



# COVID-19 GLOBAL GENDER RESPONSE TRACKER

FACTSHEET: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The year 2020, which marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, was destined to be a key year for gender equality and women's empowerment. In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the year began with the celebration of the XIV Regional Conference on Women co-organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and UN Women following the theme *Autonomy of Women in Changing Economic Scenarios*. At the conference, the governments of the region adopted the Santiago Commitment as a roadmap towards a regional agenda that prioritizes Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

In the new scenario of the COVID-19 pandemic, the region's health systems, societies and economies have been hit hard, with the achievements made in recent decades now at risk of regressing. The crisis is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing the vulnerabilities of social, political, and economic systems, and amplifying their impacts.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, LAC has become one of the most critical regions in the context of COVID-19, reaching a number close to 11.7 million confirmed cases and with more than 400,000 deaths.<sup>2</sup> The crisis caused by COVID-19 is expected to result in the worst recession in a century, with a 9.1% contraction in regional GDP in 2020, which could increase the number of people living in a situation of poverty by 45 million (which translates into a total of 230 million) and the number of people who live in extreme poverty by 28 million (reaching 96 million) in the region.<sup>3</sup>

COVID-19 has seriously deepened the economic crisis, care deficits, and aggravated the "shadow pandemic" in the region: violence against women. Inequalities also affect differently different groups of women who suffer multiple forms of discrimination based on race, disability status, income and age, among other variables. This has become evident both in the spread and in the impact of the virus.

This fact sheet, based on data provided by the Global Tracker for Gender Responses to COVID-19 developed by UNDP and UN Women, provides a general synthesis of the response measures identified by LAC governments, with a focus on those aimed at addressing threats to gender equality in three dimensions: the increase in violence against women and girls; the unprecedented increase in unpaid care and domestic work; and economic insecurity due to the loss of jobs, income and livelihoods on a large scale.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Asia-Pacific Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group. 2020. "The COVID-19 Outbreak and Gender: Regional Analysis and Recommendations from Asia and the Pacific." May.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> UN (2020) Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, April 9, 2020.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> IDB, COVID-19: Situational report, 11/13/2020. https://www.iadb.org/en/coronavirus/current-situation-pandemic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> UN (2020). Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Global Tracker joins the Regional Tracker launched in May 2020 by ECLAC and UN Women,<sup>5</sup> allowing for an analysis in a global and comparative perspective.

According to data released by UN Women and UNDP, the Global Tracker for Gender Responses to COVID-19 includes more than 2,500 measures in 206 countries and territories. The region has one of the highest indices of gender-sensitive measures (261), second only to Europe. However, the response has been uneven between countries and also in relation to some areas, such as unpaid care and domestic work, which have registered fewer measures. Nevertheless, the Global Tracker has been able to identify examples of innovative measures with a gender perspective in a wide variety of contexts.

#### **CHART 1: COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker**

The information in this fact sheet is based on the <u>UNDP-UN Women Global Tracker of Gender Responses to COVID-19</u> which monitors the policy measures established by national governments around the world to address the COVID-19 crisis and highlights gender-sensitive responses. Created jointly by both agencies, UNDP coordinates the Global Tracker with substantial leadership and technical contributions from UN Women.

The Global Tracker is a live database with countries and measurements that are added and updated periodically. The measures for the Latin American and Caribbean region were obtained mostly from the COVID-19 Observatory of ECLAC, which includes a specific section on Gender Policies, prepared in partnership with UN Women. As with all policy trackers, there may be gaps or biases due to the lack of available information, the deficit in the reporting of the announced measures, the over-reporting of measures that were suspended in practice, or the lack of data on the components. In general, the findings should be interpreted with care. When considering the number of individual measures, for example, it is important to keep in mind that countries with few or no measures related to COVID-19 may have gender-sensitive policies in place to help mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic. Measurements also vary significantly by scope. Therefore, this datasheet also provides information on the content of the measures, which should be considered together with the aggregated totals. There is no attempt to rank countries, but there is a strong potential for countries to learn from each other to improve their policy responses for women and girls. More information on the classification of policies, the definition of gender-sensitive measures and the process of data collection and analysis can be found in the *methodological note*.

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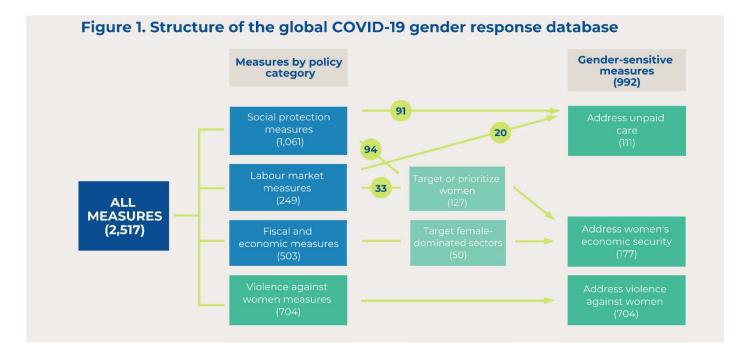
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>To provide information on national measures to be included in the UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, contact <u>covid.gender.helpdesk@undp.org</u>



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The COVID-19 Observatory was created by ECLAC at the beginning of the pandemic. Together with UN Women, a specific section was created on measures and public policies adopted by governments in terms of gender. See <a href="https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19">https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19</a>.

#### I. WHAT IS A GENDER-SENSITIVE MEASURE?

The measures contained in the Global Tracker are divided into four main policy categories: i) Social Protection; ii) Labour Market; iii) Fiscal and Economic Policies; and iv) Measures to Address Violence Against Women and Girls (Figure 1). A significant number of measurements were compiled taking as a reference other databases, such as the ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory in which UN Women participates, and others were compiled by UNDP and UN Women.<sup>7</sup>



Gender-sensitive measures are part of a subset within the measures taken that seek to directly address the specific risks and challenges faced by women and girls as a result of the pandemic:

- All measures of violence against women are classified as gender sensitive by default.
- Social protection and labour market measures are defined as gender sensitive if they aim to address women's economic security or unpaid care and domestic work.
- Fiscal and economic measures are defined as gender sensitive if they provide support to sectors where women are overrepresented, under the assumption that it is likely



<sup>7</sup> For more information see methodological note

that women's employment, and therefore their economic security, will be protected.<sup>8</sup> The evaluation is carried out based on the information available on the design of gender-sensitive policies in the response to COVID-19. However, it does not incorporate an evaluation of the implementation or the impact of the gender-sensitive or non-gender-sensitive measures.

#### II. OVERVIEW OF THE REGION

In LAC, the Global Tracker has compiled to date a total of 261 gender-sensitive measures in the face of the crisis caused by COVID-19,<sup>9</sup> implemented in 33 countries and territories of the 43 analyzed.<sup>10</sup> In line with global trends, most of the measures adopted in the region address violence against women (177 measures in 29 countries), followed by measures that address the economic security of women (61 measures in 22 countries) and relatively fewer measures to address unpaid care and domestic work (23 measures in 12 countries).

Measures that target the economic security of women and that address unpaid care and domestic work constitute only a small fraction of the total measures that make up the social protection and labour market response, on the one hand, and a fiscal and economic response, on the other.

In total, 42 countries and territories in LAC have adopted 339 social protection and labour market measures in response to the crisis caused by COVID-19. Of these measures, 22% (75) are gender sensitive, strengthening women's economic security or addressing unpaid care and domestic work, a comparatively higher proportion than in other developing regions.

Similarly, 23 LAC countries and territories have adopted 58 fiscal and economic measures to help companies weather the crisis. However, less than 16% of these measures (9) have been aimed at strengthening the economic security of women by channeling resources to feminized sectors.



<sup>8</sup> Given the different data collection and analysis processes used for identifying violence against women measures, on the one hand, and women's economic security and unpaid care measures, on the other, the three areas are not strictly comparable. While women's economic security and unpaid care measures have been located within a broader universe of social protection, labour market, fiscal and economic measures, violence against women measures have no such point of reference.

<sup>9</sup> Data updated to September 21, 2020

<sup>10</sup> See Annex I for the full list.

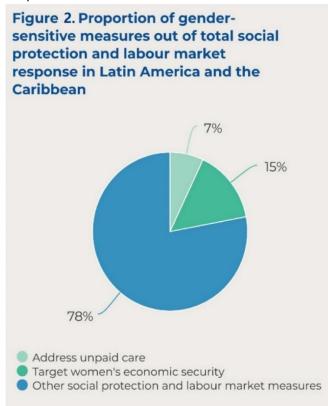
### III. WHAT GENDER-SENSITIVE MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY GOVERNMENTS OF THE REGION?

#### **Economic Security Measures for Women**

Out of the 397 fiscal and economic, social protection and labour market measures registered in LAC, 61 measures in 22 countries and territories address the economic security of women, which represents only 15% of the total.

#### Social Protection Measures and Gender Equality

More than half of the measures to address the economic security of women (35) belong to the category of social protection consisting of mainly cash transfers (17 measures in 12 countries) or food and other aid in kind (7 measures in 6 countries) that prioritize women as the main recipients. Some national examples of these measures are as follows:



- Antigua and Barbuda has implemented the COVID-19 Emergency Food Assistance Program, which provides essential food and medicine packages to populations in vulnerable situations, especially older adults living alone, households headed by a woman or a single woman, people with disabilities and unemployed people with children.
- In Argentina, the Government introduced the "Emergency Family Income (IFE)", a non-contributory global payment of 10,000 Argentine pesos (between 120 and 140 USD approximately according to the official exchange rate and date) initially between April and September 2020 to a family member, giving priority to women as recipients. The total number of beneficiaries reached almost 9 million

people, including informal workers, self-employed and domestic workers. It was initially established as a one-time measure, but later IFE2 and IFE3 were launched.



- In **Brazil**, an emergency cash transfer of 115 USD per month (or 60% of the minimum wage) was established for adults without formal work and who live in poor households that do not receive other monetary support (such as the Bolsa Familia). Single mothers receive double support, including mothers under 18 years of age.<sup>11</sup>
- In El Salvador, the Government ordered private companies to ensure the lockdown of specific workers, including those over 60 years of age, pregnant women, or women with pre-existing diseases. Such workers must receive paid sick leave for 30 days.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Labour Market Measures**

To date, there are 17 measures in 10 countries linked to the **labour market** that aim at the economic security of women, including support for women entrepreneurs, the self-employed and those in informal employment.

- **Barbados, Ecuador** and **Peru** have promoted the rights of domestic and care workers through information campaigns and regulatory adjustments.
- Chile, Colombia,<sup>13</sup> Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico<sup>14</sup> and Paraguay have taken measures to support women's entrepreneurship through subsidized loans, virtual training, financial education, home delivery and digital marketing platforms.
- In Costa Rica, the "+Mujeres, +Natura" program is an initiative to promote gender equality in the biodiversity sector (water, protected areas and forests). It will make available three financial instruments to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women. The credit programme "FONAFIFO by your side" has a credit line of 5 million Costa Rican colones (8,370 USD) with fiduciary guarantees, for a term of 10 years and a fixed interest rate of 4% per year for productive development, working capital, infrastructure, equipment and innovative projects related to the forest.

#### Fiscal and economic measures for gender equality

For the economic recovery to be gender sensitive, it is necessary to maintain and expand fiscal, economic and labour measures aimed at strengthening the economic security of women and ensuring that they can keep their jobs or re-enter the labour market if they have been unemployed as a result



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Source taken from the ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, prepared in partnership with UN Women and compiled by UNDP and UN Women.

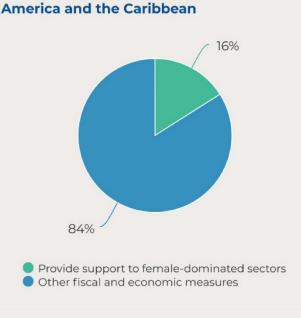
<sup>12</sup> Ibidem

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem

of the pandemic. Eight countries in the region have a total of nine fiscal and economic measures directed at feminized sectors of their economies; that is, sectors that employ a higher proportion of women than men. These measures represent less than 16% of all fiscal and economic measures adopted in the region.

Figure 3. Proportion of gendersensitive measures out of total fiscal and economic response in Latin America and the Caribbean



- The Dominican Republic pledged to provide assistance to particularly affected sectors, including tourism, to the amount of 229.4 million Dominican pesos (3.9 million USD). Tourism-related activities, such as accommodation and food services, account for 11% of women's employment, compared to 5.2% for men in the country.
- In **Trinidad and Tobago**, the government will provide 50 million Trinidadian dollars (7.4 million USD) as part of grants for Tobago hoteliers to improve their facilities. Tourism-related activities, such as accommodation and food services, account for 11% of women's employment, compared to 5.2% for men in the country.

#### **Unpaid care and domestic work measures**

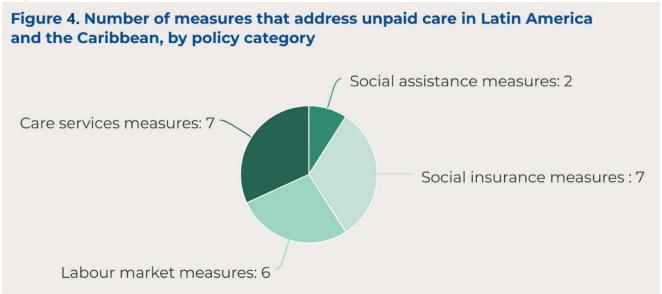
Of the total of 339 **social and labour market protection** measures adopted in response to COVID-19, 23 directly address unpaid care and domestic work, which places Latin America, alongside Europe, as the region with the most measures of this type. However, the response in unpaid care and domestic work represents only 7% of the total social protection and labour market response in the region (Figure 2).



#### Social Protection Measures and Gender Equality

Nine of these measures fall into the category of **social protection** - which includes social assistance, social security and care services (Figure 4) - mainly with family leave (six measures in six countries) and cash-for-care to compensate parents for school and daycare closures (two measures in two countries).

- Chile has extended the period of leave for parents who were on parental leave at the time of the
  outbreak of the pandemic. The initial 30 days can be extended up to a total of 90 days as long as the
  emergency continues.
- Mexico continued with the Support Program for the Wellbeing of Children of Working Mothers, in place since before the crisis, which seeks to improve access to labour markets for parents and guardians in work, or who are looking for work or opportunities, to help them pay for childcare.
- Trinidad and Tobago has introduced a "Pandemic leave" scheme covering public sector, fixed-term contract and short-term contract employees, on-the-job trainees, and those ineligible for sick leave. As part of this measure, employers are encouraged to implement remote work policies where possible, to minimize the need for employees with children to physically attend work. In situations where it may not be possible for employees with children to work from home, employers are required to explore options of shift work, staggered working hours and/or rostering. In cases where alternative work arrangements cannot be made, the employee must be allowed to stay at home with their dependents without being penalized.



The Global Tracker registers only seven measures to **strengthen care services**, one directed at children and six directed at older persons and people with disabilities (in four countries).

- In **Costa Rica**, the childcare services of the National Child Care and Development Network (REDCUDI) have continued to function throughout the health emergency to allow parents to continue working without having to shift the burden to grandparents or other high-risk groups within their family support networks.
- In Peru, a support network was established for the protection and care of the elderly and people with severe disabilities in the context of the health emergency, which includes three phases: identification and georeferencing of high-risk older people and people with severe disabilities, delivery of a prioritized service package and monitoring of the target population, and support for their caregivers.

In addition to providing benefits and services to support unpaid care and domestic work, countries such as the **Dominican Republic**, **El Salvador**, **Ecuador** and **Uruguay** have tried to raise awareness through social media campaigns on the importance of sharing care responsibilities within the home in the context of confinement.

#### **Labour Market Measures**

Six additional measures to address unpaid care fall into the labour market category.

- In Argentina, a law was approved to regulate teleworking. Among other aspects, it establishes
  that those who work remotely and are responsible for children under 13 years of age, older
  adults or people with disabilities have the right to hours compatible with their care
  responsibilities.
- In Bolivia, as part of the requirements for granting special licenses (Supreme Decree 4196), reductions in working hours are allowed; paid leave for the elderly, pregnant women and people with health problems; paid leave for workers with dependent children under five years of age; as well as paid leave for all workers, public and private, who are suspected of having contracted COVID-19.<sup>15</sup>
- In **Cuba**, for one month, a subsidy covers the total salary of workers responsible for children whose classes have been suspended. Once the term has elapsed, if the closure of educational facilities continues, caregivers are guaranteed 60% of the minimum wage.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Source taken from the ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, prepared in partnership with UN Women and compiled by UNDP and UN Women.

• In **Costa Rica**, the social actors agreed to a temporary reduction of the working day to preserve jobs during confinement. The law stipulates that reductions in working time must be applied proportionally to women and men in similar or equivalent jobs.

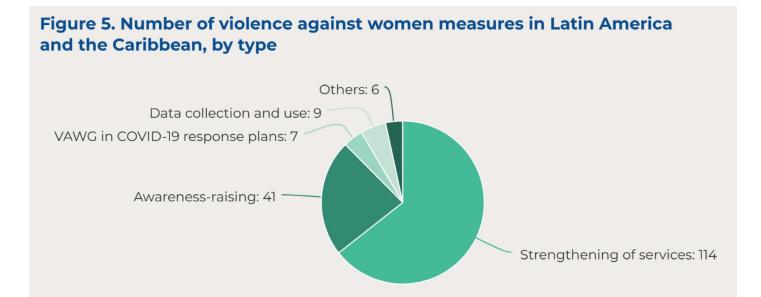
Overall, only 28% of the countries and territories analyzed in LAC (12 out of 43) have taken measures to support unpaid care and domestic work. Unfortunately, the response has been inadequate to address the severe care crisis that the virus has exposed and exacerbated.

#### Measures to eradicate violence against women and girls (VAWG)

Around 68% of all gender-sensitive measures in LAC (177 out of 261 measures, carried out in 29 countries) focus on preventing and / or responding to violence against women and girls. This means that almost two thirds of all measures identified seek to respond to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

#### Four types of measures stand out in the region:

- Strengthening of services.
- 2. Eradication of VAWG in Response Plans to COVID-19.
- 3. Collection and Use of Data.
- 4. Awareness-raising and communication.





#### Measures to strengthen services

In the region, most of the measures (114 in 26 countries) aim to strengthen services for women survivors through helplines and other complaint mechanisms (30 measures in 22 countries), police and judicial responses (29 measures in 19 countries), coordinated services (23 measures in 17 countries), shelters (15 measures in 12 countries) and continuous provision of psychosocial support (11 measures in 9 countries).

- Shelters: In Argentina, shelters for survivors of gender violence were identified as essential services to ensure their continued operation, and the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity coordinated with unions, the private sector and local governments to convert hotels and expand the network of shelters available. In Colombia, the Presidential Council for Women's Equity financed the adaptation of 65 buildings to be used as shelters for women at high risk of violence, while the Ministry of Health has taken specific actions to support sexual and reproductive health during the pandemic, including abortion care in accordance with the law. <sup>16</sup> In Cuba, the «Houses of Orientation to Women and the Family», which offer individual counseling, group activities and training programs for women in situations of violence, have continued their work.
- Helplines and psychological support: In Barbados, the social services helpline has been expanded to offer services to survivors of intimate partner violence and virtual courts have been introduced for urgent cases, including cases of violence against women and girls. In Bolivia, Chile and Colombia, women can report violence and seek help at pharmacies, usually using a codeword that alerts pharmacy staff to the situation. In Guyana, two 24-hour hotlines were established for survivors of sexual, domestic and gender-based violence. Women who cannot speak safely can communicate with the service via WhatsApp, email or Messenger. In Peru, there are 175 mental health centers operated by the Ministry of Health, offering services to survivors of violence by phone or online. All services are free and available seven days a week. In the Dominican Republic, shelters for survivors of violence have been declared essential services and, together with «Línea Mujer \* 212» (a hotline for women), remain available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during confinement. 17 In El Salvador, an emergency psychological support center has been established, made up of medical professionals and psychologists, which provides support to women with mental health problems and, in particular, to survivors of violence in the context confinement. Saint Kitts and Nevis



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Source taken from the ECLAC COVID-19 Observatory, prepared in partnership with UN Women and compiled by UNDP and UN Women.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem

announced the strengthening of counseling and support services for survivors of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic.

• Strengthening Interinstitutional Coordination: In Panama, the Ministry of Health, the Prosecutor's Office, the Police and the Judiciary are part of an intersectoral group created by the Minister of Social Development to respond to violence against women during the COVID-19 emergency. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Gender Violence Unit of the Police Service, which has specially trained police personnel, is available to support survivors during COVID-19. Anticipating the possibility that a survivor cannot leave her home to report violence, Costa Rica has strengthened patrolling and home visits in areas where situations of violence have previously been recorded.

#### Measures that integrate the eradication of VAWG in the response plans to COVID-19

Among the measures to eradicate violence against women and girls (VAWG), those that seek the integration of Eradication of VAWG into the Response Plans to COVID-19 stand out. Services to respond to and prevent VAWG should be treated as essential services and an integral part of national and local COVID-19 crisis response plans.

However, only a few countries in the region (at least five) have taken this step. This fact is extremely worrying, as the pandemic will have lasting consequences that will increase the risk of violence against women and girls. Only commitments that are part of governments' sustained and long-term planning and policies can help address the issue.

The Global Tracker records very few measures to address online violence in the regions, even as evidence shows that it has increased during the pandemic.<sup>18</sup> There are some exceptions; for example, in **Haiti**, a portal has been created to report images of child sexual abuse online and to combat the increasing risks of child sexual abuse online, especially against girls. This has become all the more relevant during confinement, when more people are at home using the Internet.

On the other hand, there are also very few measures that target women crossed by different intersectionalities and who are, therefore, in a greater situation of vulnerability. In **Argentina**, the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity of the Nation has authorized women and LGBTIQ + people to circulate freely if they need to report cases of violence

18 UN Women. 2020. Brief: "Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19. "April. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/brief-online-and-ict-facilitated-violence-against-women- and-girls-during- covid-19



(Resolution 15/2020), and other countries such as **Ecuador and Uruguay** have taken measures that include LBGTIQ + people in response to the crisis.

#### Data collection and use measures

A total of nine measures have been identified to improve the collection and use of data on violence against women in the context of COVID-19, adopted in eight countries in the region.

In **Bolivia**, the Attorney General's Office continued to publish data on cases of violence against women and femicide during the quarantine. In **Mexico**, a working group on statistics was formed to establish a minimum set of indicators that allow the timely monitoring of violence against women and contribute to the improvement of statistics on the context in which violence occurs against women during the pandemic. In **Panama**, the Prosecutor's Office publishes a monthly statistical report with data on cases of domestic violence.<sup>19</sup>

#### Awareness and communication measures

The **fourth type of measure** that was taken in the region to eradicate VAWG was awareness raising through campaigns (41 measures in 22 countries), this type of measure being the most widespread. Some examples are **Brazil**, **Ecuador and Peru**, which **launched awareness and communication campaigns to address domestic and gender violence.** 

**Ecuador,** through social networks, launched «#MujerEcuadorTeAcompaña», which uses infographics and videos to disseminate information on help lines, care services and guidance on domestic and gender violence. The messages provide a gender, intergenerational and intercultural perspective and have been disseminated with the support of public figures (such as journalists, singers and influencers). For its part, **Brazil** launched the campaign, 'Para algumas famílias, o isolamento está sendo ainda mais difícil' (For some families, isolation has been even harder) to address domestic violence, focusing on vulnerabilities of women, children and older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. In **Peru,** the campaign "Mascarillas Violetas" [Violet Facemasks] was launched as an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP) with the support of UNDP and AECID.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Note: This measure was being implemented prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Annex I: Number of gender-sensitive measures registered in LAC, by type and country<sup>20</sup>

Country/territory	Women's economic security	Unpaid care	Violence against women	Total gender- sensitive measures
Antigua and Barbuda	1	0	2	3
Argentina	8	5	13	26
Aruba	1	0	0	1
Bahamas	1	0	0	1
Barbados	0	2	2	4
Belize	0	0	2	2
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2	2	14	18
Brazil	3	0	8	11
Chile	7	1	12	20
Colombia	7	0	13	20
Costa Rica	7	3	8	18
Cuba	0	2	2	4
Dominica	0	1	2	3
Dominican Republic	1	0	4	5
Ecuador	2	0	9	11
El Salvador	2	0	4	6
Guatemala	2	0	8	10
Guyana	0	0	2	2
Haiti	0	0	Ī	1
Honduras	1	0	7	8



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Updated as of September 21, 2020

### Continued. Number of gender-sensitive measures registered in LAC, by type and country 20

Country/territory	Women's economic security	Unpaid care	Violence against women	Total gender- sensitive measures
Jamaica	3	0	3	6
Mexico	5	1	6	12
Montserrat	0	1	0	1
Nicaragua	0	0	2	2
Panama	0	0	8	8
Paraguay	2	0	12	14
Peru	2	2	10	14
Saint Kitts and Nevis	0	0	3	3
Saint Lucia	1	1	0	2
Suriname	0	0	5	5
Trinidad and Tobago	1	2	5	8
Uruguay	1	0	8	9
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	1	0	2	3
TOTAL	61	23	177	261



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Updated as of September 21, 2020.

