of violence against women in order to establish in practice equal rights for men and women
- the application and promotion of the principle of solidarity and the cultivation of community ties where the role of women is highlighted
- the generation of a culture of care, in which women's leadership is historically notorious, as a new form of exercising citizenship.

a- Equal dignity of men and women

"God created man in his own image, he created him in the image of God, he created them male and female".

Genesis 1,27

With greater or lesser systematisation and clarity, the papers elaborate concrete proposals for adaptation, modification and design of new public policies to better respond to the crisis. Among them, the need to pay greater attention to women in situations of violence has been highlighted, avoiding the reinforcement of stereotypes or the further violation of their rights.[64] In the fiscal sphere, it has been proposed to "promote counter-cyclical fiscal policies that integrate a gender perspective in their design, in order to reverse the effects of the crisis on women's autonomy and promote a sustainable and transformative reactivation that allows for substantive equality". [65]

Vázquez Correa (2020), in Mexico, proposes "to provide a complete and effective response to the serious problem of violence against women and girls, a reform of the justice system is required, which places the human rights of women and girls at the centre, as well as professionalisation and training with a gender perspective for the operators of the justice system, because women's human rights are not suspended in any crisis, under any circumstances". [66]

Cervantes Romo (2021) calls for making violence visible and including its prevention as central aspects of recovery plans in the face of the crisis generated by the pandemic.[67]

[64] PINTO, Isabella Vitral et al. Atuação de Estados e Capitais no enfrentamento à violência contra as mulheres no contexto da Covid-19 no Brasil. **Revista Feminismos.** Vol.9, N.1, Jan - Apr 2021 Available at: www.feminismos.neim.ufba.br https://periodicos.ufba.br/index.php/feminismos/article/view/42363 Accessed on 16 August 2021. See also: UNDP. **Los impactos económicos del covid-19 y las desigualdades de género recomendaciones y lineamientos de políticas públicas.** 2020. Available at: http://americalatinagenera.org/newsite/images/cdr-documents/2020/04/PNUD_GENERO_COVID19__ESP_FINAL_ok_5.pdf

[65] BIDEGAIN, Nicole; SCURO, Lucía; TRIGO, Iliana Vaca. Women's economic autonomy in times of COVID-19. **CEPAL Review** Nº 132, December 2020. Pages 225-238. Available at: https://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/46833 Accessed on: 16 August 2021.

[66] VÁZQUEZ CORREA, Lorena. Violence against women in the context of Covid-19 scenarios and challenges. **Espacio I+D: Innovation plus Development**. Vol. 9, nº 25, 2020. Available at: https://espacioimasd.unach.mx/index.php/Inicio/article/view/244 Accessed on 16 August 2021.

[67] CERVANTES ROMO, Gabriela A. LIDES - Asesoría Especializada, S.C. La violencia contra las mujeres durante el confinamiento por la Covid-19. April 2021**.** Available at: http://bibliodigitalibd.senado.gob.mx/handle/123456789/5228 Accessed on 16 August 2021.

A study in Brazil points out that the strategy to confront a structural and complex phenomenon such as gender-based violence in the context of a pandemic must be multisectoral.[68]

b- The individual and community ties

> **"The Church encourages and favours the reconstruction of the person and of the bonds of belonging and coexistence, based on a dynamism of friendship, gratuity and communion. In this way, the processes of social disintegration and atomisation are counteracted".**
>
> **Aparecida Document 539**

In specific areas such as the role of women in the solidarity economy, the need was expressed to generate cultural incentives that "promote actions that rethink the image of women in the solidarity economy with the innovative power they possess. Training and guidance for lifelong learning are important keys in this regard, as they provide the tools for women to implement their initiatives more efficiently".[69]

In Argentina, other proposals appeal to the importance of rebuilding community ties and the political commitment of the citizenry. "This community effort should be replicated at the governmental level with measures whose main focus is to address the needs of women, a decision that, in order to be taken, must recognise and assume the situation of inequality and inequity in which women find themselves as a problem.[70]

c- The culture of care

> **"I encourage everyone to become prophets and witnesses of the culture of care, in order to overcome so many social inequalities. And this will only be possible with a strong and broad protagonism of women, in the family and in all social, political and institutional spheres".**
>
> **Pope Francis, 1 January 2021**

Díaz-Heredia (2020) and other Colombian authors propose as a response to the Covid-19 crisis a "new form of citizenship centred on the human being and thinking about the care of the planet, of oneself and of others: citizenship". (...) "This new citizenship (...) vindicates and makes its own the culture of care, that which women have practised for millennia and which no longer privileges self-sufficient beings, but the most vulnerable population that needs to be included and represented in society. In this way, citizenship affirms the value of diversity and is sustained by empathy and solidarity. It is based on the recognition that people need each other and that it is not possible to survive without interacting with others, drawing on the knowledge and experiences of each individual

[68] STUKER, Paola; MATIAS, Krislane de Andrade; ALENCAR, Joana Luiza Oliveira. Políticas Públicas à violência doméstica em tempos da pandemia de Covid-19: ações dos Organismos Estaduais de Políticas para Mulheres no Brasil. **O Público e o Privado** - nº 37 - set/dez 2020 Available at: . https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/opublicoeoprivado/article/view/3988 Accessed on: 16 August 2021.

[69] SIGETTE, Eliane Ribeiro; ANDRADE, Anelise Costa; ROSA, Clara Celina Ribeiro da Ribeiro; RIBEIRO, Karen Marcelle. A situação do trabalho e vida das mulheres da Economia Solidária durante a pandemia da Covid-19. In: ESTEVEZ, Alejandra Luisa Magalhães; SIGETTE, Elaine Ribeiro; DIAS, Rafael Mendonça. (orgs). **Experiências e lutas por direitos humanos no Sul Fluminense** [livro eletrônico]. Niterói, RJ : Universidade Federal Fluminenses, 2021. Available at: https://mepvr.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/E-book-Experiencias-e-Lutas-por-Direitos-Humanos-no-Sul-Fluminense-2020.pdf#page=82 Accessed on: 16 August 2021.

[70] WAGON, María Elena. La pandemia en la sombra Reflexiones en torno a la violencia contra las mujeres en el marco del Covid-19. **IIESS Working Paper.** May 2021; p. 10-24 Available at: https://ri.conicet.gov.ar/handle/11336/134814 Accessed on: 16 August 2021.

to complement each other. Citizenship does not allow authoritarianism and is in essence democratic, and it privileges cooperation and sharing over competition and accumulation". [71]

6- Final considerations

As noted, the studies highlight the negative aspects of the pandemic on women's lives. The human rights and gender focus makes visible the increase in obstacles to the exercise of women's rights as a consequence of the pandemic and its differentiated effects on men and women. Most of them seek to influence the improvement of existing public policies that are unable to respond to the new scenario posed by Covid-19. [72]

As a general conclusion of the state of the art, it can be stated that the virus and state measures for its containment and prevention have mainly had a negative impact on women's health and lives, increasing the challenges and inequalities already experienced prior to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

From an evangelical perspective, it is worth questioning not only the negative effects, but also to do so from a logic that enables the perception of other types of impact, such as, among others, the positive aspects of family dynamics, deeper perceptions of the meaning of life, the emergence of collaboration and interconnection, the valuing of fragility and human bonds as important.

A holistic approach that encompasses the different dimensions of women's lives, including their faith and spirituality, while considering them as agents of social change, educators and guardians of others, protectors of the common home, sometimes as heads of households and/or co-protagonists at the economic and political level, will, on the one hand, provide tools for the state as policy promoter and for civil society organisations and social movements to urge changes in society.

On the other hand, the contribution of experts on the different issues that involve women and the listening of hundreds of women in the region will enable the Church to capitalise on the experiences and trajectories of women's resilience in the face of the emergency caused by Covid-19 and to provide adequate pastoral responses to the increased suffering and discrimination that affect them.

7- Theological-pastoral reflections

From Egyptian midwives to witnesses of the Resurrection. Theological reflections on Latin American women in times of pandemic.

Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer

[71] DÍAZ-HEREDIA, Luz Patricia; CHAPARRO-DÍAZ, Lorena; CORREDOR PARDO, Katya Anyud. Covid-19: an inequitable and complex reality for women. **Advances in Nursing**. Vol. 38, nº 1 (suppl). p. 61-67, 2020. Available at: https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/avenferm/article/view/88888. Accessed on 15 August 2021.

[72] ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Women's Economic Autonomy in Sustainable and Equal Recovery. **Special Report Covid-19,** 10 February 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46633-la-autonomia-economica-mujeres-la-recuperacion-sostenible-igualdad. Accessed on: 15 August 2021). See also: ECLAC. **Observatorio COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe - impacto económico y social.** 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/es/temas/covid-19. Accessed on: 15 August 2021.

Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-38). (John 8:31-38).

The Global Observatory for Women sends a "state of the art", that is, a comprehensive and well-done report on the panorama of the impact of COVID 19 on Latin American and Caribbean women. We propose here to make some comments based on Scripture and theology in order to bring more light to the data that reality shows us. With this we seek to dialogue with reality itself and hopefully take a step further in the direction of that transparency contained in the truth that liberates and of which Jesus speaks to us in the Gospel of John chapter 8, 31-32.

The state of the art of the Observatory raises elements that translate the consequences for women in various countries of the continent of the two-year period that the COVID 19 virus has already been with us and which has affected all of humanity. If all of humanity has been affected, what we read here is that women have been particularly affected in some dimensions and aspects of their lives. In other words, in addition to the confinement that everyone has had to endure and which has created a situation of suffering and anguish for everyone, for women it has been particularly strong. Because of their greater vulnerability compared to men, and the discrimination they have suffered for centuries, the deterioration that has affected everyone has hit them especially hard. In other words, all the work in the document does no more than describe the impact of the pandemic on women's lives prior to the onset of the pandemic, and which, during the pandemic, only worsened, deepened and worsened. (State of the Art, point 3)

The first thing that can be detected is the significant increase in gender-based violence. With the pandemic, women have found themselves confined 24 hours a day with their aggressors - most of the time husbands or partners - who live with them in their homes. If they used to go out for work or for some other activity or meeting, they now find themselves at their aggressor's side all the time, having to endure his violent, psychological or even physical attacks on them on a daily basis. The document does not give data on femicide, but it is known that in Brazil at least it increased enormously during this time. Confinement, added to the social stress suffered during the pandemic, also led to an increase in cases of violence against women. Pope Francis has spoken out strongly against this on several occasions, but it is a real social sore, which the pandemic only increased.

In addition to gender-based violence, the state of the art reports on other pains that women have had to suffer more intensely during and after the pandemic. These are: the continued inequality and deterioration of economic autonomy that has increased considerably in these two years, with the loss of formal work and fewer opportunities to get another job; the sexual segregation that takes place in the same job, impacting on women's health and lives. When talking about health, the document mentions that it refers not only to physical health but also to mental and psychological health. The deepening of the situation of precariousness and poverty, together with gender-based violence, threaten not only the physical and bodily safety of women, but also their mental health, their psychological balance, as they are constantly harassed and attacked, having to constantly create strategies to survive.

Also mentioned is the reduced digital inclusion of women in terms of education and work. Faced with the constant challenge of reconciling family, housework and work, the pandemic has added to this a significant dependence on the internet and digital connections in order to be able to attend classes, teach or work from home. The digital divide or even digital exclusion hits women the hardest, and in these times, that means more precariousness and more seriousness.

Finally, impoverishment and a greater lack of resources, even for basic items such as hygiene and self-care, mean that women feel that they are weakened as human beings and cannot defend themselves and their children against the virus because they cannot take the necessary hygiene and sanitary measures. Poverty that turns into destitution is a particular burden for those who, in addition to their precarious socio-economic status, have other burdens such as, for example, the fact that they are transsexuals or have children with disabilities or special needs.

From all these threats and difficulties, women have found ways and ways out in their cunning and sororal solidarity. Like the Egyptian midwives mentioned in the book of Exodus 1:15-21, who, although they had been ordered by Pharaoh himself to kill the male babies of the Hebrew women, did not do so. Asked why they had left the Hebrew males alive, they replied: "It turns out that the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, but are full of life and give birth before we arrive. "And the biblical text says, "So the Israelites became stronger and more numerous. Moreover, God dealt very well with the midwives, and because they feared God, he granted them many children".

Like these wise and faithful women, many women throughout this pandemic have managed to stay alive and help their companions to do the same, drawing resources and strength from who knows where, and no doubt receiving help from the God of life when human help was lacking. And they took care of each other, discovering ever more of that strong and astute feminine solidarity that finds ways out where there seem to be none.

Indeed, the document makes it clear that, as Pope Francis says in Fratelli Tutti 23, "...the organisation of societies throughout the world is still far from clearly reflecting that women have exactly the same dignity and identical rights as men. Something is affirmed with words, but decisions and reality shout out another message."

And that is why the great demand that emerges from the reading of the final state of the art on the situation of Latin American and Caribbean women after those two years of the pandemic is the urgency of the assumption and practice of the paradigm of care. What makes human beings human is the capacity to go out of oneself, to go out to meet and care for others.

Women have always been and are today specialists in this. They are trained throughout their lives to care: for babies, for partners, for older parents, for friends in need, for neighbours, for their community, for the Church. They are largely responsible for the fact that a culture of care already exists today, albeit embryonic and imperfect, to which Pope Francis strongly invites us in his speech of 1 January 2021: "... I encourage everyone to become prophets and witnesses of the culture of care, in order to overcome so many social inequalities. And this will be possible only with a strong and broad role for women, in the family and in all social, political and institutional spheres".

Women can teach with all their experience and help a lot to create this culture of care. But for this to happen, they must also be the recipients of this care and not only its executors. There will be no real culture of care unless women, who are the constant victims of human injustice, can also be cared for. And not only by other women, as is often the case. But by their partners, their community, their Church. By the state, which is responsible for their well-being and security.

In this way they will always be available to be witnesses of the good news. As they were with respect to Jesus of Nazareth, whom they went to look for in the tomb in order to give him the last care. Finding an empty tomb and the announcement that the one they were looking for was not in the place of the dead, they immediately told the disciples. And so began the Christian experience. Not caring for the dead, but for the living who had to learn that death does not have the last word on the human condition, but that the Father confirmed his Son by raising him from the dead. He is the God

of life and all he desires is that his sons and daughters come to the fullness of life and love stronger than death.

The truth of the situation of the women of our continent, which this document makes clear, is laid out and described. It alone can free us all from the yoke of selfishness and injustice. But this liberation will not happen as it should unless it also includes the liberation of women. Only the truth will liberate us and only by facing the fact that we are a patriarchal and oppressive society will we be able to convert to the project of the Kingdom of God.

Part II -
Expert report

1- Introduction

The crisis provoked by Covid-19 seems to have acted like a magnifying glass, making visible and increasing the problems that already existed beforehand. The contributions, testimonies and denunciations of the experts provoke us and give us hope to move forward, as Pope Francis points out, "better and interconnected".

We spoke with 25 experts from 14 countries of the continent (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Venezuela). We listened to them in three languages: Spanish, Portuguese and English, and among them - in groups of five experts each - they were able to dialogue with members of the teams of the World Observatory of Women (OMM) and the Pastoral Socio-anthropological Observatory of CELAM, in a rich "online" experience carried out between the months of September and October 2021.

What do we mean by "expert"? As the word itself indicates, a woman "who has experience", who is understood in a given field because she is inserted in it, because her personal existence reflects, in some way, the life of a community, of a human group to which she responds. And we understand that if she "responds" it is because she takes charge, she takes responsibility with concrete actions in favour of that people or social group.

The experts for the OMM are women who have understood that, among other activities whose agendas are full, their mission involves being the voice of their environment, making visible the women who so often seem invisible. They are those who have leadership in their association or community because of the service they provide. For this reason, they have given us their lived experience both in relation to the suffering of countless women, families and villages, as well as in the gestation of projects to overcome the pandemic.

All the experts who took part shared a vision based on evangelical values, although not all of them expressed a commitment to the Catholic Church. From a female point of view, they explained the positive and negative effects of Covid-19 during the past year and a half, recounting the experiences lived by the women. They have found similarities and differences between the different areas of our region and, something fundamental: they have alerted us about how to act in the future.

At this stage of the project, the "scent of synodality" can already be perceived, of listening in order to walk together. Some of the topics dealt with coincide with what men and women have expressed in the path chosen by CELAM during the preparatory listening for the Ecclesial Assembly for Latin America and the Caribbean. In our case, we have focused exclusively on the experience of women, and we wish to be an echo of them in order to allow an adequate listening, understanding and implementation in order to overcome this crisis.

2- Cast of experts

Argentina

Basset, Ursula: Lawyer. Doctor in Legal Sciences. Professor of Family Law and Inheritance Law. Director of the Family Research Centre. Director of the Family Specialisation Courses. Secretary General of the *International Society of Family Law* and of the Ibero-American Academy of Family and Personal Law. Member of the Drafting Subcommittee of the Argentine Civil and Commercial Code on the Property Regime of Marriage.

Bracco, Maria: teacher and catechist. National Coordinator of the Lay Missionaries of Mother Cabrini's congregation. Volunteer in the school and first aid room in the Villa de Emergencia Amelia de la Salada in Buenos Aires. Responsible in Misiones Rurales Argentinas for the scholarship programme for rural areas and precarious contexts in 9 provinces of the country.

García Reynoso, María Alcira: Sister of Jesús-María. Always dedicated to education. For 22 years she has been coordinating the Community Centre in Tres Isletas, a rural locality in the Province of Chaco, where food, health, education and evangelisation are offered.

Hornos, Catalina: founder and general director of Haciendo Camino. Psychopedagogue and psychologist. Specialist in family violence. Mother of 11 children. She was born in Buenos Aires and did her professional training in Añatuya, a particularly deprived area of Argentina. She settled there and created the first Child Nutrition and Human Promotion Centre. Today there are 11 centres in Santiago del Estero and Chaco, serving more than 1,000 children and 1,200 women.

Mazzini, Marcela: Doctor in Theology. Diploma in Cognitive Coaching. Teacher of Theology, coordinates the Institute of Theological Research and participates in the research group on popular spirituality in urban environments. Theological-pastoral advisor to the Bishopric of San Isidro. She is the referent of the women's area of the Department of the Laity of the Argentinean Episcopal Conference. Member of the scientific committee of Teologanda.

Bolivia

Zabaleta, Marina: graduate in Education Sciences. She is married and has 4 children. She lives in the city of El Alto, La Paz. She works at the Kurmi Wasi centre, a school that promotes encounter as a sustainable educational project in Bolivia. She accompanies girls at risk and their families.

Brazil

Loiola, Rachel: she is dedicated to communication in all its manifestations: fashion, writing, verbal and non-verbal expression. She has a degree in Language Therapy, a Masters and PhD in Linguistics and a Postdoctorate in Communication and Semiotics. She participates in a programme for the development of good conversations (Conversations for Life), Conversations with Art and the Human Library (to eliminate prejudices and stereotypes of vulnerable people).

Lyon, Yolis: indigenous leader of the Warao ethnic group, born in Venezuela in the Barranco de Fajardo community. Mother of three children, artisan and poet. Graduate in Social Communication. Social Analyst at the Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees in Belo Horizonte, where she accompanies citizens from different countries. Municipal Councillor. She is a member of the National Network for the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples in Urban and Migrant Contexts. She has lived in Brazil for 10 years.

Siqueira, Ana Paula: State Deputy for Minas Gerais. Educator and social worker. She is part of the first legislature of the Assembly of Minas Gerais to elect black women. President of the Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights. Among her projects is Law 23.680, of 2020, which creates a job exchange for women victims of domestic violence. Mother of 3 children.

Chile

Escudero, Pilar: married, 4 children and 9 grandchildren. Member of the Vicariate for Pastoral Ministry of the Archbishopric of Santiago. She and her husband, Luis Jensen, belong to the Schoenstatt Institute of Families and the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. She was a member of the Holy See delegation to the Beijing Summit, IV World Conference on Women (1995).

Colombia

Nieto, Genoveva: daughter of the Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. She is 75 years old. Catechist, educator and missionary in youth work and leadership training. She has been coordinating the Red Defensores de Vidas for 10 years, dedicated to the prevention of violence against children and adolescents with a focus on human trafficking, and is a member of the international network Talitha Kum. She trains teachers and specialises in biblical sciences.

Cuba

Acosta Hernández, Edelma Tomasa: married, with 3 children and 4 grandchildren, all living in Cuba. She is a physicist and professor at the Institute of Nuclear Sciences. She is Vice-President of the Movimiento de Mujeres Católicas de Cuba (Movement of Catholic Women of Cuba). She is a member of the editorial board of Nosotras magazine. She is co-founder of the Cuban School of Missionary Formation. She represents her country on the WUCWO Council.

Guatemala

Tuyuc, María: Maya Kaqchikel from San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango. She graduated as an accountant and studied law. She is a great promoter of entrepreneurship and business for young women. She is currently president of the World Network of Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurs. She created the Mayan Business School that seeks to train and promote indigenous entrepreneurs in the country.

Honduras

Zúñiga Campos, Melania: married, graduate in social work and public accountant. She works with the Pastoral de Migración and is the founder and director of the Stella Maris Association, which provides scholarships and support to mothers in extreme poverty. Former director of the Koinonia Association. She was an instructor at the National Institute for Research and Training in Education and Human Rights. Former Director of the Department of Children's Rights. She is a member of the International Council of the International Catholic Association for the Service of Girls' Youth.

Jamaica

Jacobs, Nicole: converted to the Catholic faith. Married, has 5 children. Has been a teacher. Serves on Cursillo *Week-end Teams*. She is the president of the *Catholic Womens League* of Jamaica, with thousands of women members in every diocese in her country. In alliance with the *Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary*, she initiated and operates the Guadalupe *Munro Skills Training Center*.

Mexico

Espinoza Rosas, María de Lourdes: belongs to the Asociación Mexicana para la Superación Integral de la Familia (Mexican Association for the Integral Improvement of the Family). She has created Family Improvement Centres where women are offered training, critical and creative awareness,

with evangelisation as the axis. She is vice-president for the Latin American and Caribbean region of WUCWO and a member of the World Observatory of Women.

Lanzagorta, Teresa: sociologist. She works with young people developing programmes on education, youth leadership, access to information technologies, employability and violence prevention. She is director of *YouthBuild* Mexico. She directs the programme Jóvenes con Rumbo, which focuses on youth at risk with an emphasis on violence prevention and school or work reintegration.

Pastor, Raquel: PhD in Political and Social Sciences. Director of Child and Adolescent Rights. Coordinator of the Master's project on the Rights and Public Policies of Children and Adolescents with the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Rural. She is a lecturer in the Master's Degree in Human Rights at the Universidad Iberoamericana.

Panama

Coba Álvarez, Arianeth: married with 3 children and 1 granddaughter. Graduated in History and Geography. Participated in adult literacy programmes and training seminars for production and farm management. She is a catechist. She is president of the Petrus Dominical Organisation - family farming - whose aim is to work for fair trade, sovereignty and food security.

Peru

Duacastella, Lucía: Argentinean nun of the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena. She is a nurse and holds a diploma in Counselling in Lima. She has dedicated herself to accompanying vulnerable communities in contexts of poverty and exclusion, especially in the area of health and pastoral care. She has been living for more than six years in Paramonga, Province of Barranca, Peru.

Pérez, Marisol: lawyer and notary. Specialist in human rights. University lecturer and army reserve lieutenant. She is a Legionary of Mary, member of the prison ministry of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action of the children's group. Ex-Congresswoman and Minister of Justice and Human Rights. President of the party re-engineering process of the Partido Popular Cristiano.

Villanueva, Mirta: teacher and counsellor. Worked in public schools in various areas of Peru. Professor at the Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University, where she was head of tutoring. She is one of the coordinators of the Education Commission of Resucita Perú Ahora, promoted by the Church to respond to the pandemic. She is a national advisor to the lay movement Equipos Docentes.

Dominican Republic

Paredes, Gina: is an architect. She works for social organisations in the areas of technical, operational and administrative coordination and project formulation. She is an ambassador for the Vincentian Family Alliance International for the Homeless. She participates in the Dominican Street Pastoral, where she works with people living on the streets of Santo Domingo.

Venezuela

Francia Márquez belongs to the Taurepán ethnic group, better known as Pemon, because that is the language spoken in her community in the state of Bolívar, an Amazonian state in Venezuela. She is a teacher in the Carabarety indigenous community in the Amazon rainforest. She works in contact with other indigenous communities.

Rivero Lozada, Virginia: lawyer, specialist in human rights, gender equality and women's development programmes. President of the Foundation for Women's Rights. She represents her

country's organisations on the WUCWO Council. Editor of the WUCWO Magazine, *La Voz de las Mujeres*.

3- Voices and experiences shared by "experts".

In the areas and regions where your work and experience is developed: how do you perceive the impact of Covid-19 on women's lives? What effects has the pandemic had on education, spiritual life, health, family, couples, links with children, etc.? Do you recognise positive aspects of the pandemic in women's lives? What advice would you give to face these post-pandemic times?

These are some of the questions we asked 25 Latin American women experts from 14 countries about the situation of women in the region as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In each meeting with them, a few minutes into the dialogue, the answers come in with vivid testimonies that focus our attention and quickly impose silence and listening. They come from women who were in the territories, who went through the difficult moments with the women, traced the links of survival, rethought strategies to move forward, accompanied, served, led and today tell us something of what women in our region have gone through. This dialogue of experts leaves us with profound stories from the perspective of valuable women, because the expert is the one who knows, who has gone through the experience, who has acquired knowledge, who feels and understands, who can bring evidence of what is happening, but also light to move forward. They are women who talk about what other women have gone through, to walk together; to live better. Let's read them and listen to them.

a. Violence: the other pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has been stalking the world and the region for almost two years. At times at a slow pace and often at a dizzying pace, more than 1.5 million people have lost their lives in Latin America, leaving millions of children orphaned. Government measures to curb the spread have not been without error, abuse and detrimental effects. Confinement has increased the vulnerability of women and girls subjected to attacks on their integrity, their freedom and their very lives. Confinement has placed victims and aggressors in a space of proximity that has unleashed the deepening of the other pandemic: violence. **Inequalities and structural aggressions against women have been exacerbated**. State presence in many territories diminished and, in some cases, disappeared. Schools and churches, often places of listening, containment and support for girls and women, have been ordered to close. The loneliness of the streets, the controls on movement, the minimal presence of staff working in social assistance, and fear itself have made it difficult for many women to seek help.

Melania Zúñiga, founder and director of the association Stella Maris in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, told us that in her country, "confinement has intensified cases of violence against women by their partners and against their children by their parents. There has been an increase in the number of complaints from abused women to the Women's Prosecutor's Office. We receive an average of 5 reports a day from battered women". And she emphasised that "if the pandemic is analysed from a gender perspective, women are the main victims".

Ursula Basset, an Argentinean researcher, agreed that "confinement increased violence and women's problems, as it made it difficult to ask for help, not only for adult and elderly women, but even for girls who lost their space for expression, which is the school. Even the Church, being closed, did not provide this listening space for women. Not being able to develop their spiritual dimension contributed to increase human impoverishment, which generated a lot of sadness and anguish. For her, "the pandemic aggravated the evils, poor women are not listened to and violence increased". Marisol Pérez, former Minister of Justice of Peru and member of Pastoral Carcelaria, also pointed out that the school is a place of denunciation and visibility of violence against children and that during the pandemic there was no way to make cases and the increase in violence visible.

The relationship between mental health and the increase in domestic violence has also been pointed out by experts. It has been pointed out how the stress, anguish and anxiety of confinement unleashed and exacerbated situations of domestic violence. Marina Zabaleta, who accompanies girls and their families at risk in La Paz, Bolivia, reported how people had to live in overcrowded conditions with subsequent episodes of violence and that "many mothers confess that they have experienced violence against their children and that they too have suffered from it". Mirta Villanueva, coordinator of the Education Commission of Resucita Peru, also expressed how confinement increased domestic violence, anxiety, stress and depression.

Some experts exemplified the significant increase in violence against women in times of pandemic based on statistical data. Marcela Mazzini, doctor in theology, mentioned that "according to Argentina's National Femicide Registry, from January to September 2020, there were 202 femicides, one every 32 hours. 68% occurred in their own home or shared with the aggressor; in 63% of the cases, the aggressor was the partner or ex-partner; 54% of the victims had children. 231 children were left motherless. "

Complementing what Marcela Mazzini says, Catalina Hornos, founder and director of Haciendo Camino, an NGO that works with the most vulnerable families in northern Argentina, shared that her organisation's shelter for women suffering violence saw an increase in admissions during the pandemic. But it was not the only type of violence they observed, as they saw an increase in child abuse by fathers, brothers, stepfathers and also by the mothers themselves, who said they had lost patience with the difficulties of the pandemic. For her, this has to do with the overload of tasks that women have suffered. Excessive restrictions and lack of support from institutions meant that the rights of women and children were not monitored and protected. She also noted that alcohol consumption had increased. In conclusion, she said that **violence against the vulnerable increased during the pandemic**.

Nicole Jacobs, president of the *Catholic Women's League* of Jamaica, noted that the number of femicides, already very high in her country, increased during the pandemic.

Ana Paula Siqueira, state deputy for Minas Gerais, Brazil, revealed that "25% of women over the age of 16 suffered some kind of aggression in the last 12 months in Brazil (35.2% increase). 5 out of 10 Brazilians have seen a woman suffer violence in the last year. 46.7% of women who suffered violence also lost their jobs. Victims started to consume more alcohol". María Tuyuc, president of the Global Network of Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurs, Guatemala Chapter, denounced the **increase in psychological violence against women since the beginning of the pandemic, as well as the increase in pregnancies of girls** as young as 10 years old, due to abuse by family members (fathers, brothers, uncles, grandparents) during confinement.

Raquel Pastor, professor of the Master's in Human Rights at the Universidad Iberoamericana, emphasised how the pandemic exacerbated a pre-existing structural violence. She said that "in Mexico, 4 out of every 10 rapes are of girls under the age of 15. Poor or indigenous women face more obstacles in accessing justice. Women between the ages of 12 and 17 are the most vulnerable. In terms of domestic violence "70% of the victims are women". Another alarming figure was that of disappearances. According to Raquel "6 out of 10 disappearances are of girls and adolescents between 0 and 18 years of age. The number of reports is low; the fact is minimised and in many cases they feel ashamed". As a result of the pandemic, violence, femicide, teenage pregnancy and child labour have increased in Mexico.

Virginia Rivero, president of the Foundation for Women's Rights, Venezuela, also gave an account of the worsening situation of women due to the pandemic. She said, "Feminicide has increased fivefold and statistics are still lacking; violence has increased considerably with the pandemic. Femicide rates show that 10% are against girls and most are committed by people close to the family niche".

Data on pandemic violence are revealing, but they do not always reflect the reality of what has happened. The decrease in the number of complaints does not mean a decrease in violent acts. As Ursula Basset said, "we don't know how many forms of violence were hidden because of the isolation and the pandemic. It is known that many feminicides have not been reported".

b. Women as commodities

Trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation is one of the cruelest expressions of violence against women. Stopping this scourge, which enslaves and destroys women's lives, requires effective public policies to prevent and punish these crimes, which are often lacking in the countries of the region. In trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, women's dignity is outraged and their individuality is reduced and objectified in exchange for money. There is an organised apparatus that profits from the exploitation of women.

In times of pandemic, the commodification of women through organised crime has increased. Sister Genoveva Nieto, Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, who has been coordinating a network dedicated to the prevention of violence affecting children and adolescents, especially human trafficking, for 10 years, denounced that: "the pandemic has not stopped the networks of traffickers; on the contrary, there has been an increase in trafficking with a prostitution state and police forces that favour men. Traffickers and service demanders have established new strategies for recruiting and 'marketing' victims through means such as the internet, mobile phones and transport networks that take victims to clients and then return them.

The increase in poverty and hunger has also increased the vulnerability of women and girls, facilitating their recruitment by these criminal networks. In this regard, she pointed out that "the pandemic has greatly increased the number of hungry and destitute families. This often led families to go to the limit of accepting the sexual services of their adolescents and girls, as they would bring money home. Seventy-six per cent of the victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation are women. Of every 10 people trafficked, 6 are minors.

The situation experienced by women and girls in Colombia due to trafficking led a group of nuns, coordinated by Genoveva Nieto, to mobilise to take concrete steps to assist these women. In this initiative "alliances were created with cooperation organisations and groups of victims of trafficking were established in 3 of the most important cities in the country, many of these people were transsexuals and others were heads of families with hungry children and with no other way of finding resources than to respond to the cruel demands of traffickers and consumers". First they were offered humanitarian aid and then "we approached their lives...their faces, their stories, their realities; we met them and then we gave them the proclamation of the God of life and invited them to value themselves as daughters of a God, father and mother who loves them".

Soon, according to the expert, synergies were formed between them and a collective awareness was created. A movement was established that continues to this day, with about 100 women in each city. Now they are given training for work and entrepreneurship.

Genoveva Nieto's testimony is similar to the reality suffered by other women in the region, and about which experts have spoken out. Raquel Pastor expressed how, as a result of the pandemic, there was an increase in marriages of indigenous children, "who are traded for money or animals by their own parents". She also denounced how many children and adolescents began to work as a consequence of the poverty brought about by the pandemic and that "girls, who generally work as servants, suffer abuse and exploitation," emphasising that "commercial sexual exploitation is one of the worst violations of human rights".

The situation of poor women in street situations was also pointed out by Gina Paredes, ambassador of the Vincentian Family Alliance International for the Homeless in the Dominican Republic, as a problem that accentuates the vulnerability of women to be victims of sexual exploitation. In her testimony, she said that "**the pandemic has had a strong impact on the lives of those who live on the street and those who live off the street**". Many women are on the street because they have no home or because their homes are not in adequate conditions. They suffer a triple marginalisation: firstly because they are women, secondly because they are poor and thirdly because they are homeless. "There is a cultural, moral and religious stigma that considers these women as drug addicts, madwomen or prostitutes". Because of the pandemic, many women had to take the risk of prostitution, violence or "mules", transporting drugs to survive. With the curfew, many women ended up being arrested by the police for not even having documents, a very common situation for people on the streets. The police are often very violent and brutal towards them. Women who get a job are exploited, they don't know how to defend their dignity. Women feel cornered, which has led to an increase in drug use and mental health problems.

In addition to poverty, Virginia Rivero said that "migration has created problems in several countries and has increased trafficking in women and sexual exploitation".

Finally, Marcela Mazzini highlighted the role of the Church in the fight against human trafficking and recalled the words of St. John Paul II to women: "In the name of respect for the person, we cannot fail to denounce the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture that promotes the systematic exploitation of sexuality, inducing girls, even at a very young age, to fall into corrupt environments and make mercenary use of their bodies".

c. Migrating while preserving dignity and cultural identity

The hunger and poverty that deepened with the pandemic increased migration in search of better opportunities and even survival. Genoveva Nieto described how migration is taking place in Colombia and the risks to which migrants are exposed. In her intervention she warned about forced migration linked to human trafficking and how the pandemic had exacerbated this situation. Focusing on Colombia as a transit country for migrants, she said that "around 3,000,000 Venezuelans have arrived in search of better living conditions" and emphasised that "it is incredible the situation of exploitation and abuse that Venezuelan women have suffered". Regarding migrants from other countries, she highlighted the situations of abuse to which women and children have been exposed: "The growing flow of Haitian men and women to the United States and Canada is impressive. Women and children have been easy prey for coyotes; children abused for a plate of food. Although gestures of solidarity from society are highlighted, the expert warned that "**there is great xenophobia; migrants are declared criminals 'just because'**".

Yolis Lyon, a Venezuelan indigenous leader from the Warao ethnic group who has been living in Brazil for 10 years, agreed on the serious problem of xenophobia and racism towards migrants, stating that "the Brazilian people are very welcoming, but during the pandemic, xenophobia has increased significantly". In her speech she denounced that "women from the LGBTQIA+ community were severely raped, assaulted and evicted from their homes for non-payment of rent". In relation to indigenous migrants in Brazil, she commented that "Venezuelan indigenous communities are recognised as refugees, but not as indigenous communities or native peoples. **It is difficult for them to maintain their culture and identity**".

As an indigenous woman, she denounced: "They want to erase our history, our ancestry. It is a struggle that we are facing, because indigenous people are made on the basis of territorial and ancestral relations". She also indicated that the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) "does not recognise migrants as indigenous peoples of another nationality. On the contrary, it grants them the title of refugees, without international protection". Furthermore, he said, "they want to erase our

culture". On the preservation of their beliefs and language, he said, "it hurts to see our children learning another language in order to survive. They want to impose the language, clothes and food of Brazil on us. This is a way of acculturating our people".

In addition to the discrimination suffered by indigenous migrants, there is the serious economic situation left by the pandemic. He said that "indigenous people who made a living from handicrafts had many difficulties, as they **stopped selling their products and ended up going out on the streets with their children to beg**". On the treatment of indigenous women, she denounced that "many women were assaulted" and that it is necessary to empower women. She also described the situation of children who cannot access distance education due to lack of resources.

Finally, he said that exclusion and multiple discrimination against these vulnerable groups generates a lot of stress, anguish and depression in people.

d. Fear of hunger rather than Covid-19

The testimonies on the increase in poverty and hunger among women as a result of the effects of the pandemic are alarming. Ursula Basset defined the impact of almost two years of the pandemic as an "increase in the feminisation of poverty". The explanation for this phenomenon must go back a little further. Before the appearance of the Covid-19 virus, women suffered from structural inequalities such as the sexual segregation of work, severe informality in their jobs and the overloading of family and work life. The onset of the pandemic left many women with no income, uncertainty of survival and fear of hunger for themselves and their dependents. **Girls, adult women and elderly women began to experience the fear of hunger**.

Nicole Jacobs said that Jamaican women make up 60% of the workforce and that with the pandemic, many lost their jobs, had their hours reduced or had to accept lower pay, leading to increased poverty. She said **many people became hungry for the first time and did not feel comfortable asking for help**. The number of people attending the soup kitchens increased considerably, especially children and elderly people.

For Marina Zabaleta, "the pandemic was devastating for families in Ciudad del Alto, where the vast majority live from day to day, selling seasonal produce". The economy ground to a halt and people who used to do what they could to survive - like washing clothes or peeling a bucket of potatoes in a restaurant - suddenly had **no source of income**.

In Peru, Mirta Villanueva explained that approximately 50 per cent of the economy is informal and most of those working in this sector were tremendously affected by the pandemic. Women were suddenly out of work.

Ana Paula Siqueira also pointed to the **increase in hunger and poverty, especially in the peripheries**. She highlighted how the closure of schools, as a measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19, led to food insecurity among children and an increase in suicides.

The testimonies go on and on. Edelma Acosta, vice-president of the Movement of Catholic Women of Cuba, described women on the streets, in hospitals and in long queues for hours to get some food. The economic situation of the country is perceived by her as catastrophic. The crowding of people in search of livelihoods and the increase of Covid-19 go hand in hand. In her speech, the expert emphasised that "as the queues to buy food are endless, the contagion increases; not having food, physical health is affected and mental health deteriorates more and more". While noting that measures have been taken to protect working women with young children, she warns that, as these are new arrangements, they are not always implemented and are subject to the decision of the bosses. Although wages have risen, she complains that the price of the basic food basket has risen thousands of times, so that income is insufficient. They only have access to 15 eggs per month per

person. Although there are shops that have a greater variety of foodstuffs, it is made clear that they are at dollar prices and only those who have family abroad who send them that currency have access to them. A major economic crisis, which is especially detrimental to women and makes life more expensive, is causing "the happy and peaceful Cuban people to become violent".

Catalina Hornos shared that the poorest families generally live on temporary jobs and economic aid from the state. In Argentina, for a certain period, the state gave an emergency family income to these families. Receiving the emergency income improved their economic situation, even beyond what they had before the pandemic. Some started businesses, others improved their housing or fixed their mouths. Now that the income has been withdrawn, they are worse off than before, because inflation has risen sharply. She sees how, as in other countries, **those who were vulnerable have become more vulnerable**.

Virginia Rivero provided a detailed description of the poverty situation in Venezuela. The starting point of her intervention is the deep "complex humanitarian crisis" in her country, where 4 million people migrated between 2015 and 2020. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis has been truly severe: "With the pandemic, there is more hunger, more disease, more inequality, less education and less access to basic infrastructure. There are now water and fuel shortages, and this has never happened before... There is no petrol, there are more poor people, less education, we are three decades behind".

e. Education: almost mission impossible

The closure of schools, as a measure to prevent the spread of the virus, made the existence of multiple social inequalities visible. The adaptation of women to this new scenario posed numerous challenges: the digital divide in knowledge and access to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs); the unequal distribution of domestic tasks between men and women, with the consequent overload for women; the lack of policies for the reconciliation of family and work life; the difficulties for parents to understand school rules and explain them to their children; and the dependence of women on support networks to deal with motherhood and pre- and post-natal care, among others. Reconciling housework, care for vulnerable family members, work, virtual classes, teaching and support for home education has clearly been a titanic effort, mainly for women, and often impossible to achieve.

Lucía Duacastella, an Argentinean nun from the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena and a professional nurse who has lived for 6 years in Paramonga, Peru, explained how the reality of poverty affects the use of technologies and how "the virtuality of basic education has been one of the biggest problems". She said that, in her experience, due to the pandemic and the closure of schools, women had to give their children their mobile phones for classes, losing their privacy. However, many of these devices did not have the capacity to store the information and activities necessary for children to study. This caused mothers to worry about their children's future, as they were unable to achieve their educational goals.

For **women teachers, the new mode of teaching implied a superlative effort**. In addition to their family responsibilities related to caring for their children, domestic work and supporting their own children at school, they had to adapt, as teachers, to the new demands of the virtual world, with all the time, preparation and wear and tear that this entailed.

María Bracco, head of Misiones Rurales Argentinas' scholarship programme for rural areas and precarious contexts, explained the difficulties faced by women teachers in rural areas, who were trained, in most cases, to be teachers with chalk, blackboards and folders, not to make videos. She had to find alternatives that the state did not provide. She recounted how the state only demanded that education should be by *zoom* and produced booklets suitable for the city, but not functional for

the countryside. With much hope he spoke of a teacher who said **"the doors of the schools were closed, but not the teaching" and managed to create almost miraculous alternatives for the children in these areas.**

In Argentina, Sister María Alcira García Reynoso, a religious sister of Jesús-María and director of the Community Centre that has been offering food, health, education and evangelisation for 22 years in Tres Isletas, Chaco, also echoed the difficulties that virtuality has brought to families and women. She recounted, with sadness, that **mothers often did not understand the instructions sent to their children via mobile phones**. It was not only a problem of access to technology, but also of knowledge of how to use it and understanding of what was required at school. In order to overcome these obstacles and despite the restrictions imposed, she shared that, from the space she is part of, they opened the centre for those who did not have connectivity. "**We had to solve the problem that they didn't have internet because this would leave them far behind**," explains Alcira García Reynoso. Sometimes "a teacher would pick up children in her car and take them home" so that they wouldn't miss classes.

Catalina Hornos, who works in rural areas, similar to Alcira García Reynoso, complemented her presentation by adding that for families living in isolated rural areas, virtual education was difficult, as "**many do not have electricity to charge their mobile phones, no signal or phones with the necessary technology**, so one of the most exhausting tasks for mothers was to accompany their children, of different ages, in their studies". Generally in rural areas, they have many children, which made the challenge even greater. She also said that many mothers were frustrated by this issue and, as a result, their children dropped out of school.

Teresa Lanzagorta, current director of *Youth Build* in Mexico, posed the great challenge of being a mother and teacher of one's own children at home and harshly stated that with distance education "**we have a simulation of education**". On the role of school in children's lives and the implications of home schooling for mothers, she reflected: "in addition to studying, school offers a space for children to socialise. When this space was closed, this function was also given to **mothers who fell into anguish and depression because they did not know how to teach their children**. This meant exercising a dual role: being a mother and being a teacher. Many mothers have had to go beyond their own educational limitations. When the government said "stay at home", they did not think about the situation at home, as most homes do not have enough space. As a result, many children have spent more time on the streets, increasing their vulnerability. With the classes on television, the children watched for an hour and a half and the rest of the time they had to do exercises, helped by their mothers. In the project to accompany the women, they decided to work in a hybrid way, but many do not have access to technology or a computer".

She said that 98% of the young people attending the training programme she runs in 23 cities across the country have a mobile phone, but do not know how to use it to study. She states with certainty that "moving around with Facebook is not managing technology". In her experience, "**the digital divide increases the problem of poverty and inequality**". The inequality of opportunities has an impact on the difficulties in overcoming unemployment, as many cannot continue studying and get a good job. She concludes, convinced, "I always thought that, from the beginning of the pandemic, we should have left our public spaces open, because 'stay at home is stay in the street'.

For Lourdes Espinoza Rosas**,** WUCWO's vice-president for the Latin America and Caribbean region in Mexico, single mothers had to reinvent themselves to educate their children and accompany them in their education at home.

In Cuba the situation was even more problematic. Edelma Acosta explained that Covid-19 intensified the collapse of education: "the government encouraged classes on television, but many do not have a device, others have no one to force them to attend classes, and others do not have access to a signal at home. Classes, which would take 15 to 20 days in person, take 30 minutes. And it is useless to ask students to search the Internet, as many do not have a mobile phone or

computer. Women, especially, do not have the right technological tools, which prevents them from participating in debates and lectures.

Some experts pointed to the solitary work that teachers carry out in order to teach online without state support. Mirta Villanueva pointed out that "the situation of teachers in the public sector in Peru is bad: there is no adequate support for public servant teachers who, since the pandemic, have been working practically without a timetable. They work mainly with their mobile phones, as most of them do not have access to internet platforms. Some connect with their students late at night, when there is greater connectivity, and others when the parent returns home with the only mobile phone available at home. Teachers urgently need emotional reinforcement".

Dropping out of school was also one of the devastating effects of the pandemic. Melania Zuniga noted that when classes are remote, girls are the first to drop out of school, as parents prefer boys to attend classes. In addition, girls need to help out at home. In the same vein, Virginia Rivero denounced that 50 per cent of children in Venezuela did not re-enrol in school.

Finally, Arianeth Coba, president of the Petrus Dominical Organisation - family farming in Panama, introduced the impact of the measures taken in terms of education in multicultural contexts in rural communities, as well as the importance of consultation and participation of those who will be the beneficiaries of these measures. He stated that "nothing can be imposed on communities or women. They must be listened to". And she emphasised that "A girl from the countryside is a girl who works, who studies. To say that a woman is from the countryside is not to say that she has not studied, it is to say that she dedicates herself and lives in the countryside and dedicates herself to cultivating the land.

f. Death in solitude

The scene of family members saying goodbye to their loved ones behind glass in a hospital or dressed in biosafety suits shows one of the most heartbreaking aspects of the pandemic in family life: dying alone, without farewells and without rites. A life is gone and, in addition to the anguish of leaving, there is the desperation of not being able to say goodbye as one would wish. From Lucía Duacastella's point of view, the relationship between faith, health and women in the Church is an issue that needs to be discussed in this context. **In times of pandemics, the mourning process has not been accompanied or ritualised**. She stated in her testimony that the pain of not being able to bury people with their religious rites and not being able to hold a wake left its mark on the women. "At first, there were no celebrations and the churches were closed. There were virtual celebrations, but these did not reach all the people's homes".

Like Teresa Lanzagorta, she urged the recovery of the rites that accompany the moments of life and death, in order to give people support.

For Pilar Escudero, a member of the Vicariate for Pastoral Care of the Archbishopric of Santiago de Chile, death in solitude, without family, friends or loved ones, highlights the importance of taking care of ties.

Other silent deaths, in the context of Covid-19, are those of women alone and/or in street situations who have no networks or family. Gina Paredes pointed out that in the Dominican Republic there are no statistics on the deaths of the street population.

Particularly acute was the problem of deaths in Peru**'s prisons**, according to the testimony of Marisol Pérez. Riots demanding health and medical attention in the first three months of the pandemic resulted in deaths. The suffering of mothers, wives and children of prisoners and female prisoners was heartbreaking because of the lack of communication.

g. Health: access denied

The pandemic revealed that health systems were not in a position to cope with a health crisis of such magnitude. Beyond the ineffectiveness of the public system to respond adequately to the pandemic, access to health care was impeded by being limited to Covid-19 and acute emergencies. This led to other silent and preventable deaths from serious illnesses such as cancer, untreated chronic conditions or lack of routine check-ups. People were often afraid to go to the doctor for fear of catching Covid-19. This was evidenced by several experts, particularly in rural areas of Peru and Argentina.

One of the most frequent examples of the lack of access to health care in women's lives has been the lack of accompaniment and monitoring of pregnancies. Melania Zúñiga said that in Honduras "the virus is killing many pregnant women. In the country, there is a lot of resistance to the vaccine, including pregnant women, for fear of losing their baby. There is a lot of misinformation on social media about this issue.

Catalina Hornos said that in northern Argentina, where they work, there was a **suspension of pregnancy monitoring programmes**. Many pregnant women only had access to doctors at the time of delivery and this led to an **increase in maternal and infant mortality in childbirth**. On the other hand, not being able to treat their children or give them the necessary care for their illnesses caused a lot of anguish for the mothers.

The crisis in the public system highlighted the social inequalities in access to health care. Marina Zavaleta revealed that health care in Bolivia has also been catastrophic, as has education, and denounced how **private health services have become increasingly expensive**, with the state incapable of providing this service.

People's economic and social situation also made access to health care difficult. Lucía Duacastella pointed out that the "**telemedicine implemented did not allow the most vulnerable women to be attended to**, as they do not know how to use the telephone or communication technologies. Some were initially able to seek private medical care, but then stopped their treatment due to lack of money. The mental health system became inaccessible as women did not have a proper space in the home and had to share the only telephone in the house with the whole family". On this last point, Teresa Lanzagorta said the pandemic was tragic for children and young people who fell into depression and for whom "going to a psychologist is a luxury". Older people also suffered emotional disorders due to isolation, according to Rachel Loiola.

In addition to this, women were deeply affected by the lack of treatment of the sick in health centres, having to assume the tasks of caring for them at home. Teresa Lanzagorta explained that "with the collapse of health services, many visits and treatments were made at home, usually by the women of the household". She also highlighted how this "movement of people increased the transmission of the virus" with a clear exposure of women caregivers.

In other cases in Mexico, according to Raquel Pastor, economic problems in families also led to food problems. Lack of mobility led to obesity, especially in children, who were unable to undergo treatment because the health system was geared to Covid-19 cases. In addition to these aspects, the decline in women's reproductive health programmes was evident.

For María Tuyuc, **access to vaccination** in Guatemala **has been hindered for indigenous women**. She raises "the difficulty of vaccinations for the indigenous population, as priority is given to the cities. In terms of vaccine uptake, many people are being wrongly persuaded not to be vaccinated because of false ideas of sterilisation or unfounded criticism of pharmaceutical companies".

h. Work: overload on women's shoulders

All the studies that analyse the impact of Covid-19 on women's lives point to the overload that the new responsibilities they had to assume during the confinement added to the domestic and work tasks they had previously carried out. Indeed, in addition to the tasks inherent to the pre-pandemic family dynamics, there was the addition of home schooling, the presence of children throughout the day without recreational and sporting activities, the lack of support networks for child-rearing, such as kindergartens, and the lack of collaborators, such as domestic workers and grandparents, among others.

Ursula Basset mentioned UNICEF reports that reveal a 51% higher overload of care tasks for women. Based on data from Greater Buenos Aires, she illustrated that "in 7 out of 10 households, the main caregiving and school support tasks were carried out by women. This generated an expulsion of women from the labour market and deepened inequalities and the feminisation of poverty. Nothing was done about this despite the fact that even before the pandemic it was known that female-headed households were among the poorest. At the beginning there was a certain 'romanticism' about virtual work, but then it became clear that women's working hours increased dramatically.

All the experts report on the **overload of work in women's lives and the "physical and emotional exhaustion" they experienced from carrying so many responsibilities** as mothers, teachers, husband's counsellors, housewives, carers of the sick in the family and, at the same time, working virtually and going out for groceries.

In addition to the overload of work, Ana Paula Siqueira said that women were affected by the precariousness of their work and unemployment, especially in the areas of health and cleaning. On this aspect, Ursula Basset pointed out that 77% of women are unprotected and work informally. Lourdes Araiza added that many women duplicated their tasks "to improve the family income" and had to leave their children at home, as they were out of school, to try to earn additional income for the family.

For Maria Tuyuc from Guatemala, indigenous women were most affected as "the containment measures have damaged the economy, especially for those who need to sell something to eat. The government, which has supported several businesses, has not provided economic programmes for small and medium enterprises led by indigenous women, which is driving many out of business. This will increase the poverty rate. And the teacher from the Carabarety indigenous community in the Venezuelan Amazon rainforest, Francia Márquez, reported that the economic crisis in her indigenous community has worsened without the fuel that was coming in from the border closed because of the emergency, and without a salary to support themselves.

According to Virginia Rivero, Venezuela was already the second country in Latin America with the second lowest rate of women working before the pandemic, but due to confinement, 21.8 per cent of the population became unemployed. The women who kept their jobs are working double shifts, due to household chores.

i. Lights and shadows in the woman-Church relationship

By order of the government and as a Covid-19 prevention measure, the Church temporarily closed its doors during the pandemic, as did all other institutions. The closure of the churches had an impact on women, not only because of their pastoral activity but also because of the space for containment that the church provided for many of them.

Edelma Acosta declared that in Cuba "the churches were closed and it was not even possible to broadcast the celebrations except for a few masses broadcast on television for a short time, once a week".

The closure of the churches did not prevent pastoral work outside. Melania Zúñiga described how the Church in Honduras, in addition to providing pastoral care, has helped a lot in the face of hunger and poverty "with social actions and provision of food, especially for unemployed women". Jamaican Nicole Jacobs said, "**The Church has shown solidarity and found new ways to be present" in the pandemic**.

Confinement also had an effect on the way spiritual life was conducted, with women attending rites from a distance. In some cases it meant that families became more involved in Christian teaching. Pilar Escudero alluded to the fact that, with the difficulty of going to church and watching mass on television, many devoted themselves to educating their children in the faith and praying together. She considered in her speech that **personal bonds "are indispensable for a more human world, for a healthier nature and for a more fraternal and family-like Church"**.

The difficulties of the pandemic also had an impact on people's closeness to God. Alcira García Reynoso recounted how some **women felt closer to God and learned to pray for others**, including those for whom they had never prayed before.

Also, according to Nicole Jacobs, "life used to go very fast; now we have had more opportunities to reflect on our own lives and to be grateful for what we have".

Lucía Duacastella considered that, due to the suspension of church activities, "women lost their leading role in prayer groups, catechesis, etc. **The virtual masses reinforced the role of the clergy and made the role of women in the communities invisible**, relegating them only to a more passive participation. This reduction made parish life centralised in the figure of the priest". It is necessary to be alert "so that this is not perpetuated and that women's spaces for action are rescued".

In a similar vein Marcela Mazzini argued that it was necessary to invest in pastoral action and to eradicate unjust relations between men and women. On the role of women in the Church, she considered that "the Church needs to plan its pastoral care with a view to guaranteeing equity. **It is necessary to go against clericalism and to go for synodality, bringing women into ecclesial discernment**". She gave the example of the Latin American Ecclesial Assembly: when women were consulted about their participation in the Church, their perception was that "although they were the majority, they were not in the decision-making places of the Church.

j. Progress in the storm

The pandemic has been very hard on women and families. However, looking at the events from a distance, not everything has been negative. The experts' testimonies about what they have experienced and accompanied highlight some positive aspects of the confinement. The first aspect is the encounter between people. They already knew each other as family, but the pandemic has inevitably led them to meet.

On this point, Pilar Escudero underlined that "seclusion increased the time spent with married couples. Men discovered how women can reconcile everyday life at home and at work; parents discovered new facets of their children". On the positive side, Rachel Loiola noted that "many mothers ended up meeting their children", there was a "drop in the consumption of clothes, a new style of dress focused on comfort" and an "intergenerational exchange", even if in some cases there was a compulsive use of the internet and virtual shopping. Looking at the home, "the house has

given identity, new hobbies have been discovered: games, caring for plants, books, conversations between members".

For Nicole Jacobs, the confinement meant a "greater opportunity to socialise and get to know our families. People became aware of the importance of taking care of their health and started exercising. Many looked for new opportunities and ways to earn money; others sought to continue their education". He noted that, from the social distancing, "**we found new ways to communicate virtually**".

Life at home also meant some change in priorities. Alcira García Reynoso said that in poor rural areas, "people saved by not being able to go out on the streets and were able to do important things with their money, such as getting their teeth fixed". She added that, although they suffered "the death of family members, not being able to drink 'mate' with their mothers, businesses without sales, husbands without work - employers tried to manage without staff - **women suddenly became the sole providers in the home**, some discovered their own children and learned to live better with them". She noted that "some women longed for teachers and dreamed of their children going back to school".

Similarly, Teresa Lanzagorta, from Mexico, collected comments from women in the pandemic and said that "some reported that it was the first time that they, their children and their husband had read a book together or commented on a television programme. She said that "**the pandemic forced them to learn to live together" and "they had to learn to forgive**.

From María Bracco's point of view, because of her work with needy rural families in Argentina, "**in the countryside the pandemic was less harmful, because in rural areas there was space**". She pointed out that "the children and the father could be outside, which helped women who were not used to having their husbands or children at home for so long. Families continued to see each other and infections were much lower than in the big cities".

k. Women's resilience: community-based Samaritans

The experts agreed on women's strength and resilience in the face of crisis. Adversity mobilises them internally to save their own and others. Women show solidarity and support the family scaffolding to preserve it from collapsing. The pandemic was, like any critical life situation, an extreme situation that put at stake the satisfaction of people's basic needs and even their very survival in the face of possible death. It **made heroic gestures and actions visible**.

The testimonies of the experts are admired for their integrity and integrity. They show their creativity to carry on with little, but forward. According to Rachel Loiola, "**women embrace different causes with a sense of solidarity**". She also highlighted the women's "strength and creative spirit" and their "physical and emotional effort" ...due to their multiple tasks and economic pressures.

Alcira García Reynoso, demonstrated that "women have immense strength"; they proudly cooked up to 7 pots at a time". She shared that the centre she directs, which is largely made up of women, has its strength in the coordination of the different sectors: food, health, education and evangelisation. She highlighted the role of the organised community: "**social or community organisations soften the impact of a difficult situation**".

For Mirta Villanueva, Peruvian women were a key driving force in guaranteeing food for the most vulnerable people: "**women, who are used to looking after their own and others, reacted quickly**: they organised, at national level, common pots to feed children and elderly people in their neighbourhoods". The state has been asked to declare a food crisis so that these common pots have more resources. In addition, he described how in the premises where the common pot is

prepared every day, small communal classrooms were organised with computers that were loaned or donated by civil society, so that the children who ate there could have access to education.

For María Bracco, whose work focuses on low-income rural families, the woman, who lives with her basic needs unsatisfied and who is often semi-literate and/or head of household, has been during the pandemic the **generator of resources and the emotional and educational support of her family**; she has managed to put a plate on the table and dodge the judicial post to sell her products in the village. She also managed to keep her children from sinking into discouragement and to keep them with minimal school activity, making use of a precarious mobile phone and a photocopier for her children's homework, praying that it would be easy so that she could help them.

Among these women living in rural areas, she highlighted a woman from the Wichi community, "a persecuted and devalued woman who has fought hard to defend her customs. A woman whose school closure left her without food for her children. A woman who lives in a house with a plastic roof and walls and who depends on the village cacique for everything, even to sell her products. This woman took courage, talked to a teacher and saw a window to sell her products directly. She overcame her fear and took the first step towards her liberation.

Marina Zabaleta said that women in Bolivia learned to move in the early hours of the morning to get cheap and accessible food, as everything was empty during the day. "**There was more fear of starving to death than of getting sick from Covid-19..**.The women did not give up despite having to walk for several hours at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning."

Marcela Mazzini highlighted the resilience of women, especially the poorest, who live in the most vulnerable conditions. For her, **women reinvented themselves in the pandemic. "This social strength of women is something we have to value**. Specifically in the Church, it is necessary to deepen synodality. She stressed that "women are specialists in mobilising networks and small businesses".

The experts highlighted the community solidarity of women in their countries. For Pilar Escudero, in Chile, there was an increase in reciprocity and mutual aid, in parishes and NGOs. Edelma Acosta explained that in Cuba "women have worked in canteens for the most needy. Several support groups for women were created, in particular psychological help through telephone calls and then letters, due to the cost of the calls. There were many private actions to finance the initiatives, especially for the intercommunication of women". And in Peru, according to Lucia Duacastella, "several cooperation initiatives emerged, such as the sharing of medicines, care for migrants and community kitchens".

Maria Tuyuc explained how some women from the Mayan school had the ability to modify their business model and adapt it to new trends, and others organised new ventures to secure family income. **Women reactivate their capacity to be able to overcome the crisis in difficult times**.

Arianeth Coba from Panama described the initiative of peasant women who, during the pandemic, joined a group to sell their produce, supported by the Catholic Church. They had difficulty transporting what they produced. As a result, they started selling in the city itself, at a more affordable price. The sale of food baskets helped to increase the family income and allowed them to invest in the community. They realised the problem of middlemen: "Now we produce, harvest and sell ourselves, with no middlemen between us and the traders in the cities". He remarked that another positive point was that they were working together and receiving continuous job training through the Catholic Church. Agriculture has a lot to contribute and it has been demonstrated in the pandemic.

From Colombia, Genoveva Nieto referred to how women can emerge stronger from such extreme situations, stating that "these situations have to provoke a rebirth of all of us and they have done so". **"We discovered all the capacity and ingenuity of women and at the same time we discovered each other to make collective what was previously individual".**

I. Looking to the future

The dialogue with experts involved much more than exchanging views on the positive and negative effects of the pandemic on women's lives: it included reflections on how to rebuild a better future.

One of the first reflections shared was to work towards greater equity for women. With or without a pandemic, women must have equal opportunities with men and be able to exercise the same rights. According to Ursula Basset of the Catholic University of Argentina, "**we must work against structural and symbolic violence**"; according to Marcela Mazzini of Teologanda, **it is necessary to think about gender equality as a question of evangelical justice according to what St. Paul says in Galatians 3:28 "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female"**.

With their sights set on solutions, the experts proposed creating spaces for women's accompaniment, places where they feel safe when they want to ask for help and, above all, where they can be heard. Mirta Villanueva and Lucía Duacastella from Peru, Arianeth Coba from Panama, Catalina Hornos from Argentina and Gina Paredes from the Dominican Republic, among others, supported the creation of collectives for women's empowerment, where they can speak freely about what is happening to them. Yolis Lyon, an indigenous leader who migrated from Venezuela to Brazil, said: "**Listen to them, empower them and give them the strength to continue walking".** Accompaniment, listening and support appear as forms of female empowerment that need to be replicated and promoted.

As well as listening, **training for women is also a key part of strengthening women's leadership**, according to Genoveva Nieto from Colombia, in agreement with other experts. Rachel Loiola and Lucía Duacastella agreed on the need to give women more possibilities for digital inclusion, with free connection spaces, and to provide access to social networks to older women so that they can emerge from invisibility.

The importance of working for equality and the prevention of violence from childhood has also been a vision shared by many experts. For Lourdes Araiza, supporting women victims of the pandemic is a priority, but it is also necessary to ensure the education of women, starting from childhood, and to work for their digital inclusion to help them overcome poverty. For Ana Paula Siqueira, we must strengthen actions that seek to promote the dignity of women and focus first on girls, so that they do not have to grow up with low self-esteem, and then think about actions to reverse the current situation. Raquel Pastor agreed that we must focus on girls because violence begins in childhood and there is still the problem of access to education.

Autonomy in decision-making and access to positions of power were also pointed out with a view to the future. For Ana Paula Siqueira, a relevant issue is to achieve the representation of women in political spaces. Catalina Hornos and Gina Paredes agreed that it is necessary to **occupy decision-making spaces in public policy** and, from there, to promote programmes that work with vulnerable populations. But as these transformations are long term, in the meantime, acting on micro changes is significant.

Looking to the future also entails enhancing the good deeds that have been identified in times of pandemic. Solidarity, family proximity, as well as links and mutual aid were highlighted as positive aspects of the Covid-19 crisis. Pilar Escudero emphasised the need to maximise links and cooperation networks**; to focus on collaboration rather than competition**. She also referred to austerity and lifestyle; the need to ask ourselves whether we really need so many things, in the face of a poverty that has become evident with a force that many did not suspect.

Rachel Loiola raised the need for a more humane future that includes older adults and promotes intergenerational interaction. She spoke of humanising relationships through conversation circles

and offering intergenerational support groups so that older people can collaborate with the new generations.

The future role of women in the Church was also the focus of reflections. For Marcela Mazzini, formation is key to the empowerment of women in the Church. She proposed continuing to work on the pastoral and theological education of women within the Church. Lucía Duacastella proposed reinforcing the training of women as pastoral agents for the accompaniment of the sick, mourning, prayer and community celebration. In addition to training, she recommended instituting some kind of accreditation and support in order to entrust, legitimise and strengthen women's mission. Lourdes Araiza shared this point, proposing to recover spaces for women in the Church and to strengthen the role of community leaders. They agreed that the World Observatory of Women is a great tool for listening that motivates new concrete actions.

The approach to death in times of Covid-19 was included in the expert dialogue. They spoke of the pain caused to many people by the lonely death of their relatives and friends, without being able to say goodbye to them. Lucía Duacastella emphasised the importance of recovering the rites that accompany the moments of life and death, in order to provide containment. Along the same lines, Lourdes Araiza proposed the creation of spaces for mourning to share and pray, as well as thinking about **popular religiosity as a healing factor**.

4- Final considerations

The experience of the meetings with experts from our continent has been highly significant and, on several occasions, moving. The WMO has proposed a process of gathering qualitative evidence, which, without leaving aside the quantitative data presented in the State of the Art, shows and systematises the reality experienced and expressed by the women themselves, such as, on this occasion, the 25 experts whom we thank for their participation.

At the end of this stage we seem to have heard in the different experiences shared by the experts, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, a modern-day incarnation of the words of Jesus: "... I was hungry and they gave me food, I was thirsty and they gave me drink, I was passing through and they gave me lodging, naked and they clothed me, in prison and they came to see me" (Mt 25, 35-36); in other words, a feminine face of the Latin American Church.

5- Theological-pastoral reflections

Maricarmen Bracamontes Ayón, OSB

What this dialogue with experts on the effects of COVID-19 on women in Latin America and the Caribbean tells us in its first sections are dehumanising experiences, lives even more threatened by the unprecedented contexts of this pandemic. In the following sections, she talks about the miracle of finding ways to care for these lives in such adverse circumstances.

The dialogue leaves the horizon open to glimpse the challenges of these times from the perspective of the divine project of life in abundance for humanity.

The biblical text that points the way is undoubtedly very apt: those verses of Mt 25:35-36 which, incarnated in creative and concrete actions, have provided an immediate response to basic needs. There are, by grace, and the dialogue bears witness to this, those who are feeding, those who are giving to drink, those who are housing, those who are clothing, those who are visiting, those who

are going to see them... and we must multiply these actions exponentially... likewise, we must boldly add liberating actions, of authentic conversion, a true metamorphosis in mentalities that leads to the transformation of structures, which implies changing the roots of a system that degrades human life and the common home. And I believe that this dimension would be one of the aspects to be addressed in the theological-pastoral reflections.

What immediately comes to mind is Exodus 3:9-10,12,

> "The cry of the children of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression of the Egyptians upon them. Go therefore; I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt... I will be with you... I am the one who sent you".

And Miriam, Moses and Aaron, the sister and the brothers, three people of the people, ***accompanied by God,*** accept the mission.

These verses could be rephrased as follows,

> "The cry of my daughters has come to me, and I have seen the oppression of the insatiable ambitions that dominate these times... go, for I am sending you to set them free, to recreate their lives... ***I will be with you***".

Thus today, women and men, united by the bonds of universal brotherhood and social friendship, (Fratelli Tutti), inspired by God's plan for humanity and with the Parresia of the Spirit, seek creative means to care for life, to help what is already budding to flourish (cfr Is 43,19).

This universal brotherhood is woven through mutual listening. This social friendship is expressed in creative and daring actions that make possible the development and maturity of innate potentialities, which are groaning, waiting for the practical and effective incarnation of the proclamation of the Lord's year of grace. They are actions that make possible the liberation from all forms of captivity and oppression. (Cfr Lk 4,18-19).

In this process of liberation, the dignity of being children of God, created in His image and likeness, will be clearly manifested in each and every woman and girl, an image and dignity that has been tarnished by an ancestral culture that has not had eyes to see, ears to hear, or actions to honour such dignity.

The crimes against humanity perpetrated throughout history have been made possible by these perverse actions in which races, social classes and sexes have been dehumanised. We can see this in what happens with impunity in the fatal expression of the bodies of women and girls through feminicide, trafficking and networks of pornography, prostitution and paedophilia.

Thus, in these accounts of the experiences of women whom the experts have met and listened to, we discover the cries that challenge us[73] and urge us to seek bold and effective actions to join in the processes that help to recreate, with the Parresia of the Divine Ruah, the dignity of all women and girls, according to their Divine image and likeness.

[73] The images described in the first part of the dialogues project the demands not of Christian service, but of humiliating servitude that exhaust women and force them to give of themselves until they say enough is enough, and also keep them on the margins, excluded from participation in the decisions that affect their lives. Moreover, as a consequence of this same cultural pattern, the men around them often do not share these burdensome tasks, and some of them have even multiplied violent acts against them.

These cries imply the need for us to progressively become protagonists in the full recovery of its true face.[74]

The Guadalupan event in the light of the dialogue with experts

"In order that we may enjoy freedom, Christ has set us free; let us therefore remain free, Let us stand firm and not be subject to the yoke of bondage" (Gal 5,1). (Gal 5,1)

There is an emblematic story that is very much ours, very much Latin American and Caribbean. The Nican Mopohua,[75] the story of the encounter between Mary of Guadalupe and Juan Diego. It bears witness to a dialogue, a mutual listening, which recreates and dignifies women and men from an entire continent. It is a story that reveals to us paths of liberation. It is a human-divine dialogue-action that takes place between the native peoples, in the personification of Juan Diego, and the Mother of the True God for whom we live; of the giver of life; of the one who is always near and beside us, at our side. She declared and affirmed the full dignity of all the inhabitants of these lands. She made herself present, she went out to meet and, from the moment she pronounced the name of "that little one" in whom these peoples were incarnated, she manifested her dignity: ***Iuántzin Iuan Diegótzin***, which we translate, not very accurately, by the diminutive "Juanito, Juan Dieguito". In naming her María de Guadalupe ***Iuántzin Iuan Diegótzin***, there is a recognition of her dignity. ***Tzin*** is a reverential suffix that denotes appreciation and respect.

The inhabitants of these lands considered themselves unworthy as a result of such oppressions. But ***INNINANTZIN IN HIPALNEMOHUANI***; ***TONÁNTZIN IN TLOQUENAHUÁQUE***[76] recreates their lives, encouraging them to carry out ***their mission in the*** midst of the difficulties and threats they faced.

What mission? To build, to recreate her *Temple* incarnated in those who inhabited these lands, and she will make possible the recreation of those lives that were mistreated, enslaved, despised by unjust institutions and systems. She will be at their side, she will accompany them, so that they may become protagonists of the recreation of their being in the divine image and likeness, unconditionally loved. In the story we read the consequences of oppressive experiences. Iuántzin, Iuan Diegótzin, on realising the bishop's distrust of the message commissioned by Inninantzin In Hipalnemohuani; Tonántzin in Tloquenahuáque, will try to make her realise that he is not the right person for the task,

"...therefore I earnestly beg you, my Lady and my Child, that you would commission one of the chiefs, known, respected and esteemed, to carry your message so that they may believe him; for I am a little man, I am a string, I am a little ladder of boards, I am a tail, I am a leaf, I am a little people; and you, my Child, the youngest of my daughters, Lady, send me to a place where I do not walk and I do not stop. Forgive me for causing you great sorrow and for falling into your anger, my Lady and my mistress.

[74] In this regard, there is a text by Rosario Castellanos which states: "The feat of becoming what one is... demands... the rejection of the false images that false mirrors offer women in the closed galleries where their lives take place", *La mujer y su imagen*, in Colección de ensayos "Mujer que sabe latín". SEP Setentas Diana, Mexico, 1979.

[75] *https://www.academia.edu/50916249/Nican_Mopohua_Clodomiro_Siller_Acu%C3%B1a), annexed on 11/11/21*

[76] INNINANTZIN IN H IPALNEMOHUANI (I AM THE MOTHER OF THE GOD THROUGH WHOM ONE LIVES, and also as MOTHER OF THE GIVER OF LIFE). *TONÁNTZIN IN TLOQUENAHUÁQUE* (the Mother of the One who is always near and close to us) and with four other names that identify her as the Mother of God (cfr. v. 22). Cfr. Estudios Indígenas Vol. VIII No.2, March-1981, p.233 commentaries to the Nican Mopohua, Clodomiro Siller A.

And she replies:

"Listen, my son, my little one, understand that there are many my servants and messengers whom I can commission to carry my message and do my will, but it is absolutely necessary that it be you yourself, that you request and help, and that through your mediation my will be fulfilled. I beg you very much, my son, my smallest and most rigorous son, to go again tomorrow to see the bishop. Give him a report in my name and let him know my will in its entirety: that he must build the temple I ask of him. And again tell him that I in person, the ever-virgin Holy Mary, Mother of God, send you. "

Juan Diego then tells him:

"My Lady and my Child, I will not grieve you; I will willingly go to do your bidding; I will by no means fail to do it, nor do I regard the way as hard. I will go to do your will; but perhaps I will not be heard with pleasure; or if I am heard, perhaps I will not be believed. Tomorrow evening, when the sun goes down, I will come and give an account of your message with the prelate's reply. Now I take my leave of you, my daughter, my youngest. My Child and Lady. Rest in the meantime.

And, now, how would we paraphrase this moment of the Guadalupan event in the light of the dialogue that has been shared with us?

It would be a dialogue of recreating life and building sisterhood. She would go out to meet the girls and women, calling them daughters and sisters. She would bring balm to heal their wounds and a loving listening attitude to embrace their stories. And she would tell them that she too lived in an oppressive society that did not value women. That is why she sings the *Magnificat* (Lk 1, 46-55) where she declares that she is not a slave of the Empire but only a servant of God's plan that rescued her from the humiliation in which she lived.

And she would tell them to live her discipleship; that she was a disciple and that her Son proclaimed her as such: "But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and do it'" (Lk 11:28). And she would invite them to trust in their dignity, to stand up and praise God by living in fullness. He would remind them how Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, rescued all women from domestic servitude in Peter's mother-in-law and incorporated her for the service of the Kingdom (Cfr Mt 8,14; Lk 4,38; Mk 1,29); and that he also freed them from the oppression of the Temple in the bent woman of whom he said: she too is a daughter of Abraham (Cfr Lk 13,16). He overturned the laws of purity and impurity which kept them marginalised and which the religious authorities of that time considered to be a divine design (cf. Mk 5, 21-43). He also included them as disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem (cf. Lk 8:1-3) and sent them out as apostles (cf. Jn 20; Mk 16; Mt 28; Lk 24).

To continue listening, to continue dialogue

Certainly, the women in this pandemic are carrying on their backs double and triple journeys of love, generosity, service... and while they certainly reflect the feminine face of the Church in their generosity and splendour, they also exhale loudly the groans of the Divine Ruah that reveals to us the urgency of listening and responding to situations of death that cry out for conditions of life[77] .

[77] It is also opportune to rediscover and put into action pastoral actions that the Conferences of the Council of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (CELAM) have pronounced since its foundation. I recall something that was expressed at the First Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on Women, their Presence and Work in the Social Pastoral and Caritas in Quito, Ecuador, "...we need an examination of conscience. We have clear, challenging and even beautiful teachings... where we fail is that we have not managed to bring this dignity to the reality of the daily commitment of the faith... with all this, Catholics should be the most well-known promoters of these realities and needs of women. We need to make the teachings concrete, to bring the principles down to earth.

As Pope Francis invites us to dream and warns us, speaking of women, "**service yes, servitude no**", I would like to conclude with the dream of one of my sisters in the community[78] ,

> *My dream is for women to have OUR DREAM...*
> *that comes from us, from our experience,*
> *our spirit, mind, body and feelings;*
> *of our yearnings, reflections and relationships,*
> *of our analysis of reality*
> *and prayerful discernment of the Word...*
>
> *...and that we devote our energies to*
> *solidarity with other women and also with the*
> *men, to make that dream come true*
> *for the good of all humanity.*

Part III - Survey Report

[78] Sr. Patricia Henry, o.s.b., "Women in Public Life: Feminisms and Catholic Identity in the 21st Century". LAS MUJERES EN EL MAGISTERIO DEL PAPA FRANCISCO, VI Diplomado Internacional de Doctrina Social de la Iglesia del 11 al 25 de julio, 2020, Academia de Líderes Católicos, México.

1- Introduction

Just when we thought that the emergency caused by Covid-19 was improving, the data on the continuity of the pandemic confirms the importance and need to continue to make its effects visible in order to contribute, from an evangelical perspective, with solutions that help to improve the quality of life of women, their families, their communities and their countries.

This paper - the third and final part of the first project developed by the World Observatory of Women (OMM) of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) and the Department of Knowledge Management of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) - aims precisely to study and understand the impact of Covid-19 on women in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), in order to make visible the situation of women whose sufferings, potential and achievements seem to be invisible to many.

This stage consisted of a survey answered by more than 2000 women from 23 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean[79] . The number of responses from three countries in the region stands out: Mexico, Brazil and Argentina; but there were also responses from 20 other countries, including some small island territories, which denotes the symbolic value of the sample. This implied dedication as well as the difficulty of working in three languages: Spanish, Portuguese and English.

The approach is primarily qualitative rather than quantitative, as the survey does not represent the total female population of the continent in statistical terms. Therefore, generalisations have been avoided and testimonies are presented, which constitute the greatest richness of the document and point to a diversity of trends depending on the circumstances.

Although most of the respondents are adult women, the ages range from 18 to 88, thus including voices of young and old women. It is also noted that while the majority of respondents are highly educated and a minority come from poorly educated backgrounds, the survey has also symbolically reached out to groups of women on the peripheries (e.g. a rubbish dump, a prison, rural areas of extreme poverty, indigenous communities and migrants).

The profile of women who declared themselves to be Catholic (86%) can be clearly seen, in many cases coinciding with the Narrative Synthesis of the Listening of the recent Latin American Ecclesial Assembly. However, slightly more than 10% of women of other faiths or who described themselves as having no religion were interested and answered the questionnaire.

Four thematic axes were addressed so that women could express their perceptions during the pandemic: *support and deprivation*, *family life*, *education* - in relation to their dependents and themselves - and *women and the Church*. In all the axes there were closed questions and at least one open question to allow for a free expression of the testimonies.

Obviously, both within and outside the axes, much more remains to be investigated; we have not sought to implement an exhaustive or exclusive instrument, but rather a tool capable of reflecting, as in a mosaic, the confluent and discordant voices which, in some way, indicate to us what the experiences of these women have been. They themselves are the source of the expressions that they put into the questionnaire with the firm desire to be heard.

[79] Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

2- Significant experiences evidenced in the pandemic

- **Increased family integration**
  By living more closely with the family, knowledge, communication and relationships between family members deepened; more affection developed and new bonds were created. There was more creativity in getting along with children or partners and appreciating simple coexistence.

- **Family conflicts**
  Fights with husbands and other family members; family crises up to separation and break-ups.

- **Valuing life**
  Despite the setbacks, the women clearly perceived the value of their lives and the lives of others. With their ability to overcome difficulties and the strength to live and fight, they helped and defended the lives of others.

- **Deaths and inability to say goodbye**
  Death was the worst of the women's experiences: the loss of loved ones, the impossibility of saying goodbye and the prohibition of funerals and religious rites due to contagion.

- **Self-awareness**
  Isolation and quarantine also encouraged self-knowledge. Many women discovered the possibility of self-correction and reinvention. Several experienced an improvement in their own diet, self-care and physical exercise.

- **Loss of emotional balance**
  Some women lost their emotional and even physical equilibrium; they felt tormented by the risks of the pandemic and without sure guidance on how they should behave. The isolation caused anxiety, loneliness, fear and loss of peace.

- **Solidarity**
  A large number of respondents were sensitive to the fragility and vulnerability of both themselves and others. This led to an increase in mutual help among neighbours and the development of solidarity practices and support networks.

- **Crisis of economic and working life**
  Unemployment and economic crisis; lack of access to goods and services; excessive responsibilities at home; pressure of work and having to combine it with household chores.

- **Deepening spirituality and life of faith**
  Many of the women felt a change in their relationship with God and in their involvement in the Church. Many strengthened their faith and appreciated their gifts more. Others gained a more spiritual and less materialistic understanding of interpersonal relationships.

- **Damage to children's education**
  For many, the greatest suffering was the damage to their children's learning, not least because of the lack of internet access and insufficient training to help them.

3- Profile of the women surveyed

The survey involved 2163 women with a wide variety of profiles, taking into account country of residence, family situation, age, level of education and the localities or areas in which they live (urban, suburban, rural and aboriginal communities), among other aspects.

Characterisation of participants:

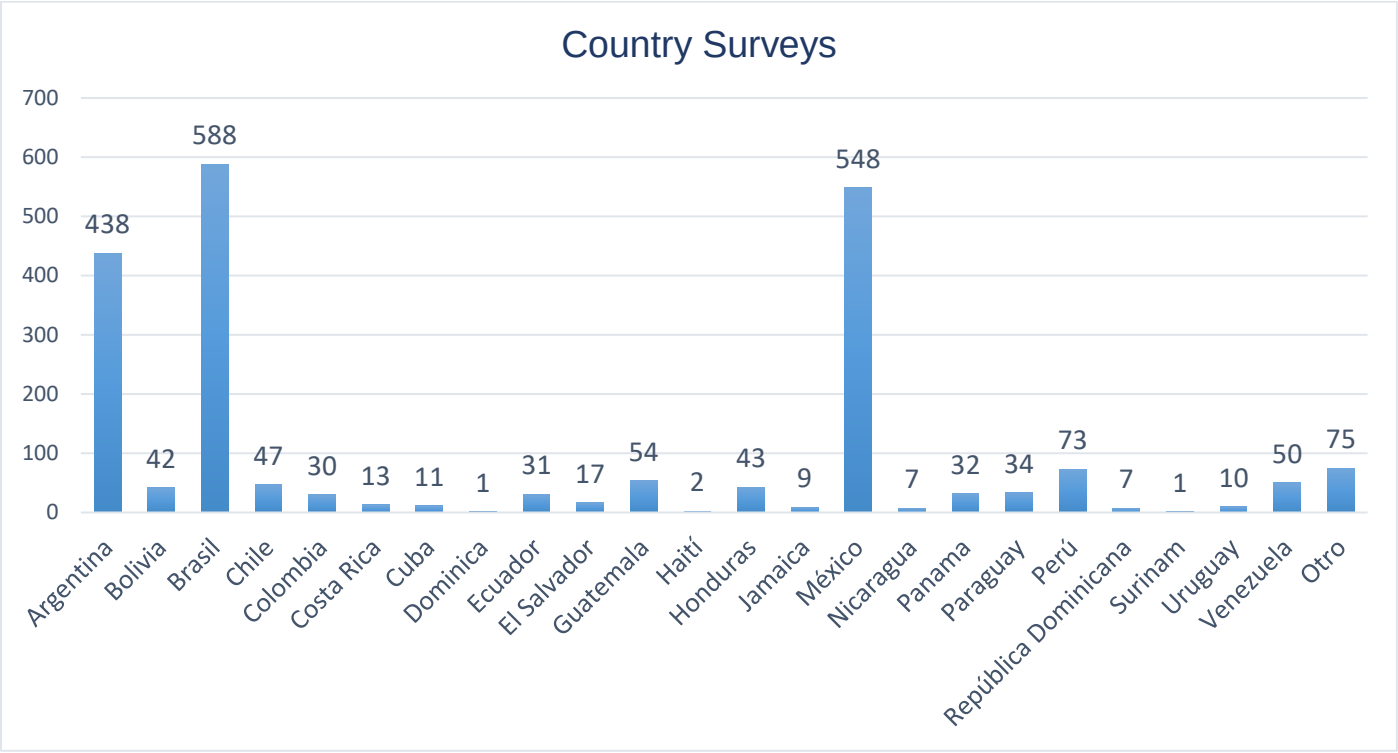


Figure 1 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

Women from 23 countries in the region participated, with a large majority of those residing in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

In the above graph, "Other" is defined as those women who are nationals of a LAC country, but who are living outside the region, mostly in the United States.

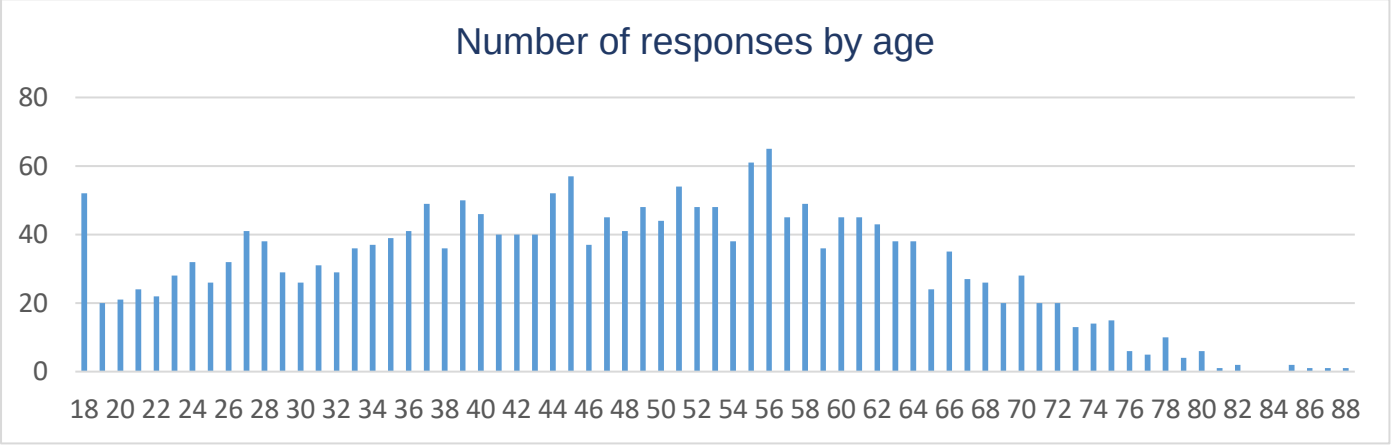


Figure 2 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

The ages of the women ranged from 18 to 88 years, with the highest concentration of participants between 37 and 57 years old.

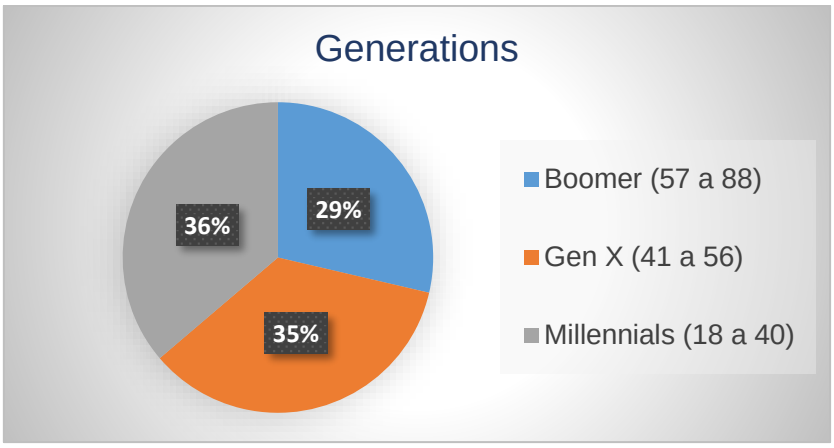


Figure 3 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

Considering the age groups, we have a sample with a very similar distribution.

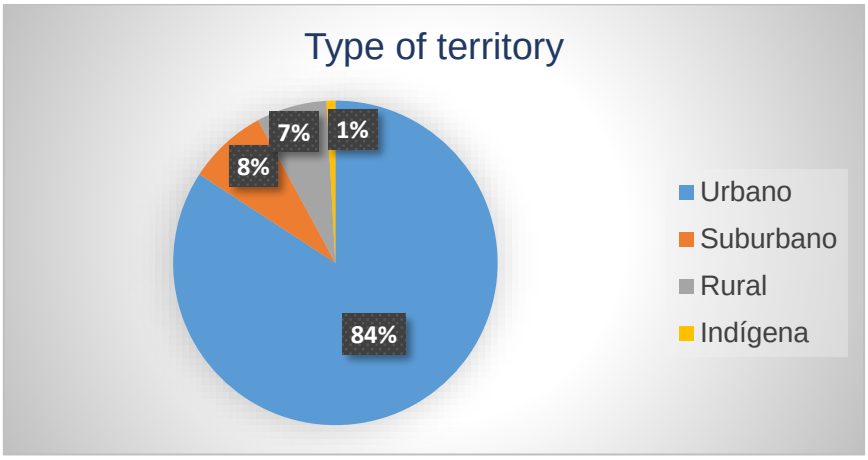


Figure 4 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

The highest percentage is in urban areas, which is very much in line with the total population in the different parts of the region (81% of the LAC population lives in urban areas, according to the World Bank).

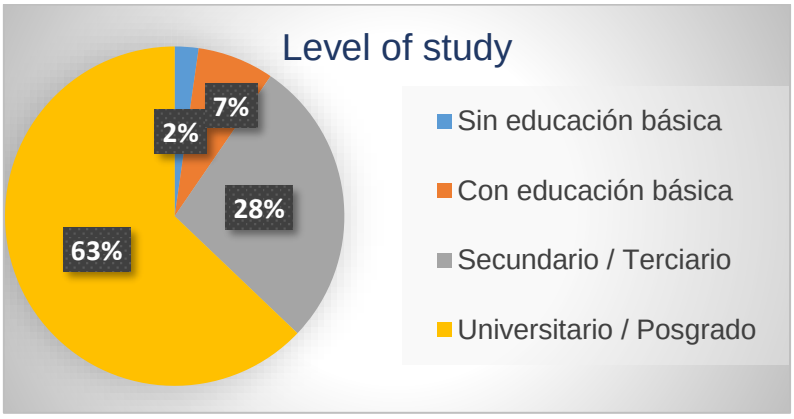


Figure 5 - Source: WMO preparation of WUCWO

Most of the women who took part in this survey were highly educated. Four categories of analysis were used to consider the level of education:

- No basic education: no or incomplete primary education.
- With basic education: completed primary and incomplete secondary education.
- Secondary/Tertiary: completed secondary school and incomplete or complete technical and/or tertiary education.
- University/graduate: incomplete university, complete university, incomplete postgraduate, complete postgraduate.

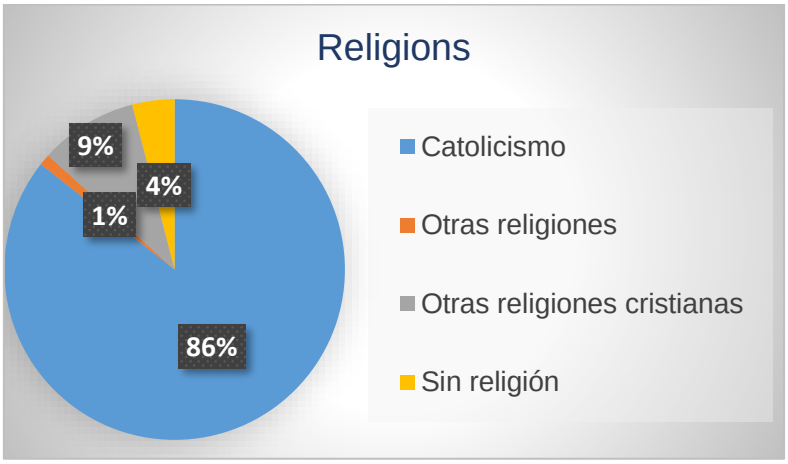


Figure 6 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

The majority of the women surveyed said they were Catholic, while a minority said they were involved in other faiths or had no religious affiliation.

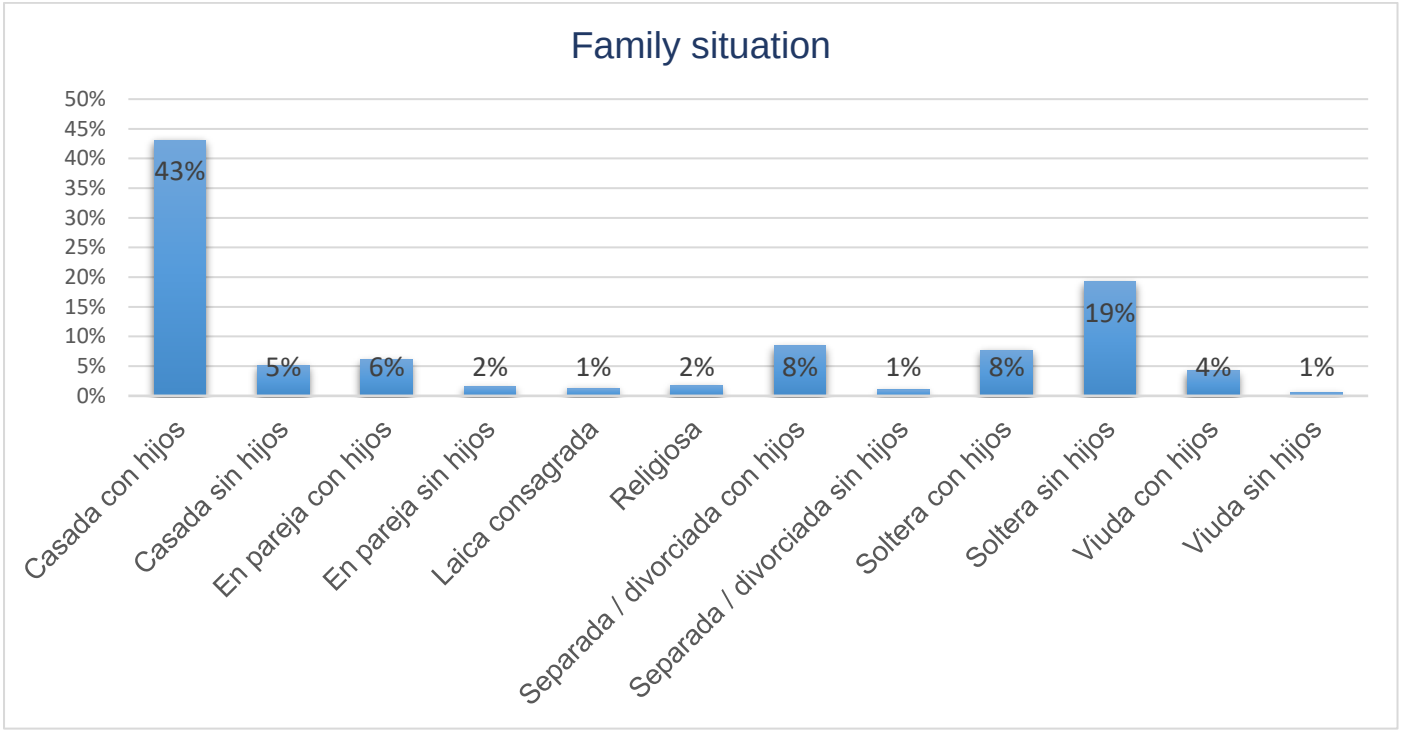


Figure 7 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

There was a wide variety of women's profiles in terms of family composition, although a good percentage (43%) were married women with children.

Of all the women who participated in the survey, 29% reported having had Covid-19.

4- Latin American and Caribbean women's voices

We present the four central axes of the survey carried out with the main results and some of the most significant testimonies given by the women who participated. The richness of the survey lies more in the trends and testimonies than in the numbers and percentages it shows.

a. Support and gaps

This first axis of the survey had two questions.

I. Support

The first asked how much support (a lot, some/sometimes, little, never) women felt during the pandemic from different actors: family, friends, church, NGOs, people at work, neighbours and government.

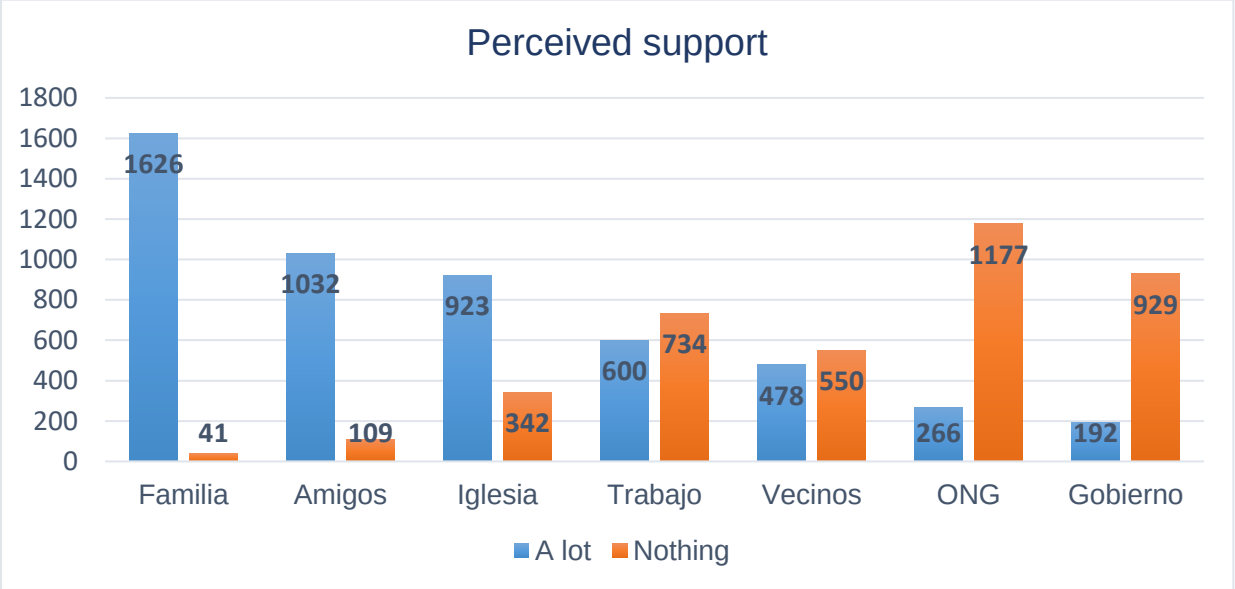


Figure 8 - Source: WMO preparation of WUCWO

It is observed that most of the women felt a lot of support from their families. According to the experiences collected, the actors that provided the least support to the women surveyed were NGOs and governments.

On the importance of the family as a refuge from the pandemic, some women said: *"It was important to be with the family, despite the problems that arose*. "*Support came from the casita and no one else, not even the government, who forgot about all of us*. Others felt that the confinement of family life exacerbated the violence against them. "*Being close to a man who made me very bad, who is controlling and possessive, in this case my father, who verbally abuses me and my mother*".

Many highlight the solidarity and resilience generated in personal relationships and support networks: *"Only fraternal bonds became credible and sustained what was needed so that life was not further destroyed. We helped each other. "We learned that 'everything is connected', 'no one is saved alone'. "I felt very useful, because I was the one who encouraged everyone and filled them with hope. I don't know where I got this strength from or how, but I did it well*".

For the migrant women, it was hard: "*Unfortunately, because of my migrant status, I could not receive help from the government*.

II. Shortcomings

The second question of this first axis focused on whether, during the pandemic, women experienced unmet needs in terms of: food, psychological aspects, care and upbringing, education, health, and housing.

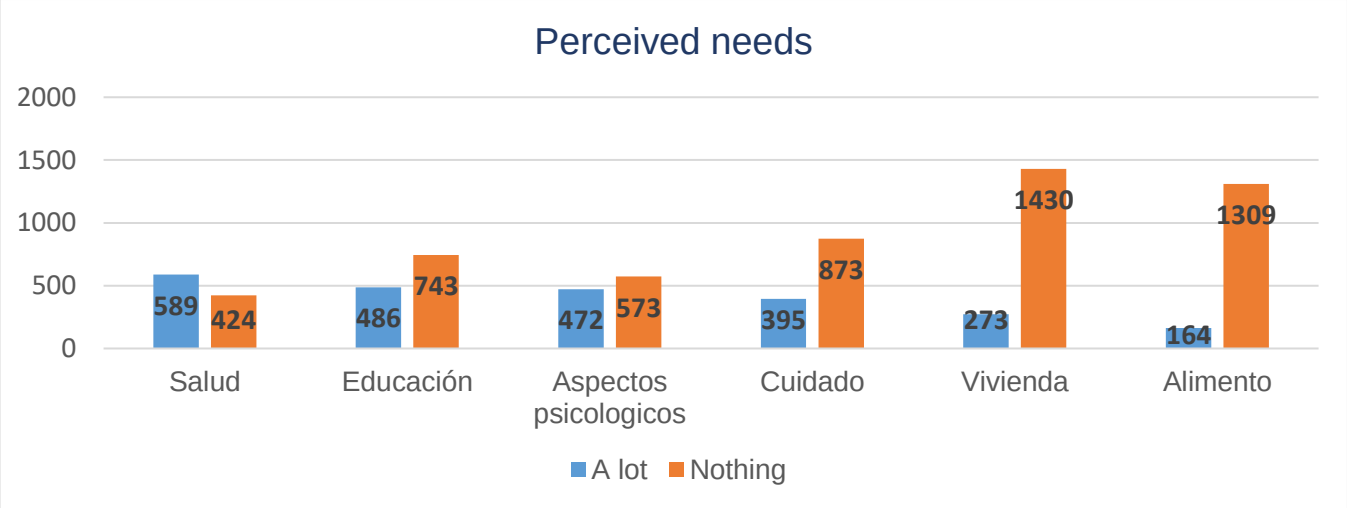


Figure 9 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

Women's greatest deprivation was linked to health and the least to food.

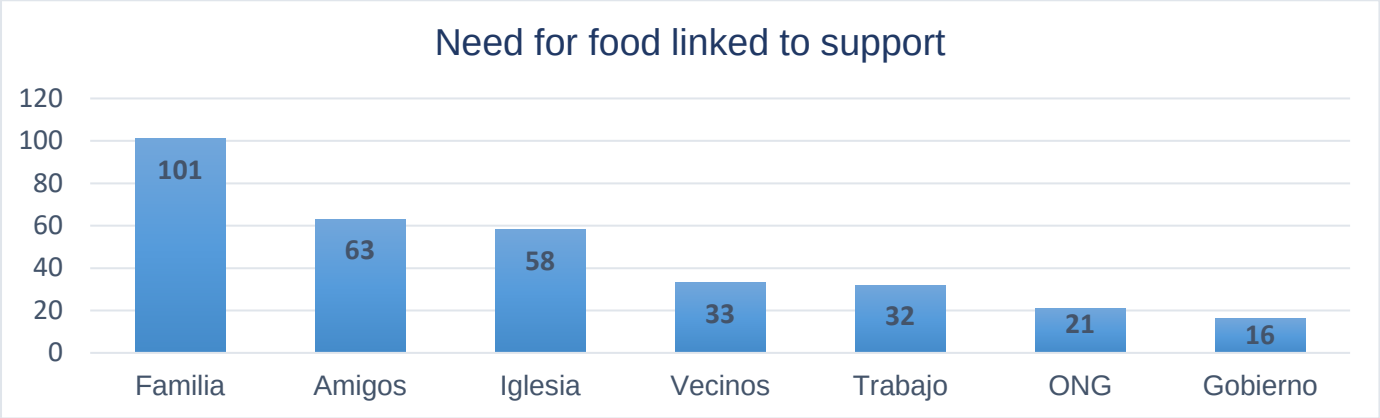


Figure 10 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

Of the 164 women who felt a great need for food during the pandemic, most reported receiving a great deal of support from family and very few reported receiving help from the government.

Hunger emerges from the accounts of some of the women "*I was able to witness many women in search of food, without light, without water*...".

Psychological deficiencies also appear in women who felt alone, who felt restricted in their freedom and who experienced profound suffering such as the fear and anguish of being ill or losing a loved one: "*I felt that I was living under a regime of terror because, at the beginning, they did not want to let us out for anything. I remember I even cried because I had never been locked up for so many days". "Social isolation for those who already live alone is a martyrdom". "I needed emotional help when they told me I was infected with Covid, I felt the need for someone to hold me and comfort me, I felt I was going to die and I didn't want to be hospitalised". "My mother died. Without being able to do anything, they took her, cremated her and gave her back to us in a little box. So painful*.

Economic deprivation was evident. Indigenous women reported difficulties, as they were unable to sell their handicrafts. "*During the pandemic, obtaining materials was complicated and the problems were a bit more serious, because where I live, the family is large and only one person works. Food and cleaning products were scarce*.

b. Women and family

The second axis aimed to find out how women's family situation had changed during the pandemic: whether they had felt changes within the household, how tasks were shared out, whether they suffered any kind of violence and, for those who had to do paid work from home, how this affected family life.

I. Coexistence within the Home

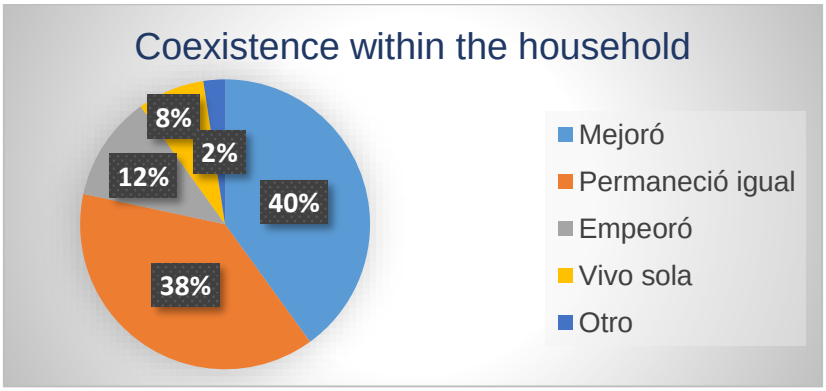


Figure 11 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

A large proportion of the women say that the coexistence within the household improved or remained the same, sharing that there was more and better communication and dialogue between family members. There is even repeated mention of having had the opportunity to get to know and/or value the children or the partner more. "*I felt that as a family the affectionate demonstrations were greater". "Better communication and unity in the family". "Dinners became longer and more elaborate as they were more fun to prepare and we all sat down to talk".*

However, a smaller percentage reported that cohabitation in the household worsened; these women said that it was a really difficult time for them. There are cases in which relations between family members deteriorated very seriously. "*So it worsened the coexistence that we had". "Being working at home and being the breadwinner for my family 100 per cent for several months was not easy. A lot of work stress. "I got divorced. "Overloaded". "Chaotic.*

In some answers women talk about how "wonderful" it was to be able to live more with their children, grandchildren, etc., while for others it was "very difficult" or even "terrible". It is clear that it often depends on the "circumstances and conditions" of confinement, which are much more severe in the cities than in the countryside, particularly for women with small dwellings. This response was also influenced by whether or not the women were mothers, the number of children and whether or not they worked. Thus, some expressed: "*I had to take on the role of teacher for my 5 children during the online classes. I loved the experience because I finally got to understand the school system in this country. "Less possibilities to devote myself and my needs to having my child at home all the time*. "*Being out of school brought different relationship problems in the family".*

II. Domestic violence

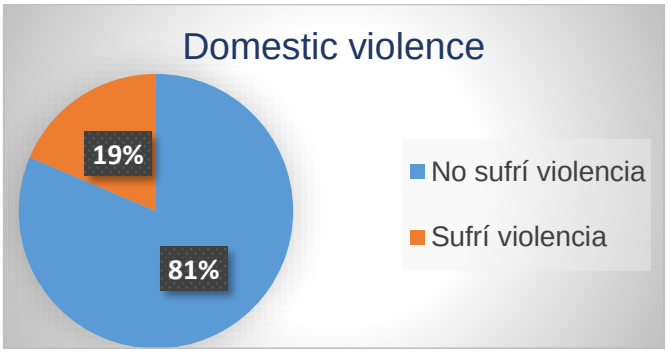


Figure 12 - Source: WMO preparation of WUCWO

The vast majority reported not having suffered any violence. Among the 19% who reported the opposite, the most frequently reported situation referred to conflicts with a spouse, partner or ex-

partner: verbal, physical, psychological and/or economic violence. There were those who pointed out a problem in the relationship between women, such as abuse committed by the mother. They also highlighted conflicts with relatives who started living in the same house and increased aggression from the children, with whom they lived together 24 hours a day. Other responses denounced the violence exercised by the State, which is incapable of fulfilling its obligations, or that exercised in the workplace.

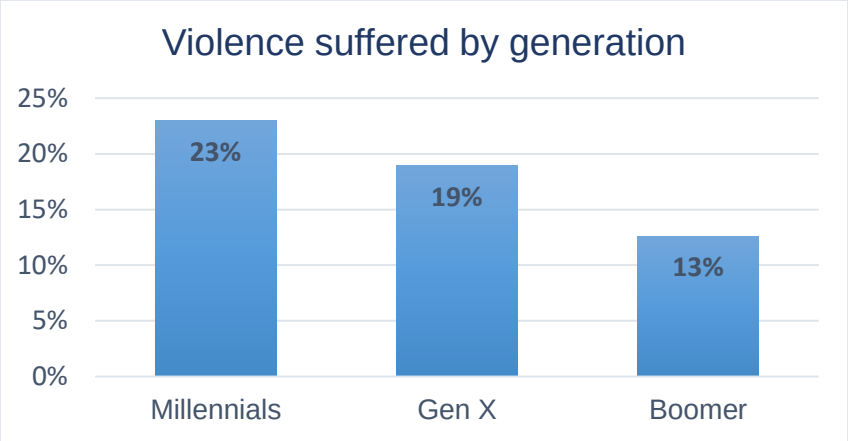


Figure 13 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

Assessing the women who suffered violence according to their age, we see that millennials, those in the 18-40 age range, are the ones who reported suffering a little more violence, while boomers, those over 57, are the ones who suffer the least.

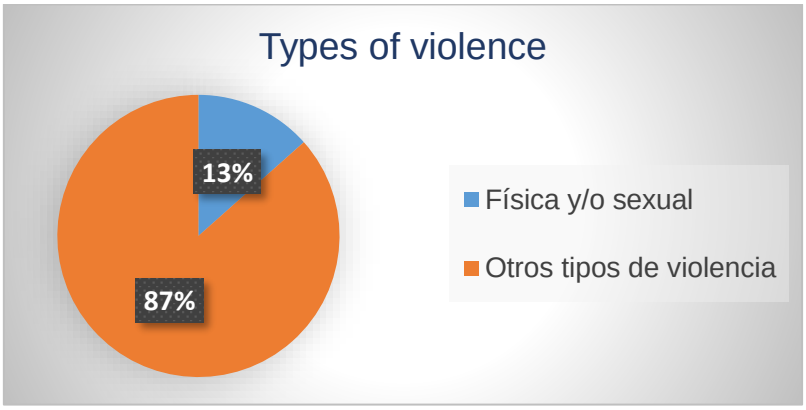


Figure 14 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

Although physical and/or sexual violence was experienced by only a small group of women among the different types of violence they reported having experienced, this does not detract from its importance. There were difficulties in relationships due to male violence or problems related to lack of work or lack of money due to a decrease in family income. "*My relationship with my husband was very demanding and, on several occasions, he took his fears and frustrations out on me. In addition to the permanent cohabitation, our frailties and limitations are more exposed. When I stopped earning money by doing my odd jobs, I started to depend exclusively on him and it was very difficult".* Increased cohabitation at home is cited as a trigger for violent situations. "*I was encouraged to get divorced.*

In some cases, situations of extreme violence were reported, such as rape by a partner. "*I was raped by a partner I lived with for 5 months".*

III. Household chores

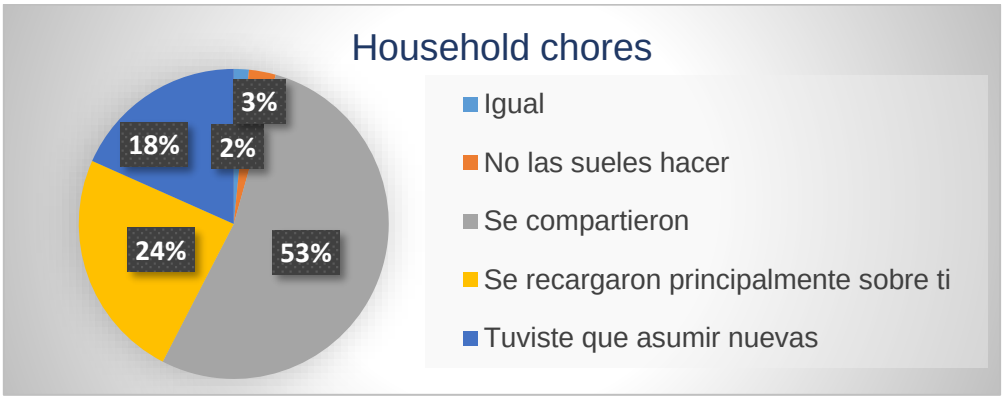


Figure 15 - Source: WMO preparation of WUCWO

In terms of how household chores were shared, more than half of the women said that they were shared in their households. Achievements frequently mentioned included learning to organise themselves better, delegate, prioritise and reschedule activities, manage and save money, and be more responsible. "*Generally everything alternated with my husband; while one did housework, the other took care of the baby. "Between all of us, we distributed tasks according to age. "We divided it up between me and my grandson. "We organised ourselves as a family to be able to live together well.*

A quarter of the total expressed that the tasks were mainly placed on them, being female heads of household and/or single mothers: *"I preferred to overload to avoid quarrels. I have them all in my charge". "There was no sharing, as they were all "busy" with school and work from home and I took care of them all".*

IV. Paid work at home

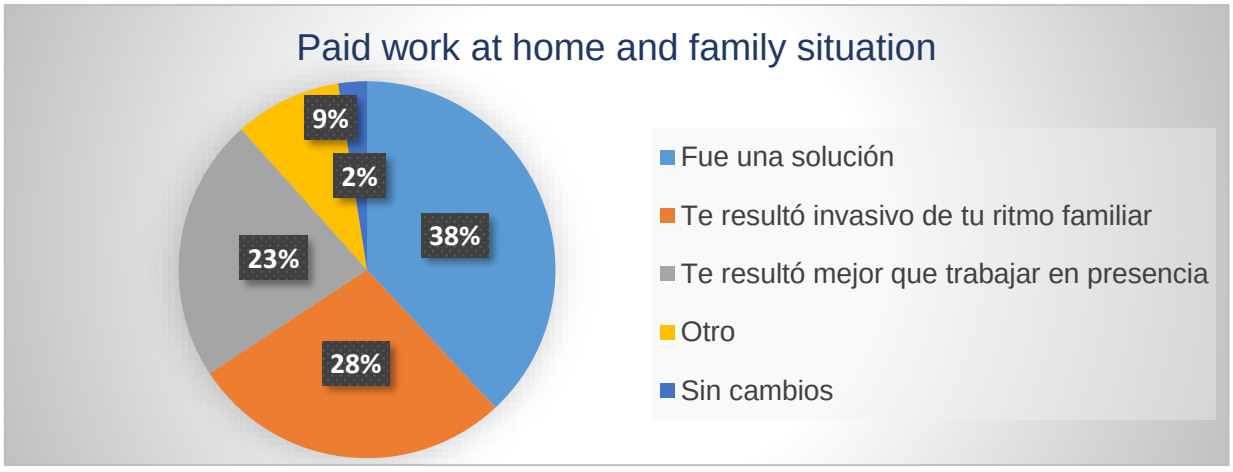


Figure 16 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

While more than half did not do paid work at home, of those who did, the majority said that it was a solution for them. "*Working at home was good for me because it saved me commuting time; being an English teacher, I have been able to continue some of my classes from home, thank God.*

There was the challenge of adapting to a new way of working and new forms of education. Paid work at home was sometimes invasive for the family rhythm because women worked longer than usual, as it was difficult to delimit working hours. "*I had to work longer than if I worked in person. In addition, I neglected housework. "I work endless hours and they don't respect my privacy".* This situation often led to an overload of work at home: a double or triple shift (home, work and school) and even quadruple shifts, when, in addition, women had to take care of their elderly parents. "*My husband was still going out to work as normal, my daughters were studying at a distance and I had to work at a distance, take care of the house and help the children with their studies. I felt very overwhelmed*.

However, for a majority group of women, remote work was better than face-to-face work, as they saved money on transport and meals out; they saved time; and, above all, they could be closer to their family. "*Remote work helped me a lot to be with my family and to tidy myself up. "The experience of working at home was favourable to avoid contagion. "More calmness in the rhythms. Better space and time for work and study. Eating together. More conversation. I prefer virtuality in many things".*

c. Women and education

In this area, the proposal was to find out how the pandemic affected women by accompanying the family's children in their school activities and how it affected their own educational process.

I. Accompaniment in the education of children

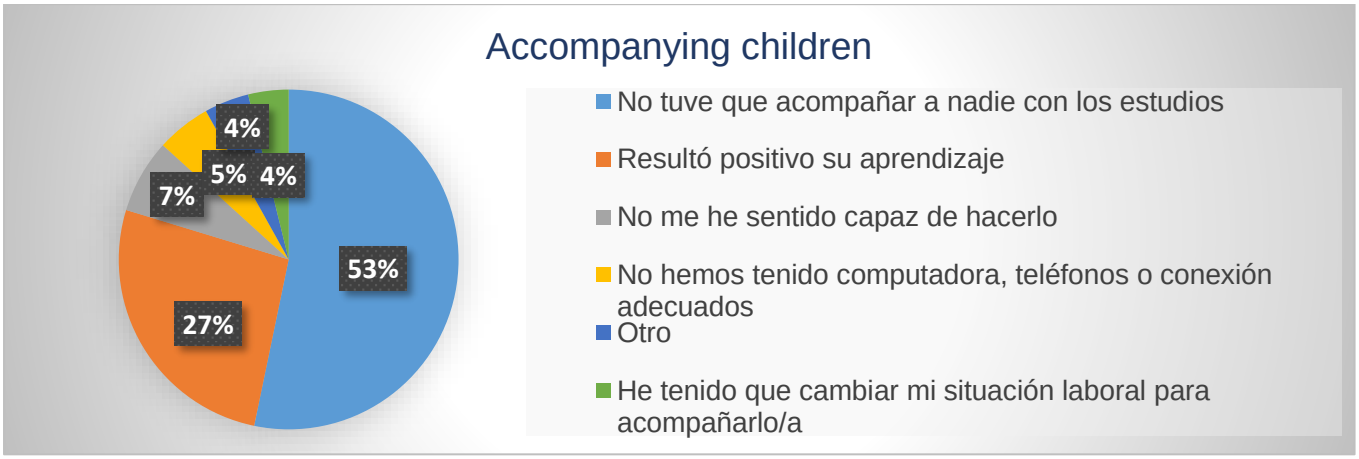


Figure 17 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

While more than half responded that they did not have to accompany anyone with their studies, the highest percentage of respondents who had experienced school accompaniment had good experiences. "*I learned new things by helping my daughter with her homework". "I accompanied*

my daughters at all times. They learned to read with me, which I am very proud of, and I learned a lot of things with them". "For me it was positive to share the school accompaniment by learning how to use innovative technological tools. "Spectacular to accompany my grandchild; it made me feel useful, so I enjoyed those moments".

Some were extremely creative in motivating and engaging their children. *"I dressed up as a teacher. Every day an invention to pass the time".*

Those who had a bad experience described it as overwhelming, exhausting and the students did not learn. Adapting to distance learning was not easy for children whose mothers needed to have minimal knowledge of the process to be able to accompany them in their studies. The teachers also had great difficulty in adapting, as they moved very quickly from face-to-face teaching to distance learning without adequate preparation. In this case, learning new technologies and educational methods was essential.

In general, for the women it was a very tiring and stressful experience, especially because of their children's disinterest, lack of proper connection or inappropriate or unrealistic content for the pupils. The lack of social interaction between the children was also one of the reasons for their discouragement. "*I had to take on the role of 'almost a teacher' with my 13-year-old son and balance the emotional, so that I wasn't fighting all the time,*" she said.

Some mothers said they could not help their children. "*It's very stressful, because I have to take care of two children, my daughter and my nephew, and you feel the pressure of the classes*. Some were helped by their older children, who ended up taking on the responsibility of monitoring the younger ones.

Few women were able to change their routine to accompany their children. *"I had to change my work schedule to be able to follow my youngest daughter more closely in remote classes, as I did not have the necessary skills to access the school platform".*

In addition, mothers accumulated concern for their children, as it became increasingly evident that the children were not learning anything. Also, with internet resources, most "copy and paste". "*They didn't learn anything, they copied it from the internet*.

One problem cited by some women was the lack of special and adapted education for children with special needs. "*We found out in the pandemic that my grandson is autistic, so education without school was difficult, as his development depends mainly on school*.

II. Women and their education

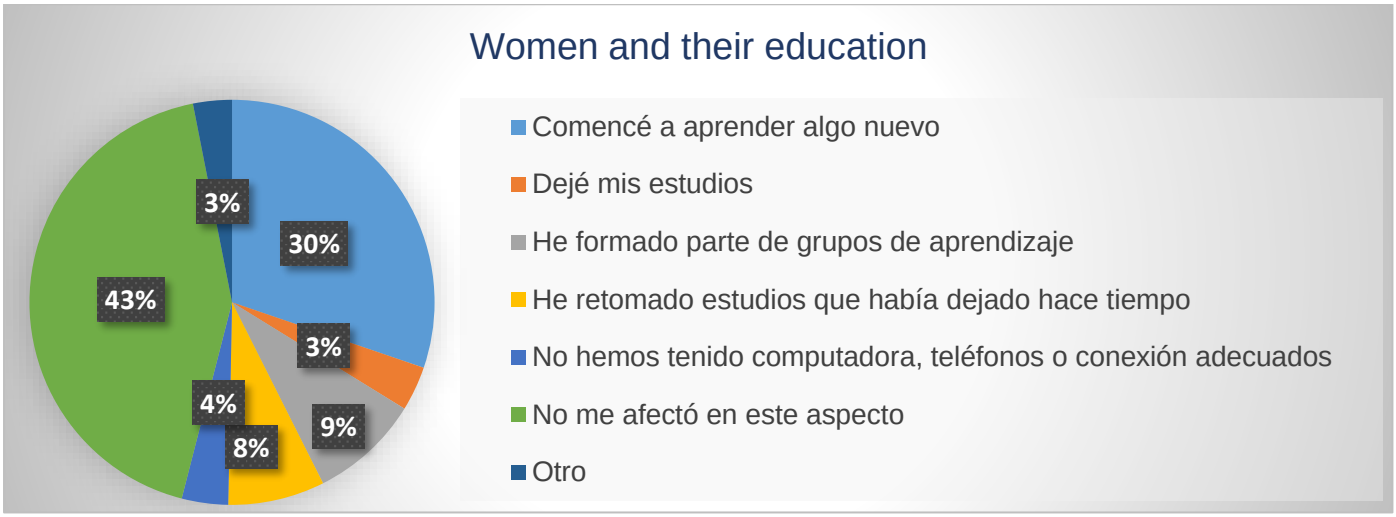


Figure 18 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

The most frequent response to this question was that the pandemic had not affected them in this respect. In this area, a large number of women took the opportunity to prepare themselves, to continue or resume their studies, or to study something new. The need and opportunity to learn technology and media arose. They also commented that new interests were born. A great opportunity opened up with virtual courses. This helped a lot those who, in a face-to-face way, could hardly attend something like this. "*A lot of online education options have opened up and it's something I'm excited about; some options are affordable and I can afford them*. "*It has allowed me to take short courses, mainly the free ones, as everything was online. "I was able to do a diploma course virtually. "I started to learn more about technology, reading and resuming my religious activities through social media".*

While one of the main obstacles in this field was access to the Internet and the absence of adequate equipment for studies, other problems also arose that hindered education, such as difficulty in organising time, accumulation of work and household chores, in addition to the home office. "I did *not have the emotional health to maintain a study routine and I also experienced a sense of intense overload*".

d. Women and Church

With regard to the relationship between women and the Church, it was interesting to know what they had found and what they had lacked from the Church during this period and also, if they had participated, in what way they had done so.

I. Contributions received from the Church

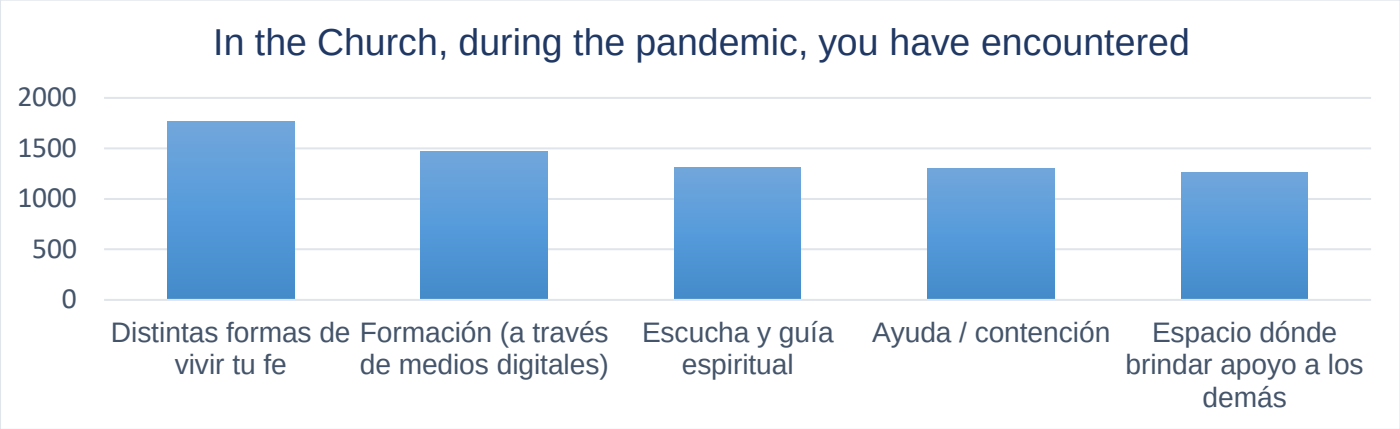


Figure 19 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

In terms of what women found in the Church during the pandemic, the responses were very similarly distributed, but what they found most were different ways of living the faith and**,** secondly, formation through digital media.

The women especially highlighted the increase in social action and solidarity among people. "*Seeing the commitment of my parish to people who are struggling"*. Many groups and social ministries were even more dedicated to the vulnerable, gaining numerous collaborators among the rest of the faithful.

Most of the women said they had grown closer to God and the Church. They also highlighted the online celebrations and prayers as a very positive point. "*The most positive thing was the registration of the need for a shared faith*. The women used social networks a lot to exchange messages and for moments of prayer. Unfortunately, the ban on face-to-face celebrations and the consequent inability to receive communion saddened the women. In addition, the comment that the church was creative in strategies to serve its faithful was in the majority. "*The church reinvented itself and came into our homes*.

The women also witnessed the importance of the online formation meetings and the expansion of study possibilities, both personally and in groups. They perceive that the Church has sought ways to accompany them by all possible means, has become closer and more committed to reality. Some have started to participate in new groups and communities.

In fact, there was also a deepening of personal spirituality. "*I had more time for prayer and silence. These activities contributed a lot to maintaining my emotional and spiritual balance during the pandemic"*. In addition, they stressed that their own home is the domestic church. "*I learned that the church was always in my home*." There was a longing to return to God's house.

Many also recounted the help they received through the sermons, especially those related to faith and hope. It was an opportunity to find strength and encouragement to live in the midst of the chaos of the pandemic. *"...to put myself at the spiritual service of my family by lifting their spirits and turning their eyes towards God"*. In a special way, living Holy Week and Christmas virtually as a family was discovered. The listening service was also very important, especially for those sick and affected by Covid-19. The bereavement support was highly appreciated.

Some women more committed to community pastoral service recounted the importance of exchanging experiences with other generations. "*I had the opportunity to be an online catechist and*

help more experienced catechists with technology. This shows that women were involved in the Church and sought creativity to continue some form of spiritual and formative care, such as distance catechesis. Some women testified that they were away from the Church and ended up returning during the pandemic. For many, returning to face-to-face participation in Eucharist and Reconciliation was very exciting.

II. Shortcomings vis-à-vis the Church

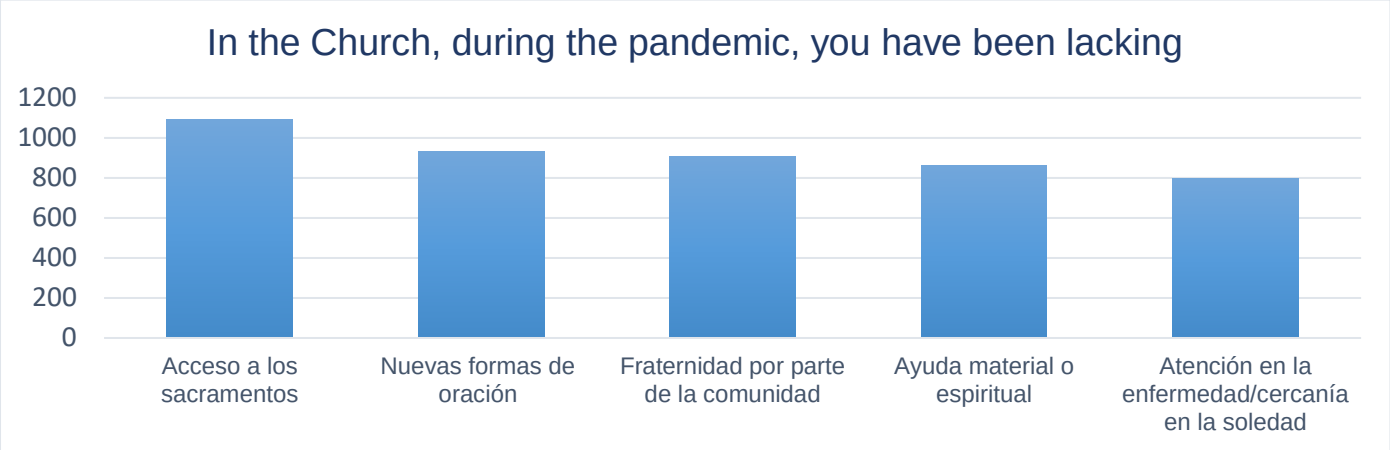


Figure 20 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

Women said that what they lacked most during the pandemic was access to the sacraments. "*Not being able to attend mass in person"*. This was the most frequently mentioned issue and the one that generated the most discomfort and sadness in women, as they ended up losing a fundamental support for their moments of anguish and despair. *"My emotions were affected to the extent that I didn't know how to approach God or start again in church.*

We found women who noted as frustrating the interruption of the activities of religious groups and some works, which led to the paralysis of the attention to people and the service provided by the pastoral care centres. *"Women's spaces were lost".*

Some women also rated online celebrations as a negative point, as they could not adequately replace face-to-face activities. In addition, many women were already connected all day due to work and distance learning. Celebrations on television or the Internet increased screen time. In this perspective, some complained about the lack of technical preparation, the lack of adequate technological resources and the lack of training for the Church to function at a distance, as well as the coldness of mobile phones. They longed for proposals for virtual accompaniment beyond the masses, adapted to the prevailing situation. *"Lack of structural and technical preparation of the churches with regard to digital media. Also the total disarticulation of pastoral ministries which have not been able to adapt to the remote".*

Some are self-critical*: "We have neglected new forms of encounter with Jesus, the following of those who are integrated into the sacraments of initiation"*. The lack of time of the parish priests *"to listen, to talk..."* is the complaint of several**.**

5- Final considerations

Shared foresight

First of all, it is useful to summarise the Latin American women's vision of the future in the survey. Three main common denominators can be identified: **the link with God, resilience and the organisation of solidarity networks**.

- *The bond with God* is what most often characterises women - whether they are Catholics or Catholics - as being
  of other Christian religions. It appears in the most varied forms, always as the fundamental thing when looking at the vital horizon in relation to oneself and to others.
  If we consider only those responses that refer in some way to advice for the future, the words "God", "Father", "Jesus", "Holy Spirit" or "Lord" appear 348 times; "faith", "hope", "charity" 318 times; "prayer" and/or "pray" 133 times; all this together with various expressions that denote the priority given to the personal relationship with God.

- It also highlights *resilience*, manifested in different ways such as: *"always looking for ways to get ahead economically, learning new jobs and new things, not standing idly by while the need at home is great"; "women have the capacity to face a crisis"; "go ahead learning with resilience"; "always positive, there are no obstacles that a woman cannot overcome"*, etc.

- Finally, another line of advice on how to face the future has to do with *organising in solidarity networks.* Many women pointed out that it is necessary to unite to help others; that it will be necessary to strengthen links in order to undertake or continue solidarity actions and that it is necessary to organise oneself to serve, creating support networks. In summary, there were a number of expressions that the solution lies in networking to care for brothers and sisters in difficulty.

These characteristics bring to mind the account of the evangelist Luke (24:1-8) when he tells how the group of women went together to the tomb, "**in a network**", in the midst of the crisis of the death of Jesus, carrying their perfumes to attend to his body, "**solidarity action**", but without giving up, knowing that they would have to face the Roman soldiers and be creative in the face of a stone that was almost impossible to move: "**resilience**". They, listening to the question about why they were looking for the living among the dead, remember the words of their Lord and Master, because of their "**personal bond with Him**".

Stereotypes and traditional mandates

Secondly, in some of the responses there are indicators of a mentality formed in a culture and society that, even today, favours stereotypes and traditional mandates for the roles of men and women within the household, as if the roles assigned to each could not be transformed over the centuries.

Expressions such as: *"My husband helped with the children"* or *"in my house only my husband and I live, therefore, all the tasks in my home are part of my responsibility",* show a mentality in which it is not even conceived that both the upbringing and education of children and household chores are a matter of joint responsibility between both parents or spouses. These are convictions that are automatically triggered and are not questioned in a continent still marked by machismo.

In other cases, the confinement served to change their mentality: *"We realised that it was unfair to leave the burden of housework to my mother".* At least in the younger generations, the pandemic may have influenced an awareness of the inequality suffered by women.

It is understandable why a Latin American Pope has clearly stated in his magisterium: "History bears the traces of the excesses of patriarchal cultures, where women were considered second class (...). The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice that old forms of discrimination are being overcome, and that within families an exercise of reciprocity is developing" (*Amoris laetitia,* 54).

Unexpected fruits

In the end, the research yielded unexpected and moving results. Conducting the survey in certain peripheries where women are not used to thinking about themselves, in deeply and structurally impoverished areas of countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Mexico or Venezuela, was a very positive experience.

Surprising testimonies have been received of how having to answer the questionnaire mobilised women to find the time to reflect on themselves, their sufferings, reactions, feelings and dreams; they began to speak, to dialogue freely and with the joy of being listened to. In other words, the survey was a tool for raising awareness and capturing one's own reality and future alternatives.

Still in tune with what emerged from the preparatory listening process for the first Ecclesial Assembly for Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered in the document for Community Discernment (n.129), we have to state that: In summary, it is encouraging "the commitment of women in spite of their wounds and invisibilisation" (SN, p. 92). And it gives us even greater hope to collaborate in the process of visualisation through the dissemination of this report and future work.

Tips shared by women

Word cloud related to advice on how to face the times ahead.

6- Theological-pastoral reflections

Marcela Mazzini

The art of wise people and communities is to capitalise on the lessons learned from our personal and community histories. The work we have in hand is an excellent instrument for a profound reflection, with its consequent lessons learned, on what women in Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced (and continue to experience) in these times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Theology is the faith that seeks to understand"; this classic definition of theological work has its main analogue in a woman, the Virgin Mary, who, surprised by the angel's announcement, asks: "How can this be? (Lk 1:34). Her deep faith does not exempt her, but prompts her to question God's action and her own action in a concrete circumstance that life presents to her. We too are going to reflect, in the light of faith and allowing ourselves to be enlightened by the Word and the magisterium of the Church, on the challenges of the present time, in order to understand what the Lord is inviting us to do in the reality of women in LAC at this moment in history.

Two notes for context

The first thing to say is that this consultation is taking place in the context of two other consultations: the listening time of the Latin American Ecclesial Assembly, which is reflected in the narrative synthesis[80] and the document for community discernment[81] (both materials cited above), and the diocesan phase of the synod on synodality,[82] which is taking place all over the world.

We are living, then, in a synodal time in the Church, that is, a time in which there is a growing awareness of the importance of journeying together, together, which is precisely the meaning of the word "synod". We perceive, hand in hand with Pope Francis, the importance of beginning this process in which listening and dialogue are crucial, because how can we make the journey together if we do not listen to each other, if we do not see and perceive each other?

The second thing to point out, in the words of Marilú Rojas Salazar, is that the pandemic has been epiphanic,[83] in the sense of exposing structural problems and personal and social miseries that were not entirely visible. We can say that it has also made visible the debts that we as a Church have towards women.

Nuclei for Pastoral Theological Reflection

Having said this, I would like to bring up three themes that offer themselves to our pastoral theological reflection.

The first is what, according to the consultation we have in hand, women found or did not find in the Church during this time (Women and Church, 4.d); the second is the self-awareness that women are acquiring and that drives them to take on new leadership roles; and the third is a deepening of the gender stereotypes that we assume, often without realising it.

Women and the Church: contributions and shortcomings

The women consulted pointed to the fact that in the Church they were able to find new ways of living their faith and instances of formation that enriched them. They also point to the creativity of a Church "going out" (cf. EG 15) to put itself at the service of those who need it, whether materially or spiritually.

[80] https://prensacelam.org/2021/10/01/esta-es-la-sintesis-narrativa-de-la-escucha-de-la-asamblea-eclesial/
[81] https://asambleaeclesial.lat/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ddc.pdf
[82] https://www.synod.va/es/news/documento-preparatorio1.html
[83] Cf. Rojas Salazar, M. (2021). "La pandemia. An epiphany of violence against women". *RIBET XVII (32)*, 85-97.

They mark the sacramental question as a limit, which is a point of questioning for the whole Church (ordained ministers, lay people, laywomen) in pandemic: how to celebrate the liturgy in a meaningful way when it is not possible for us to approach it physically? This Church-wide questioning perhaps resonates especially with women, who are more accustomed to liturgical participation. It is a good time for all of us to ask ourselves about the meaning of celebrations and the sacramental life of our communities.

The women themselves give an answer, marking as very positive the reaction of charity that the communities have had in this context. Is it not the time for liturgies that take on a new meaning by bringing food and comfort to the most needy, as they point out? Perhaps a reflection along these lines, which can see more clearly the link between the sacramental Eucharist and charity in the life of the Church, will help us to understand what the sacrament of love is all about.

Yes, the Church celebrates the Eucharist, but the Eucharist makes the Church, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us (n.1396); and the same text, in the following paragraph (n.1397), points out that the Eucharist involves a concrete commitment to the poor. In a word: Communion with the Body of the Lord is much more than consuming a piece of bread; it involves a concrete commitment to the community. This commitment nourishes us especially at times when it is not possible for us to receive the Lord in the Consecrated Host.

Self-awareness, sensitisation and new leaderships

In the prospective vision, something is said that seems to me to be central and illuminating in the whole document, because it shows the way forward: it says that *"having to answer the questionnaire mobilised the women to find the time to reflect on themselves, their sufferings, reactions, feelings and dreams: once they began to answer the survey, they began to speak, to dialogue with freedom and with the joy of being listened to"* (5). The consultation is spoken of as *"an instrument of sensitisation" ...* and the document ends by stressing (taking up the narrative synthesis and the document on community discernment of the ecclesial Assembly) that it is encouraging "*the commitment of women despite their wounds and invisibility*".

This paragraph is both happy and painful at the same time. An awareness that allows women to express themselves, to dialogue and to grow in their capacities is always positive and exciting, but the fact that this phenomenon is only happening now generates a certain unease and bewilderment: How is it possible that at this point in history (at least in the West) women in the Church are only just beginning to ask these questions, to understand what is happening to us and to dialogue about these issues?

Basically, it is about the place of women in the Church, about our visibility or invisibility, about our roles, about the leadership that we should assume for the good of the community. In this sense, it is very worrying that women have/have a certain invisibility in ecclesial structures, but it is even more serious that we *feel* invisible, because we cannot occupy the place to which we are called if we are not aware of it.

There is a strong magisterial line, which has as its starting point the Aparecida document (453,455), which speaks of the place of women in the Church: a place of participation, of equality with men, of visibility. Pope Francis has given this line a new impetus. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope speaks of a "more incisive presence of women in the Church" (103-104); in *Amoris Laetitia he* condemns the "excesses of patriarchal cultures" and "admires a work of the Spirit in the clearer recognition of

the dignity of women and their rights" (AL 54). In this line of recognition and dignification of women are also the affirmations of *Christus Vivit* 42 and *Fratelli Tutti* 23.

Francis not only talks about the issue, but also makes gestures that give space to women in the Church, naming some of them in key positions.

Many say how can one speak of the invisibility of women in the Church when the communities are full of women? Yes, there are many of us working in the communities and animating the ecclesial structures (parishes, chapels, schools, Caritas works, etc.), but there are few of us making decisions. These places of decision-making are what make us visible and, from this visibility, we can become aware of our place in the Church. It is not only about this or that woman who becomes visible through a task or position: these women become a sign of protagonism for so many others who are losing their fear of taking on leadership roles within the Church. Yes, because taking on such leadership often requires strength and courage to face criticism and opposition, which is normal because the new is naturally resisted and viewed with distrust. This is not only a decision of the Pope, it is part of the ecclesial cultural change that Francis proposes when he speaks to us of synodality and reform of the Church.

It is definitely necessary to talk about these issues, to study the Word of God and the documents of the Magisterium, to read the theologians who have reflected on these interesting and controversial questions. It is also necessary that in the communities we discuss and reflect together on some models of holiness that are proposed to women and that propose an ideal of submission that has little to do with the Gospel. These models need to be revised because they do not conform either to revelation or to the teachings of the Church.

Doing this work of reflection and dialogue is one of the many ways of incorporating the lessons that the pandemic has left us, and it will also be a concrete way of practising the synodality that we talk so much about these days.

Misconceptions, prejudices and stereotypes

The text also speaks of a *"mentality formed in a culture and a society that even today favours stereotypes and traditional mandates for the roles of men and women within the home"* (5). These are beliefs that assign to men and women ways of being and doing as if they were essential characteristics. Thus we find statements such as "women are sensitive and men are rational and analytical", "men do not cry", "women are bad drivers", etc. These are mandates, beliefs that trigger themselves in an uncritical way, we affirm them and often reproduce them without thinking. Are these statements really true? And if they are, aren't they part of an education, of a culture?

A Caritas document published a few months ago clarifies the issue by explaining the notion of *gender stereotyping:*
"When we talk about gender stereotypes, we refer to simplified, incomplete and generalised representations based on biological sex. For example, it is stereotypical to assume that it is only women who are responsible for raising children, the elderly or domestic work. [84]

These kinds of statements, which unfortunately are very frequent in our Latin American and Caribbean peoples, merit a revision of our ways of thinking. These beliefs could create false

[84] Caritas Argentina. *The Other Pandemic*. First edition (digital format), July 2021. Document prepared by the Equity Board of Caritas Argentina, gathering reflections and themes from the main national meetings, internal reflection and the experience of the covid-19 pandemic. P. 26.

conditioning for both men and women. For women, for example, it reduces them to caregiving tasks, to perceiving themselves as weaker and less capable of taking on challenges in the world of work, and for men it encourages them to take unnecessary risks, to always be the strong ones, it distances them from affection, it inhibits them from expressing their feelings, etc.

It is good for us in church communities to talk about these beliefs and to assess how they are present in our relationships and in the education we pass on to our sons and daughters, for example, when we ask girls to do household chores that we do not teach our boys. These are resisted topics where jokes about feminine and masculine identities immediately arise. We should be aware that, behind the comments that tend to "boycott" these topics, there is a fear of the new and that a change in this sense will alter our values, especially our family values. This is not the case, which is why we need to discuss, study and reflect on the issue.

The very word "gender" often arouses misgivings. We recall here what a document of the Argentine Episcopal Conference says: *"The first thing we have to say is that biological sex can be distinguished without separating it from the socio-cultural role of sex, that is, from gender (AL 56). Sex and gender are deeply connected realities, but they are not exactly the same."* [85]

The new generations, who tend to have more open views on the roles assigned to men and women, help us in this paradigm shift that is irrepressible in contemporary culture.

May the great biblical women (Sarah, Miriam, Rajab, Deborah, Ruth, Hannah, Judith, Esther and so many others) and the saints who throughout the history of the Church have courageously assumed their vocation, encourage us in these challenging times. We especially entrust ourselves to Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, to help us to be faithful and creative in this difficult hour of humanity, for the glory of God and the joy of his Holy and Faithful People.

7- General conclusions

In the six-month process of drafting this document, an attempt has been made to "listen" to three different types of "voices": in the *State of the Art, the* first part, what is expressed in the main technical reports and research published on the ***impact of Covid-19 on women in Latin America and the Caribbean***; in the *Experts Report*, the second part, the voices of the experience of women who are leading projects in favour of integral human development in their respective communities; and in the third part, the *Survey Report, the* experiences, testimonies, opinions, sufferings, achievements and dreams of those who have voluntarily responded on the same subject.

It was an active, attentive and receptive listening carried out by members of CELAM's Department of Knowledge Management, through its Pastoral Socio-anthropological Observatory and WUCWO's World Observatory of Women, who worked as a team from different countries and in different languages. Within the team itself, they worked collaboratively, with parriole dialogue and shared discernment, in order to make decisions that allowed the "voices" heard to be systematised and reflected in these lines.

Two coordinates framed the project: the pandemic and synodality. The fluctuations of Covid-19, the preventive measures or measures aimed at reducing contagion and its consequences, and the many uncertainties of 2021 and 2022 were reflected in the work. The 1st Latin American Ecclesial

[85] Cf. https://jurecmardelplata.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/BP-126-Distingamos-sexo-g%C3%A9nero-e-ideolog%C3%ADa-CEA.pdf

Assembly and the launch of the Synod of Bishops "For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission", to which Pope Francis is calling the entire Catholic Church, contextualised, inspired and enlivened the work.

In the message sent by the Holy Father to the participants in the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, Francis underlined two words: ***"listening"* and *"overflow"***. In our case, the present contribution corresponds to the "listening" stage. We are aware that we still have a long way to go in terms of listening in order to give visibility to the most vulnerable women in the region. However, with the voices already collected, we intend to begin the second stage, that of "overflowing"; that of disseminating the voices contained in the report, in order to find paths that will lead us to realise the fraternal humanity of which the Pope invites us to dream. In *Fratelli tutti,* he shares and explains this dream of universal brotherhood to believers and non-believers alike.

If we consider, together with the "voices" of the present document, those of the Ecclesial Assembly expressed in the challenges resulting from the November 2021 meeting, such as, for example: "to accompany the victims of social and ecclesial injustices with processes of recognition and reparation", "to encourage the active participation of women in ministries, government, discernment and ecclesial decision-making", "to promote and defend the dignity of life and of the human person from conception to natural death", "to increase formation in synodality in order to promote and defend the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death", to "increase formation in synodality in order to eradicate clericalism", to "promote the participation of the laity in areas of cultural, political, social and ecclesial transformation" and to "listen to the cry of the poor, the excluded and the discarded", we will see a harmonious harmony.

We hope with faith that those responsible in our countries, in international organisations and the media, as well as leaders in social networks, leaders and members of civil society organisations, Presidents of Episcopal Commissions, the Bishops of our dioceses, our pastors and every member of the People of God will find their sphere of action and responsibility to join forces and generate synergies that will allow us women too to develop fully and exercise our co-responsibility, with competence, creativity and resilience.

We would like to conclude by thanking the Holy Father for his commitment to Latin American and Caribbean women. "It is a serious duty to understand, respect, value and promote the ecclesial and social strength of what they do", Pope Francis told the CELAM Committee in Bogota (7 December 2017). "Please, they cannot be reduced to servants of our recalcitrant clericalism; they are, instead, protagonists in the Latin American Church; in their going out with Jesus; in their perseverance, even in the suffering of their People; in their clinging to the hope that conquers death; in their joyful way of announcing to the world that Christ is alive, and is risen".

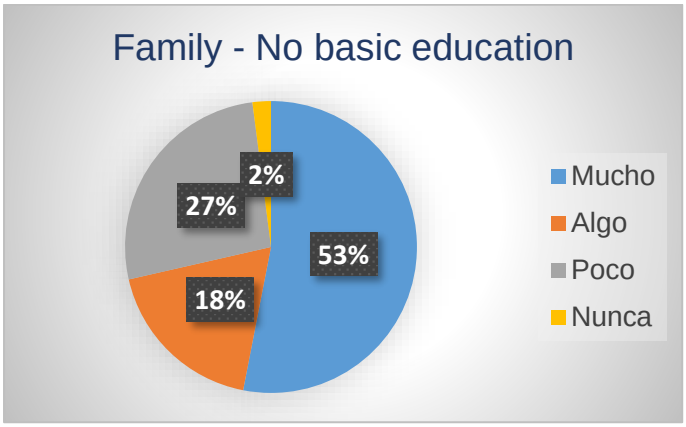
8- Annexes

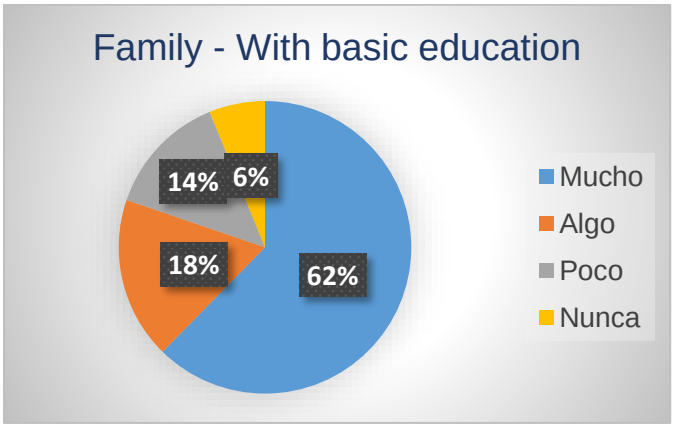
a. Annex I - Charts

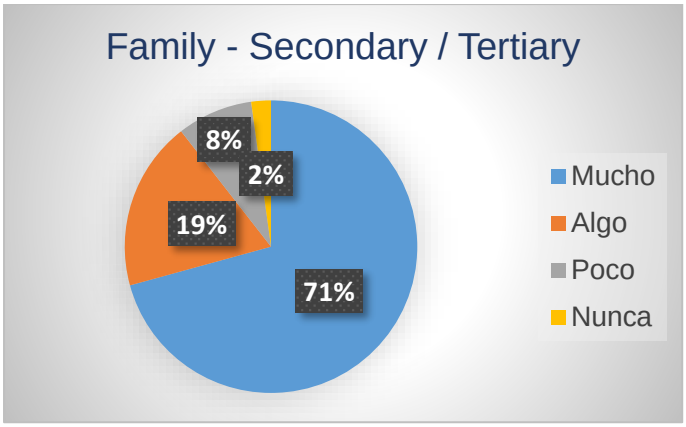
Level of study and perception of support

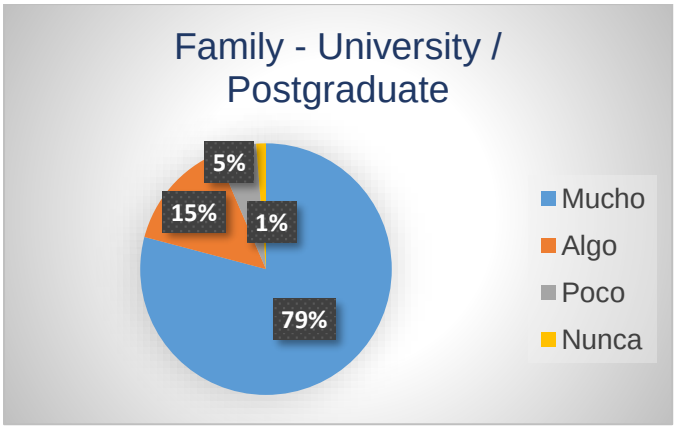
A relevant fact is that**, as the** level of education increased, women reported feeling more support from all social actors.

As an example, the following graphs show what happens with women and family support according to their level of education:

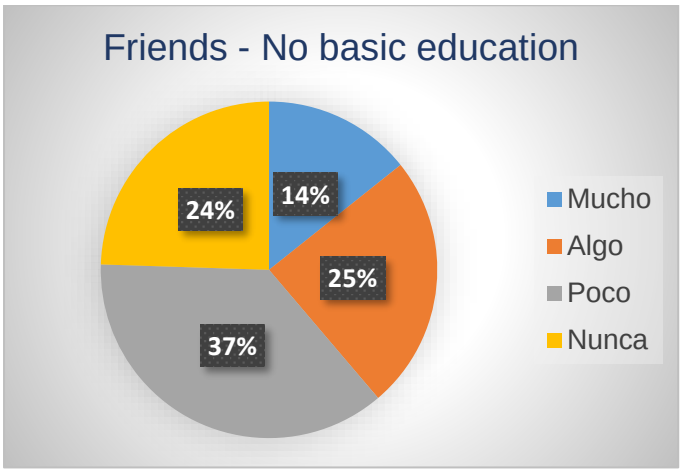


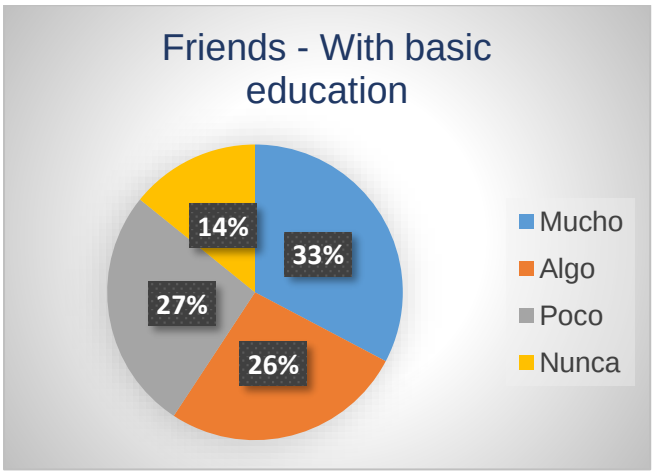


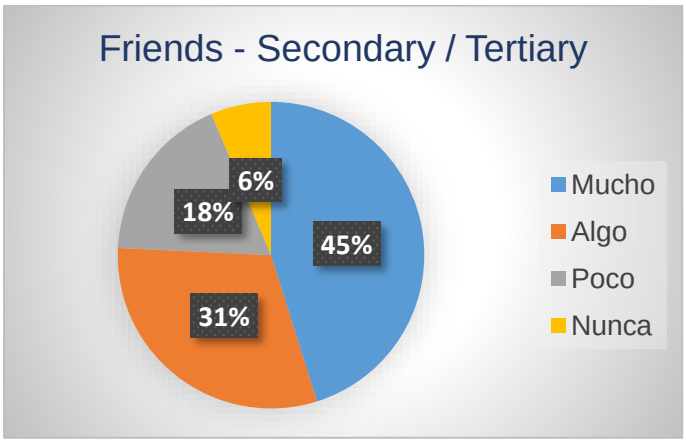


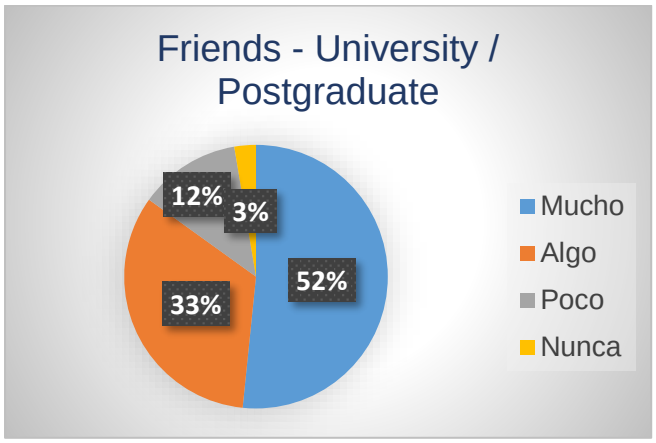


The same goes for the support received from friends, the Church and work.









The study was also conducted with regard to the educational level of 29% of the women surveyed who reported having had Covid-19:

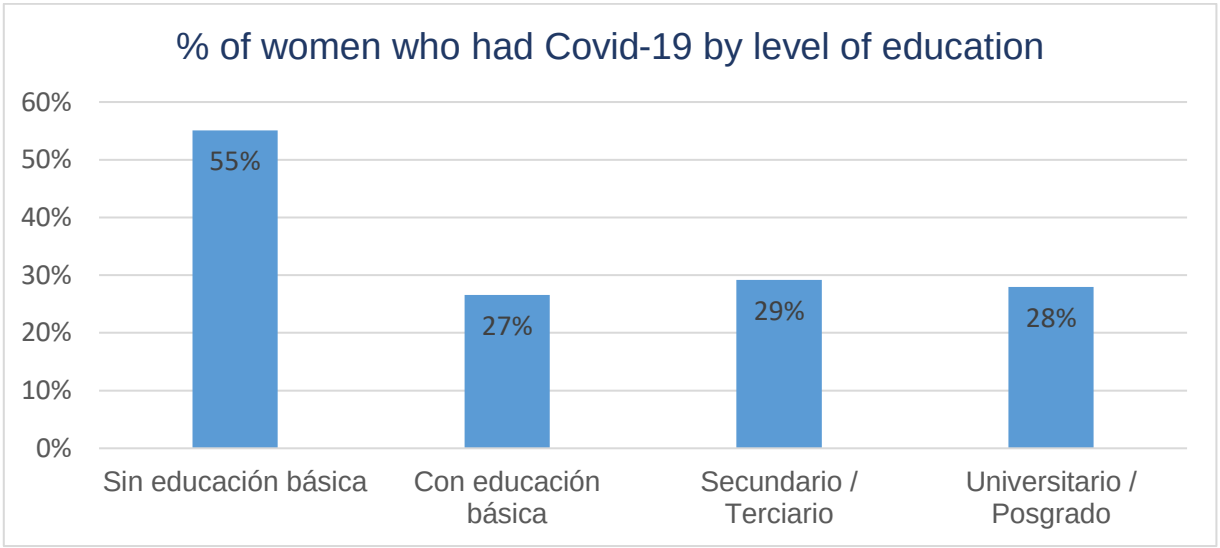


Figure 21 - Source: WMO elaboration of WUCWO

The group with the highest percentage of infected women was women without basic education.

b. Annex II - Survey

The impact of Covid-19 on women in Latin America and the Caribbean

Global Observatory for Women

WUCWO - CELAM

At the Global Observatory for Women, we want to give Latin American women the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard in order to contribute to the construction of society and the People of God in our region. Help us by answering this questionnaire on how you have experienced the Covid-19 pandemic.

Personal data:

- Name
- Surname
- Age
- Telephone (not compulsory)
- E-mail (not compulsory)
- Country of residence (list of 33 LAC countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela).
- Location
- Type of territory: Rural, Sub-urban rural, Urban, Indigenous / Aboriginal community
- Level of education (No education, Primary incomplete, Primary complete, Secondary incomplete, Secondary complete, Technical / Tertiary incomplete, Technical / Tertiary complete, University incomplete, University complete, Postgraduate)
- Are you currently working: yes / no
- Religion: Catholicism, other Christian religions, Judaism, Muslim, Islam, No religion, other religions).
- Family status: Single without children, Single with children, Married without children, Married with children, Couple without children, Couple with children, Separated/divorced without children, Separated/divorced with children, Widowed without children, Widowed with children, Consecrated layperson, Religious

General aspects

During the pandemic you felt supported (A lot, Somewhat / sometimes, A little, Never) by:

- Family
- Friends
- Church
- Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- Work
- Neighbours
- Government
- Other

Briefly recount your experience of support or lack of support during the pandemic.

What kind of needs have you experienced during the pandemic? (A lot, Somewhat / sometimes, A little, Not at all)

- Food
- Psychological aspects
- Upbringing / care
- Education
- Health
- Security
- Housing
- Another

Briefly recount the most significant material or emotional problems experienced as a woman during the pandemic.

Women and family

Have you experienced any of the following changes in your family situation as a result of mandatory detention?

-Coexistence within the home:

- Improved
- Worsened
- Remained unchanged
- I did not live with other people during confinement.
- Other/s:

- You have suffered some kind of violence:

- Physical violence
- Verbal violence
- Psychological violence
- Sexual violence
- Economic violence
- I did not suffer violence
- Other:

Do you want to share your case if you have suffered violence?

-Household chores:

- They mainly leaned on you
- The following were shared
- You had to take on new
- You don't usually do them
- Other:

Do you want to share briefly how your household chores were divided?

-Paid work at home and family situation:

- It was a solution
- It was better for you than working in presence
- You found it invasive of your family rhythm
- You did not do paid work inside the home
- Other/s:

In a nutshell, tell us about the most important changes in your family situation as a woman during the pandemic.

Women and Education

If you have had to accompany your children, grandchildren, siblings with school activities, how did the experience turn out?

- Their apprenticeship was positive
- I have not felt able to do it
- We have not had adequate computer, phones or connection
- I have had to change my work situation to accompany him/her.
- I didn't have to accompany anyone with studies
- Another

Briefly tell us about your experience in school accompaniment if you have done it.

How has this pandemic affected your education?

- I have resumed studies that I had stopped some time ago.

- I started to learn something new
- I have been part of learning groups
- I gave up my studies
- We have not had adequate computer, phones or connection
- I was not affected in this respect
- Other

Briefly tell us how the pandemic has affected you in terms of education.

Women and Church (Optional)

In relation to the church during the pandemic:

Found (Yes, No, Don't know)

- Help/containment
- Different ways of living your faith
- Listening and spiritual guidance
- Space to support others
- Training (through digital media)
- Other/s:

Missed (Yes, No, Don't know)

- Access to the sacraments
- New forms of prayer
- Attention in sickness/ closeness in loneliness
- Community fraternity
- Material or spiritual aid

How you have participated in your church:

- Attending Mass
- Supporting the parish
- Participating in a social support group
- Non-participation
- Other

Tell briefly what has been the most positive thing about your relationship with the church?

Briefly tell us what has been the most frustrating thing in your relationship with the church.

Women and Covid

Did you have Covid? Yes / No

In your life, what has been the most positive thing about the pandemic?

In your life: What has been the most negative thing about the pandemic?

Women have great strengths to face crises. As a woman, what advice would you give or what good practice would you like to see in order to face the times ahead?

With regard to the use of data:

I authorise the use of my data for the development of the World Observatory of Women of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) with the collaboration of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM).

Thank you for replying and for being part of the Global Observatory for Women.