

Regional Study on
Shelters for Women
Victims of Gender-Based Violence
in Latin America



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*Regional study on shelters for women victims of gender-based violence in Latin America. **Approved by the Committee of Experts of the MESECVI, during its Nineteenth Meeting, held on November 12, 2022.***

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PRESENTATION

The European Union's EUROsociAL program and the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention have undertaken a collaborative effort to delve into the functioning of shelters for women victims of gender-based violence in various countries in Latin America. The aim is to identify best practices and the significant challenges posed by this crucial and necessary public policy at the regional level.

One of the outcomes of this collaboration is the current study, which allows us to review the regulatory and institutional framework of the shelters, their area of coverage and location, their housing capacity, the budget for their operation and the origin of these funds, and their monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Additionally, the study enables us to observe some general trends in the region regarding this public policy. For instance, it highlights a significant increase in the number of shelters at the regional level over the past decade, with a trend towards continued growth.

Noteworthy State efforts, in some cases, focus on proper regulation through national laws, action protocols, operating guidelines, and management models that have been strengthened through experience. These efforts also involve providing State budgetary allocations to ensure the continuity of shelter provision by creating specific budget lines for their operation.

The study also identifies some national best practices that could inspire other institutions responsible for shelters at the national level. These include: i) assessment mechanisms and the preparation of periodic reports that allow for continuous evaluation of results, recognizing critical points and actions for effective management; ii) mechanisms allowing for confidential submission of complaints or reports within shelters, which are reviewed by oversight bodies to ensure proper review; iii) financial support for six months for sheltered women to find support in the process of exiting violent situations.

However, the study presents significant challenges for the proper and effective implementation of this public policy. These challenges include the need to ensure shelter confidentiality for the safety of victims, the importance of comprehensive services and specialized care within these spaces, the lack of budget for proper shelter operation in certain cases, and the necessity for these services to provide access to justice, housing plans, job training, or employment access to achieve economic autonomy.

We hope that this tool proves to be of utmost utility for various institutions and civil society organizations at the regional level to continue strengthening this crucial public policy, providing a dignified way out for women victims of gender-based violence. This violence confronts us with a complex and multi-causal phenomenon deeply rooted in our societies, requiring systemic, sustained, and multidisciplinary efforts for its addressing, treatment, and eradication. From the European Union's EUROsociAL program and the MESECVI, we will continue working in support of organizations and States to strengthen public policies dedicated to the prevention, care, investigation, punishment, and the provision of reparation of women and girls victims of gender-based violence.



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1. INTRODUCTION

In order to be effectively executed, the right to live a life free from violence for gender reasons, enshrined in Article 3 of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), requires a series of guarantees from the party States. These governmental obligations include guaranteeing the safety of women victims of violence or those whose physical safety is at risk through a variety of means, including providing access to shelters and safe houses.

During the last few decades of the 20th century, women's shelters were established in all regions of the world – in Europe in the 1970s and Latin America in the 1980s. Despite these efforts, until this date, there is still no centralized database that includes information on the number of shelters that exist, how they are funded, their capacity, their admission criteria, among other important aspects. To address this gap, EUROsociAL+ and the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) have launched an initiative to evaluate the status of shelters in Latin America.

EUROsociAL+ is a cooperative program between Latin America and the European Union that seeks to improve social cohesion and strengthen institutions in Latin American countries through support of the design, reform, and implementation of social policy. The program, financed by the European Commission, focuses on issues of gender, governance, and social policy. For the last ten (10) years the program has provided a forum to allow equivalent institutions in Europe and Latin America to learn and share experiences via a broad set of tools.

In 2019, the Gender Equality section of EUROsociAL+, led by Expertise France, established a close partnership with the MESECVI to combat gender-based violence.

Created in 2004, MESECVI began operating in 2005. It is comprised of two bodies: the Committee of Experts (CEVI) and the Conference of States Party. Its Technical Secretariat sits within the Inter-American Commission of Women in the Organization of American States (OAS).

During the course of their partnership, it was decided to undertake an analysis of existing shelters for women victims of domestic violence and applicable laws in Latin America.

The proposed methodology included developing a questionnaire to be sent to every national authority responsible for addressing the issue of domestic violence, in order to collect the information necessary to build a database. By December 30, 2020, 16 countries had responded to the request: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Uruguay.¹

Additionally, key stakeholders and the CEVI were asked to provide input. The team also conducted extensive internet research, collected information from secondary sources, and developed a specialized bibliography. (Note: The bibliography only cited sources that provided data for the study.)

For the purposes of this study, a shelter is defined as, “a physical space that provides protection and specialized or interdisciplinary care to women and children who are at risk as a result of domestic violence.”² We chose the word **shelter** due to its widespread usage and the general understanding of its meaning. These spaces that provide protection for women and girls who suffer domestic violence are also known across the region as support centers, welcome centers, safe houses, comprehensive care centers, temporary housing units, etcetera.

Shelters or safe houses can be structured in a variety of ways, follow different organizational models, and provide differing coverage and services. Regardless of these differences, the State must ensure that, in addition to protecting life and physical safety of women, enable them to overcome the numerous consequences of that violence, and allows them to rebuild their lives. They must focus on the victims and their human rights, as well as, their safety and empowerment and work to avoid the revictimization of the woman and her children.³

The first domestic violence shelter was built in Brazil in 1964 (Lar Espirita Esperidiao Prado, Rio Claro, Brazil). Shelters began to appear in other countries in the 1990s, and the numbers have only multiplied since then. Initially, shelters were set up by groups of women in response to the growing awareness of the issue of domestic violence. They were not, at first, included in legislation, national plans, or specific national policies, but in the intervening years, countries have gradually assumed responsibility for women’s shelters.

This analysis will review the legal and regulatory framework of shelters at the international level, as well as, the institutional framework that governs shelters; determine if it is composed of statutes, regulations or other functional documents; determine who is responsible for appointing shelter leadership and managing the shelters and if there are any mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

In addition, we will analyze the location and capacity of these spaces: age limits for children, if any; authorized length of stay in shelters; annual budget (in US dollars); the origin of the funding; admission criteria; the existence of protocols; admission and treatment. We also tried to find out the type of shelter staff qualifications; the existence of support for shelter staff; shelter objectives and, finally, the services the shelters offer.

2. BACKGROUND ON SHELTER MONITORING BY THE CEVI

The **First Hemispheric Report**, published in 2008, noted that, “[t]he majority of States have at least one shelter to admit women victims of violence.” **18 States** report the existence of shelters within their territory to receive women victims of violence, with significant differences in quantities. Some States report the existence of one shelter, while others, such as Brazil, report up to 87. In total, this report identified **201 shelters**.

The CEVI expressed the following concerns based on the information provided by the States in the First Hemispheric Report:

- a) In nine States, existing shelters were established by or are managed by civil society organizations due to a lack of State-run shelters. While the work of civil society in this regard is commendable, it does not absolve the State of its responsibility to provide services and shelter to women victims of violence.
- b) The number of shelters reported is not sufficient to meet national demand, considering the number of complaints of domestic violence. At least eleven States report the existence of three (3) or fewer State-run shelters, while another large group notes that its shelters can only accommodate fewer than 20 people.
- c) The majority of States provided little information on whether the shelters also accepted the children of women victims of violence.⁴ This is a serious problem, because women often continue in a situation of violence for fear of being separated from their daughters and sons.

In the **Second Hemispheric Report**, the CEVI highlighted the scarcity and lack of clear protocols for shelter reference networks and pointed out the obstacles impeding the application of protective measures. In doing so, it references the following statements: “One of these is the scarcity and limited capacity of shelters and safe houses, which are primarily located in the capital city or large urban centers. Another issue is the public’s awareness of the physical location of these centers, which facilitates the perpetrator’s ability to locate the victim, and the lack of protective measures for the woman’s family and other witnesses.”⁵

However, the report noted an increase in the number of shelters in the majority of States and their location outside of the capital cities, indicating an expansion in coverage. **26 States reported a total of 298 shelters**. Similarly, “a number of States, especially in the Caribbean, are

partnering with civil society organizations to run shelters (...). Similarly, in other cases... the State signs agreements with shelters and boarding houses run by civil society organizations to secure the safety of women, in the belief that State-run shelters could be targeted for attack.”

The CEVI recommends that additional information on the maintenance and sustainability of the shelters be provided and urges the States to continue to increase the number of shelters in existence. Additionally, given the low levels of awareness of the existence of these resources by broad sectors of the population, it was recommended to increase the public awareness of these spaces.

The CEVI also stresses the need for States to establish free, specialized services for women victims of violence and their children. At a minimum, these services should include additional shelters, homes for women and comprehensive care centers; pre-trial legal counseling; legal representation at trial; health services that also cover a woman’s sexual and reproductive health and legal interruption of pregnancy; psychological counseling, therapy, and self-help groups.

Other recommendations include conducting studies on shelters, not only for analysis, but also to determine their suitability for their purpose and to identify the amount or percentage of the national budget dedicated to services for women victims of violence, such as: (...) shelters, safe houses, etc.

The data tables in the Second Hemispheric Report depict the increase in the tendency of States to make agreements with boarding houses and hotels to house at-risk persons, who are, in many cases, accompanied by their children. This need to respond rapidly to high-risk situations is understandable given the lack of shelters themselves or situations wherein shelter capacity has been exceeded. However, it is important to note that housing persons or families who have suffered violence, or who are still at risk of violence, in hotels without the comprehensive services and specialized care they need, does not fulfill the obligation of the State to prevent violence and support victims.

The **Third Hemispheric Report**, published in 2017, focused primarily on the prevention of violence against women. In this report, the States Party reaffirmed the key role shelters play in prevention efforts into the human rights of women, in conformity with the Belém do Pará Convention.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK ADDRESSING WOMEN'S SHELTERS

3.1. International Legislation

The need for shelters and the obligation of the State to guarantee their existence is now enshrined in both international law and the laws of every country in the region.

At the international level, the Committee on CEDAW has made clear that violence against women should be interpreted as a consequence of discrimination as defined in Article one of such Convention. In 1992, that Committee issued General Recommendation 19 on violence against women, which recommended that the States Party establish or support services for women victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and other forms of violence against women to include **shelters**, specially trained health workers, rehabilitation, and counseling.

In 2011, the United National General Assembly adopted Resolution 65/228, strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice response to violence against women. This resolution urges member States to advance effective crime prevention and criminal justice strategies, including those that prevent revictimization ... removing barriers that prevent victims from seeking safety, including barriers related to custody of children, access to shelter, and availability of legal assistance.⁶

Committee of the CEDAW General Recommendation 33 reiterates the concerns expressed in General Recommendation 19, and referring to the availability to systems of justice, recommends that the States Party, “[i]n cases of violence against women, ensure access to crises centers, financial aid, shelters, hotlines, and medical, psychosocial and counseling services.”

In CEDAW General Recommendation 35, on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation 19, requires that that States provide, “accessible, affordable and adequate services to protect women from gender-based violence, prevent its reoccurrence and provide or ensure funding for reparation to all its victims/survivors.”⁷ Further, the recommendation states that, “[s]tates should provide specialist women's support services such as free of charge 24-hour helplines, and *sufficient numbers of safe and adequately equipped crisis, support and referral centres*, as well as adequate shelters for women, their children and other family members as required.”⁸

In this General Recommendation, the Committee on CEDAW also requires the States to adhere to the principles that should guide the establishment of services for victims, to include shelters, “[e]nsuring all legal proceedings, protection and support measures and services to

women's victims /survivors of gender-based violence respect and strengthen their autonomy. They should be accessible to all women, in particular those affected by intersecting forms of discrimination, and take account of any specific needs of their children and other dependent persons. They should be available in the whole territory of the State party, and provided irrespective of women's resident status or their ability or willingness to cooperate against the alleged perpetrator.”⁹.

States that signed on to the Beijing Platform for Action agreed to provide well-funded shelters and relief support to women and girl victims of violence, as well as, medical, psychological and other counseling services and free or low-cost legal aid.¹⁰

In 2017, the Special Rapporteur in her report to the United Nations Human Rights Council on violence against women, its causes and consequences, stated that the acknowledgment of the right of women to a life free from violence determines the States' obligations to protect women victims and possible women victims of gender-based violence. This protection should be effected through the enactment of legislation and adoption of practical measures to prevent and combat this violence and the States should provide a comprehensive set of services including **shelters** and measures, and access to protection orders.

In this regard, it referred that States should ensure that the services available facilitate the victim's recovery from the violence suffered and allow her to overcome the numerous consequences of such violence in order to enable her to rebuild her life. Services must therefore be accessible, affordable, appropriate, acceptable, of high quality, and include protective measures. They must focus on the victim and the human rights of women, as well as the empowerment of the victim, and work to avoid the revictimization of the women and their children.¹¹

Despite the importance of shelters and the obligation of the States to guarantee their existence, there is no global or regional data available on the number or types of shelters, or on the agreed standards on the number of spaces needed.¹²

On a regional level, the Istanbul Convention also specifically refers to shelters. Article 23 requires the States Party to adopt legislation or other necessary measures to establish a sufficient number of appropriate and easily accessible shelters to provide safe housing to women victims of violence and to proactively reach out to women and their children.

Article 8 of the Convention of Belém do Pará, urges States to, “provide appropriate specialized services for women who have been subjected to violence, through public and private sector agencies, including shelters, counseling services for all family members where appropriate, and care and custody of the affected children.”

In such an indicator system, the format for the compliance report of the Convention is structured to align with the system. The State Capabilities category requires States to provide data on: i) the “Number of shelters, boarding houses, and safe houses for women victims of domestic violence and their children.” (Structural Indicator); (ii) the “Accessibility and availability of care for victims of the various forms of violence by jurisdiction and geographical region.” (Process Indicator); and (iii) the “rate of the request for care (calculated by the number of women seen in the last twelve months, divided by the total female population, and multiplied by 1000)” (Result Indicator).

A more detailed study of the indicators was conducted in a joint MESECVI-UNFPA study in July 2020, comparing the information collected by the UNFPA through the Essential Services Packet for Women and Girls Subject to Violence and the data collected by MESECVI in the States’ responses to the progress indicators.¹³

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes the elimination of violence against women in Objective 5.2 as one of the goals that must be met in order to achieve equality between the sexes and the empowerment of women. Unfortunately, it was not included in the related indicators (5.2.1 and 5.2.2), which seek to collect data on shelters and orders of protection. According to the Rapporteur on Violence Against Women as cited in the aforementioned report, having this data would have provided the information on availability needed to determine the need for additional shelters or orders of protection.

3.2. National Legislation

As it was mentioned, the regulatory vacuum that existed at the beginning of the 1990s was gradually replaced by national legislation, public policies, action plans, and specific programs to build and maintain shelters, receive women victims of domestic violence, and develop services.

In general, the existence of shelters is regulated by law – either national law, provincial regulation, or municipal ordinance. Federal countries have national legislation, state or provincial laws, and municipal ordinances.

Public policies regulating the creation and management of shelters, as well as, national plans against violence against women and associated programs exist in every country analyzed, without exception.

4. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SHELTERS

The data collected reveal that there are currently 568 shelters in 16 countries, in addition to various “alternative transitional housing” programs or single-family homes specifically set up to house victims of violence.

As mentioned, the oldest shelter was created in 1964 in Brazil - others began to appear beginning in 1990, and then began expanding their reach from capital cities into more distant provinces.

With respect to coverage, every country has shelters located in the capital city and there has also been an increase of shelters located in more populated cities and provinces.

As an example, Argentina has shelters in 21 of the country’s 24 jurisdictions. The 167 reported shelters are unequally distributed throughout the country, with 5 located in the city of Buenos Aires and 63 in the province of Buenos Aires, which represents the most populous region of the country. In Peru, there are 34 shelters distributed across various departments, with 6 located in the capital city of Lima. In Brazil, a country of 5,520 municipalities, there are Safe Houses and Shelters in 142 cities (representing 2.5% of the total). El Salvador has shelters in five of its eight departments. Five of Guatemala’s 22 departments have shelters. And Paraguay has two shelters across its 17 departments.

These examples indicate that, while the number of shelters has increased in the region, coverage remains limited. Women who live in provinces far from the capital city or with a predominantly rural population have more difficulty accessing a shelter than those who live in the capital or in more populated cities.

Six of the 16 countries reported that their shelters were State-run: Bolivia¹⁴, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay, and the Dominican Republic. In the remaining countries, while the majority of shelters are State-run, there is a mix of private initiatives and public-private partnerships, within which the state works with the private sector to run the shelters.

Privately-run shelters organized and managed by groups of women or women’s organizations often do not have the support of the State or communicate with State entities in order to harmonize criteria. The Special Rapporteur on Violence against women notes that in her experience, “today many States tend to perceive the establishment of shelters or support of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that run them as optional and not required as part of their obligations to support human rights under international treaties.”¹⁵

Eleven countries provided information on specific provisions in the budget dedicated for domestic violence shelters. The remaining five countries that completed the questionnaire did not provide information on specific budgetary provisions. There are several possible explanations for this, including that shelter maintenance may depend on funds that are included in the general budget of a plan or program or there is no specific provision for funding shelters. Another possibility is that in many cases, funding for shelters is part of the budget at the local municipal level, rather than at the national level. This is the case in Colombia, where there is no specific budgetary provision for shelters in the national budget, but there is in the municipal budget, which is reported separately.

Furthermore, in many cases, State-run shelters co-exist with private ones that are supported by NGOs. These private shelters often are the beneficiaries of donor agencies or domestic and international philanthropy, making it difficult to determine how much money each country actually spends to maintain its shelters.

With the exception of the six countries that reported having only State-run shelters,¹⁶ the others report a combination of State-run, private, and shelters run by public-private partnerships. In some countries like Costa Rica, private shelters transitioned to being State-run in 2005. (See budgetary provisions in Annex I1) In Mexico, where there are shelters in 31 of the 32 federal jurisdictions, the responsibility is shared by the State and the private sector—resulting in 34 State-run shelters, 34 private shelters, and 4 public-private shelters.

With respect to the institutional framework, we note that the first shelters were mostly established by groups of women who were inspired by their commitment to feminist solidarity. The idea was to save lives and guarantee the physical safety of women victims of domestic violence. As they gained more experience, they developed guides and protocols on processes ranging from admission to the release of residents, in order to better regulate the institutions. Currently, we have observed the growing institutionalization of shelters through the development of management models, specialized protocols, admission manuals and guides for women, girls and children, criteria for the care of those admitted, as well as, criteria associated with their discharge.

Another factor which has influenced this growing institutionalization is the transition of shelter management from civil society organizations to the State, resulting in the creation of mechanisms to guide civil servants and support them in the execution of their functions in support of shelters.

The authority to appoint shelter leadership falls to the different organisms that for the most part belong to the local municipality. In non-governmental organizations, ones managed by foundations, the Board of Directors makes the decision as in El Salvador and Guatemala.

In mixed organizations, the decision is made jointly. In some countries, that responsibility resides in the Ministry of Women or other similar organizations as happens in Peru or the Dominican Republic.

With the exception of Bolivia, where the State reports that many shelters are not legally accredited (unless they are supervised by a separate organization), most states have statutes, regulations or notarized certificates conferring accreditation or establishing operating standards. Brazil has the National Directory of Shelters for Women in Violent Situations (*Diretrizes Nacionais de Abrigamento às Mulheres em situação de Violência*); and in El Salvador shelters are expected to maintain the accreditation by following the operating standards of Shelter Homes (*Casas de Acogida*).

The selection of shelter leadership depends on the type of shelter. In State-run shelters, the State is responsible for the nomination and selection process. As the majority of shelters are run by municipalities, in general local municipal authorities manage the process. For privately-run shelters, Boards of Directors or Executive Committees will select the managing personnel, and in shelters run by public-private partnerships, there is usually a combined team that makes the selection.

In State-run shelters, the government is responsible for managing the facility, while in non State-run shelters, management falls to the civil association. With the exception of cases where the national authority on gender issues participates directly as in Costa Rica, Chile and Paraguay, in most cases the local municipal government is directly responsible. In organizations overseen by public-private partnerships, there is usually a mix of governmental and private sector management.

The same situation occurs with the mechanisms responsible for oversight and evaluation. In Mexico, this responsibility falls on the management of each individual shelter. In 2020, governmental supervision and evaluation of shelters transitioned to the Health sector and is overseen by the Secretariat of Social Welfare in the National Institute of Social Development (INDESOL).

Eight of the 16 countries surveyed did not report the existence of evaluation reports. Others confirmed their existence but did not submit any data. The exceptions were Paraguay that provided data collected in 2016; Uruguay that reported the existence of a data platform; and Chile that submitted their most recent annual Management Reports.

The scarcity of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for shelters is one of the most alarming weaknesses in the effort to establish procedures to ensure the safety of women and girls. It is almost impossible to improve public policies related to shelters without data on the results of the funding and services provided, how they were implemented, what worked and

what did not work, how the funding was allocated, and what follow-up was provided to women who accessed the shelters' services and left, returning to their daily lives.

Lodging capacity in shelters varies not only by country, but also within the countries themselves. They can range in size from facilities that can house 2 families (2 women with their children) to those that can accommodate 60 women. The number of children admitted is limited only by the occupancy capacity of the shelter, and not because of other restrictions.

Age limits are generally stricter for male children than for female children and range from age ten in El Salvador and Honduras to 18 (in four countries). In contrast, female children can mostly remain without limits until they are 18 (8 countries), while in 2 countries the age limits are similar for male children and women. In Chile, the age limit for children of both sexes is 14; and in the Dominican Republic it is 11.

Limits on the length of stay in shelters also varies. Five (5) countries, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama, have a 3 month stay limit. Other countries have more flexible regulations that allow residents to remain in the shelter between 1 to six months and even for an indeterminate period of time, depending on the victim's individual circumstances.

The majority of countries have defined criteria for admission to shelters that specify that they are intended for women victims of domestic violence. Argentina is the only country to clarify that shelters will admit both women and LGBTQ victims of domestic violence, regardless of sex.¹⁷

We have not observed any restrictions related to sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin, or migratory status.

Most limits on admission are the result of a lack of capacity and the ability for the shelter to provide women the specialized services they need. Costa Rica, for example, will admit women with disabilities as long as they are able to take care of themselves. Ecuador has broad admission criteria, but notes that shelters do not accept women and children with disabilities due to the inability to provide specialized care. Several countries restrict women and children with mental illnesses, also due to a lack of specialized personnel trained to provide adequate care.

All countries have protocols covering admission and care and report they communicate shelter rights to residents upon admission. This provision is incorporated in every country's shelter regulations, without exception.

The opportunity for women residents to participate in the life of the shelter exists in almost every country. These opportunities are listed in shelter protocols and increase gradually depending on the state of mind of the shelter residents. Residents are encouraged to help with the trash and

keep the shelter neat; in some countries, shelters provide educational activities and entertainment for residents' children. Eight countries allow shelter residents the opportunity to participate fully in decision-making, Chile and El Salvador allow this on a partial basis, Bolivia does not allow this, and some countries did not provide any information on this type of opportunity.

Costa Rica, Mexico, Honduras (in several shelters), and El Salvador (in one shelter) have procedures for residents to submit complaints about treatment at shelters.

Referrals to other services are, in general, dictated by flowcharts or roadmaps published in guides and protocols and vary depending on the cases and the individual needs of the woman or her children. An analysis of each situation determines the referral. In some countries, a referral occurs due to wounds, serious injuries or impairment (Mexico). In others, reasons for referral are related to psychiatric disturbances or contagious or infectious diseases (Peru).

The number of staff working in shelters depends on the size of the facility. A small shelter could have only four staff members, while a large one could have 23 (Uruguay).

Women make up the vast majority of shelter personnel, while men are usually employed as drivers or security. We do note the adoption of traditional gender roles in the division of labor at shelters. Six countries did not provide information on the sex of shelter staff and in 2 countries, Ecuador and El Salvador, shelter personnel is exclusively female.

In general, larger shelters have multidisciplinary teams that include psychological, legal, and social services available to residents in addition to the shelter administrators, educators and facilitators. Most States offer some initial training for the function, but some provide annual, quarterly or biannual training for staff.

The process of hiring shelter personnel depends on whether the facility is private or State-run. In Costa Rica, for example, hiring of technical staff - leadership, technical administration, legal counsel, psychologists and social workers - involves a competitive hiring process managed by INAMU's Human Resources Department. Food service, security and cleaning services are contracted out to external organizations that hire their own staff according to their own internal processes, but complying, also, with requirements provided by INAMU.

In private shelters, the managing foundation implements the hiring process including advertising open positions, reviewing resumes, interviewing candidates, and making the referral for selection to the organization's Board of Directors.

As mentioned, the vast majority of shelters are managed by local municipalities: in many countries the hiring process falls on the local government.

Only five countries report providing shelter staff with therapeutic support. Every country supervises shelter staff and provides some training, which in some countries only takes place when staff are first hired. The granting of licenses is done in accordance with existing labor law and in the majority of cases, fails to take into account the permanent physical and psychological toll of working on cases that involve domestic violence. Rotation of roles is not common – 8 countries report that there is no role rotation, four confirmed the rotation of roles, and 4 did not provide any data.

The objective of the shelters is fairly standard in all countries: to guarantee the personal safety of victims of domestic violence, promote resilience, facilitate transition to life outside the shelter and empower women to exercise their right to self-determination.

With respect to the services offered by the shelter, every single one emphasizes the security precautions they provide, which include conducting risk assessments and developing security plans. Security in shelters is directly connected to maintaining the secrecy of the location of the facility. This reality presents various challenges: on the one hand, if the location of the shelter is not publicly known, access for victims and survivors must take place through referrals from bodies such as the police, public prosecutors or organizations that specialize in domestic violence. In some countries, admission to a shelter can only take place if a victim files a complaint with the police; but bureaucratic procedures can result in delays to enter the shelter. On the other hand, in some countries, the involvement of the local or provincial police in the transport of the victim to the shelter has resulted in complaints of information leaks that have allowed the perpetrator to discover the location of the victim.

Similarly, all shelters provide psychological counseling, either at the facility itself or via an external provider; legal counseling and assistance; and escort of survivors to the police or courthouse to conduct necessary business with the authorities to receive external medical treatment. Every country also offers shelter residents the opportunity to participate in support groups for survivors of domestic violence.

Nine countries report that they do not provide financial assistance to shelter residents and 5 countries note that they can connect residents to third party organizations that can provide emergency financial support. Costa Rica, for example, can refer residents to the Mixed Institution for Social Welfare (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social) to facilitate a short-term economic subsidy for female users of Specialized Care and Shelter Centers (CEAAM), if needed. Argentina has “Acompañar”, a program that authorizes a six-month economic subsidy for women and sexually diverse victims of domestic violence.

The majority of countries report that they provide some kind of job training for shelter residents.

5. GENERAL TRENDS

In our general overview of domestic violence shelters, we have observed the following trends:

Increase in the number of shelters

We can use the First Hemispheric Report from MESECVI's Experts Committee, published in 2008, as a baseline. In that report, we identified a total of 201 shelters for women victims of domestic violence. In the Second Hemispheric Report, the States reported the existence of 298 shelters. In the current analysis, conducted in December 2020, data received from 16 countries¹⁸ identify at least 568 facilities. This number includes "alternative housing" provided by special programs, such as the one in Medellin, Colombia, which is based on single family homes especially set up to house women victims of violence and their families, as well as, space leased in boarding houses and hotels as in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

2008 / 18 countries	2012 / 26 countries	2020 / 16 countries
201	298	568

Legislative Alignment

The vast majority of shelters are regulated by legislation: in some cases at the national level, and in others at the provincial and/or municipal level. In general, however, shelter operations are aligned with the public policies, programs, and national plans designed to combat domestic violence.

Increase in institutional regulation

The original regulatory vacuum has been gradually replaced by Action Guides, proven protocols validated through experience and operational models in State-run, private, and mixed-model shelters.

Transition of shelter oversight from civil society to the State

In the last 20 years, the majority of States have assumed either partial or full responsibility for providing resources to shelters. The majority of shelters are run by the local government.

Specific budgetary provisions

We have noticed an increase in efforts by the States to appropriate funds in budgets for shelters, to better understand how much to invest in these resources, and, at the same time, earmark specific line items in municipal or national budgets to cover the maintenance of shelters for women.

Integration of shelters into domestic and international networks

The majority of countries include their shelters in both domestic and international shelter networks. In 2006, Latin America established the Inter-American Network of Women's Shelters (Red Interamericana de Refugios, Casas de Acogida, Albergues y Centros para Mujeres en Situación de Violencia), that also includes a global network of shelters.¹⁹ The first meeting of RIRE took place August 18 – 21, 2006 in Mexico City, where the movement to establish a global network of women's shelters was launched. The second meeting took place in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada in 2009, with a goal to develop an infrastructure that would allow the network to commence operations. In 2015 the Global Network of Women's Shelters organized the third Global Conference, welcoming delegates from 137 women's shelters located in every region of the world.²⁰ In Europe, Women against Violence Europe (WAVE) monitors the establishment and operation of women's shelters in every member country of the European Union. A survey²¹ conducted in 2015 revealed the existence of 1,747 shelters in 46 European countries, with the capacity to house 28,124 women. WAVE works to ensure that countries comply with the recommendations of the Council of Europe Task Force²² to combat violence against women that women's shelters be established in every region, with one family place per 10,000 inhabitants.

Restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic also impacted women's shelters in a variety of ways. Some countries shut down shelters entirely to avoid the spread of the virus through contagion; other countries required a negative test result prior to permitting access to a shelter. Countries also cut budgets for shelters, as in Mexico (70%) and Guatemala (90%), measures that led to protests by social organizations and in some cases, to the closure of shelters.

The pandemic trapped women between the recommendation from public authorities to remain at home and, hence, lose their employment, and the burden of providing educational support to children who were home from school, thus adding to their regular duties at home. We also saw an increase in cases of domestic violence resulting from the tension created by lengthy periods of in-home confinement. Further, since the organizations that provide specialized services also closed at the beginning of the pandemic, there was no way to file official complaints of violence. The closure of shelters deprived thousands of women in the region the ability to access safe spaces.

The CIM and the MESECVI made specific recommendations to States to address this issue, noting that, "[t]he infrastructure of shelters or places of refuge for women victims of violence and their families face capacity, health and budgetary limitations. This situation will become more complicated as confinement intensifies, so it is necessary to consider measures for excluding [the aggressor] from the home [...], and not only think of shelters for women and their families; as well as launching extraordinary temporary shelters; and/or enabling hotels and other accommodations for women, children, and older adults, with adequate budgets and care protocols."²³

6. COUNTRY ANALYSIS

Argentina

As was established earlier, there are currently 167 women's shelters in Argentina, the majority of them State-run. 22 are run by NGOs, and four are run by public-private partnerships. While there are shelters located in 21 of Argentina's 24 jurisdictions,²⁴ many are concentrated in the Province of Buenos Aires, where there are 63 shelters, and the City of Buenos Aires, which has five.

Management of the shelters is primarily the responsibility of the local municipal government (145 out of 167) and shelters are regulated by provincial laws and municipal ordinances. The municipality is also responsible for appointing and overseeing shelter leadership.

While Argentina did not provide information on exactly when shelters were established, there is data indicating that some shelters date as far back as the 1990s.²⁵ The State also did not provide information on funding allocated to cover the costs of shelters.

Women's shelters are regulated by national, provincial, and municipal law and regulations. At the national level, Law 26.485 provides, "Comprehensive Protection for the Prevention, Punishment, and Elimination of Violence Against Women in Interpersonal Relationships" (Article 10, section 6) guarantees, "transitional spaces for the care and housing of women who experience violence and whose presence in the home would pose an immediate threat to her or her family's physical, psychological, or sexual safety, to be focused on her immediate family, social ecosystem, and work environment."

Shelter oversight is addressed in the National Plans issued by the Ministry of Women. The current plan in effect is the National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence 2020 – 2022. This program focuses on driving a, "new paradigm that takes a comprehensive approach to promote public policies that create the conditions that guarantee that the people and groups of people most impacted by gender-based violence can achieve the goal of an autonomous life." The program is based on two main principles: "1) providing economic assistance equivalent to the Minimum Living Wage for a period of 6 consecutive months to women and LGBTQ+ persons at risk of gender-based violence; and 2) providing comprehensive support and access to psychosocial resources to program participants in coordination with provincial and local governments."²⁶

The responsibility for women's shelters at the national level lies with the Directorate of Shelters and Comprehensive Safe Houses within the Sub-secretariat for the Comprehensive Response to Gender-Based Violence, which did not submit any information on available resources or evaluation reports.

Protective measures must guarantee access to shelters to women, lesbians, transsexual persons, transvestites, bisexual persons, non-binary persons, intersex persons, gays, and other persons with non-heteronormative sexual identities along with their dependents who are at risk of or who are the victims of gender-based violence. Similarly, there are discussions on the establishment of networks to provide former shelter residents support as they exit the shelter and work to develop the skills associated with an increase in socioeconomic independence through programs managed by government ministries, gender-based organizations, and other local, provincial, and national entities.

Shelter capacity varies widely, ranging from the smallest shelters with room for two persons to the largest with room for 48. No information was provided on the age limits for children nor on the length of stay permitted. Further, we received no data on the existence of complaint procedures for shelter residents, criteria required for referrals, or on the number or functions of shelter personnel.

Care protocols exist in the majority of shelters, with the exception of those located in the Province of Misiones. In October 2020, the National Ministry of Women, Gender, and Sexual Diversity unveiled the Intervention Guide and Training Plan for Treatment of Victims of Gender-based Violence in Territorial Protection Facilities (Guía de Intervención y Plan de Formación para Dispositivos Territoriales de Protección de Personas en Situación de Violencia por Motivos de Género), as a training resource for members of interdisciplinary teams tasked to develop a comprehensive care approach in the “territorial facilities for comprehensive protection,” as shelters, safe houses, and other refuges for victims of domestic violence are known.

This initiative would, “involve actions for the prevention, assistance, protection and reinforcement of women’s access to justice, as well as a strengthening of the community networks for persons subject to gender-based violence, from an intersectional and diverse perspective, and taking into account the different forms of violence: domestic, institutional, reproductive, obstetric, in public spaces, in the media, in the workplace, and in public policy.”

The National Authority for the Comprehensive Protection of Victims of Gender-based violence has proposed the creation of a Unified National Registry of Shelter Admission, Follow-up and Exit of Women Victims of Domestic Violence. This unified registry would include three (3) sets of data: a) Territorial Protection Facilities, which would provide data on the specific shelter b) Case Information, which would provide the data on the person admitted to the shelters, and c) Relationship between the facility and the case, which would include the data of what took place between the women’s admission to and her departure from the shelter.

The recently created Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity, developed the “National Plan of Action against Gender-Based Violence 2020-2022,” in consultation with civil society

organizations located in the different provinces. The National Plan of Action includes the Acompañar Program (Support Program for Persons at Risk of Gender-Based Violence)²⁷ intended to provide short-term financial assistance²⁸ to offset the “unequal distribution of unpaid care that limits women’s and LGBTQ+ persons’ opportunities to access paid employment inside and outside the home, and when accessed, to allow the performance of the employment in equal conditions.”

As these plans have just been created and are currently in the process of being implemented, there are no available evaluation reports. We would hope that a monitoring mechanism would also be created, in order to identify the advantages and obstacles faced during their implementation.

Bolivia

Bolivia reports the existence of 23 women’s shelters distributed across the country’s nine departments. The first shelter was established in 2004. While the State reports that all shelters are State-run, there is at least one that is run in partnership with the “Gregoria Apaza” Center for Women’s Advancement. The State reported that with the exception of this one public-private shelter, the remaining ones are funded via the State.

Domestic violence shelters in Bolivia are regulated by national law 348, the “Comprehensive Law to Guarantee Women the Right to a Life Free from Violence,”²⁹ departmental laws, and municipal regulations. Article 24 of law 348 states that, “programs and treatment services will be organized, coordinated, and strengthened in the annual budget of every municipality, as permanent support measures for the Comprehensive Municipal Legal Facilities and Shelter and Temporary Safe Houses (Servicios Legales Integrales Municipales y las Casas de Acogida y Refugio Temporal).” The treatment provided in these facilities services must be prioritized, permanent, specialized, and multidisciplinary. They will coordinate with all relevant official government entities, in particular the Bolivian Police, the Judicial Branch, and healthcare institutions.”

All available care services must be extended to the children of the woman victim of domestic violence and her at-risk dependents.” Bolivia has a specific public policy and National Plan to combat violence.

The issue of shelter operations is addressed in the Comprehensive Public Policy for a Life of Dignity for the Women of Bolivia (Política Pública Integral para una Vida Digna de las Mujeres Bolivianas).³⁰ Bolivia also has an Action Plan against Femicide and Male Violence.³¹ The Municipal Shelter for Women Victims of Domestic Violence that is part of the Comprehensive Municipal Legal Facilities of the Autonomous Government of Sucre (Servicio Legal Integral Municipal del Gobierno Autónomo Municipal de Sucre) has a program, but we did not receive information on the specifics.

The authority to select shelter leadership and oversee shelter operations falls primarily to the autonomous municipal governments, who are also responsible for the monitoring mechanisms. Evaluations are carried out by government authorities, but we did not receive any reports.

Residency capacity varies, with the smallest shelters able to house 2) and the largest able to accommodate 50. There are no specific limits on the admission of children and the age limit is set at 18 for children of both sexes. The length of stay varies from one to six months but can be extended when needed. Admission criteria are provided in the operations guide for shelters and temporary safe houses for victims of domestic violence.

The number of shelter personnel varies from four to 17 people, depending on the size of the facility. The largest shelters employ a comprehensive multidisciplinary team that includes a psychologist, a social worker, an attorney, two technical support staff, a doorman, an administrative assistant, a doctor (provided by the municipality), a driver, a seamstress, a computer instructor, a pastry chef, an arts and crafts teacher, and a Municipal Integral Legal Service (SLIM) coordinator.³² While shelter staff do receive training, we did not receive information on the frequency of the sessions.

The objectives of the shelters are broad and include the following: the safety, treatment, and empowerment of the resident, the provision of psychological care and legal counseling, and the opportunity to participate in working groups. Shelters do not provide financial assistance or escort services to the police or other institutions for shelter residents.

Brazil

Brazil submitted 2 responses to the questionnaire about shelters for victims of domestic violence. The response from the National Women's Policy Secretariat, which is part of the Ministry for Women, Families and Human Rights reported the existence of 78 shelters as of August 2020. The National Secretariat for Social Welfare, an agency of the Ministry of Citizenship, provided data on 100 instances of safe houses. Together, the number of facilities for women victims of domestic violence provided by the 2) entities totals 178, and the data should be analyzed together.

Regarding the Shelter Units, with the exception of the Lar Espirita Esperidiao Prado Shelter in Rio Claro, which was the first shelter for victims of domestic violence established in the country on August 19, 1964 and which is privately run, most shelters in Brazil were created in the 1990s and later.

Domestic violence shelters managed by the Ministry for Women, Families and Human Rights are governed by the following laws:

- Organic Law for Social Welfare – (LOAS,1993) and subsequent amendments (Law N° 12.435, July 6, 2011, amending LOAS and providing for the organization of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS)).³³
- National Policy for Social Welfare – PNAS (2004)³⁴
- National Social Policy Framework³⁵
- Law Maria da Penha (Law 11.340 of 2006).³⁶

The Ministry of Citizenship maintains the following monitoring and follow-up mechanisms with respect to shelters:

- The SUAS survey, governed by Decree No. 7.334 signed October 19, 2010, is a monitoring process that collects data entered into an electronic form by the Ministries and Councils of Social Assistance in the states and municipalities. The goal of the survey is to develop data on the implementation of the country's social assistance policies; improve the operations of the SUAS and the quality of services provided to the public; identify the advances, limitations, and challenges of the institutionalization of the SUAS; and provide the government data that enables them to be transparent with the public and held accountable for their actions.³⁷
- The CadSUAS is the SUAS database that contains all the information related to the municipalities, the governing entity, the fund and the municipal and state councils, the social assistance team, and the organizations that provide the social assistance.³⁸

Shelter capacity varies from 2 to 70 places. While the majority of shelters will accept migrant, undocumented, disabled, and lesbian and transgender women, in some facilities, access is restricted to women who have been the victims of domestic violence.

In addition to fulfilling the overall objectives of safety, resiliency, transition out of the shelter and women's empowerment, shelters in Brazil encourage women to leverage an existing certifications and training network with an eye toward providing them with the tools they need to become productive members of society and build a life that allows them to overcome the violent situations that they escaped.

According to the National Reception Guidelines (2011),³⁹ safe houses, the other type of shelter in Brazil, should be spaces that guarantee the "(...) safety, protection, rebuilding of citizenship, rescue of self-esteem and the empowerment of women, based on feminist values." Safe Houses are public facilities – municipal, state, regional and/or consortia – that are committed to provide temporary emergency protective measures and safe spaces to house women in violent situations, either with or without their children.

The first Safe House was established in 1986 in Sao Paulo – the Group Home for Women Victims of Domestic Violence. There are currently 78 Safe Houses across Brazil, with the majority located in the southwest (25 facilities) and southern (13 facilities) regions of the country. The majority of these facilities depend on SUAS, except for the few that are part of the Public Security, Judicial, or Health systems. Most of the facilities are government-run (either by the municipality or the state) and confidential.

A report developed in 2019 by the Specialized Center for the Promotion and Defense of Women's Rights (Núcleo Especializado de Promoção e Defesa dos Direitos da Mulher) within the Public Defender's Office of the State of Sao Paulo notes that, "[e]ven though provided for in the Maria da Penha Law, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), dated 2013, there are only 155 facilities in 142 cities of the 5,570 Brazilian municipalities (2.5% of the total), where women threatened with death can find safe shelter.

Safe Houses are managed by the Secretaries of State or the Municipal Secretaries and exclusively accept women victims of domestic violence. There is no limit on the number or ages of children accepted, and capacity varies from 1 place to 60.

Operation of the Safe Houses is included in a public policy that governs the National Guidelines for Shelters,⁴⁰ as well as, the National Policy to Combat Violence against Women.⁴¹

The authorized length of stay in Safe Houses ranges from 90 to 180 days. Admission criteria stipulate that entry is reserved for women victims of violence at risk of death, and their family members. The State clarifies that entry is not granted to migrant or undocumented women, refugees, disabled women, or transgender women. Safe houses have entry and treatment protocols and residents are informed of their rights. The Safe Houses also take security precautions – escorting residents to the police, courthouse and to other appointments. They conduct working groups on violence and provide job training.

Chile

Chile has established 43 domestic violence shelters since 2007, and 1 shelter for victims of human trafficking (2012). The shelters are distributed across the 16 regions of the country and the center for victims of human trafficking is located in the metropolitan region surrounding Santiago de Chile, the national capital city. All facilities are State-run.

The most recent Annual Report on Domestic Violence Shelters (2019) published in January 2020 by SERNAMEG, defines shelters as, "temporary residential facilities established to provide protection to women 18 years and older, with or without children, who are at risk of serious risk of bodily harm or death due to violence committed by a partner or ex-partner." Children up to the age of 14 are accepted at the shelter as well.

Residents are referred to the facilities by the executive entities that correspond to municipalities, and not-for-profit foundations through direct transfer agreements.

Data on domestic violence shelters are collected in the Violence against Women Unit's Unified Registry System. In addition, there is an advisory and technical oversight department that, until the beginning of the pandemic, traveled to the different regions of the country and attended national conferences with the entities responsible for shelter operations. Once COVID-19 restrictions were implemented, they continued to operate, "on a remote model, using telephone calls, email, and video teleconference software. They divided the country into three separate sections – north, central, and south – and assigned direct advisory and oversight responsibilities to the regions that comprise these three geographical zones."⁴²

Domestic violence shelters are financed with public funds, but are distributed via third parties, who are contracted to the National Service for Women and Gender Equity (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género – SERNAMEG).

The annual budget for the domestic violence shelters is USD\$6,485,741 and USD\$164,520 for the shelter for victims of human trafficking. We are not able to calculate the cost of each individual facility because each one has different aspects, numbers of personnel, and offers a different range of professional services to residents.

Domestic violence shelters in Chile are not regulated by a national law, but this does not mean that they lack standards, as their operations are governed by a Public Policy implemented by public entities and/or private not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, departments, and healthcare services. Chile also has the National Plan to Combat Violence against Women 2019 – 2030 and the SERNAMEG Program for Treatment, Protection, and Reparations for Violence against Women. In addition, shelter operations are governed by the "Technical Guidelines for Domestic Violence Shelters."

The intervention model is "structured in different stages, beginning before admittance to allow the women to make the decision to stay at the facility. This phase is followed by the admission procedure which includes a psychological, social and legal assessment to determine the intervention services the woman will need followed by an Individual Intervention Plan (PII), developed in collaboration with the woman. Once the objectives of the plan have been fulfilled, the transition phase out of the shelter begins. The final phase includes post departure monitoring, and takes place over a defined period of time depending on how departure from the shelter occurred (departure, desertion, transfer, or withdrawal), beginning on the date of departure from the shelter."⁴³

Due to the intense social disruption that has taken place in Chile in the last few months and the reports of gender-based violence against women within the context of public demonstrations, admission criteria to domestic violence shelters have been expanded beyond victims of domestic violence to all women who could be impacted by the civil unrest.

Similarly, services for victims of domestic violence were reviewed, resulting in the launch of 2 pilot programs beginning in 2020: Legal Representation for Women at the Center for Precautionary Measures in Santiago and Continuing Treatment for women victims of serious violence within the context of a current or previous intimate relationship. In addition, a Center for Specialized Restorative Care has been set up for women victims of domestic violence.

Chile's model includes a follow-up mechanism to check up on women's progress once they have exited the shelter. The idea is to confirm that their lives have indeed changed or identify any future threats in a timely manner, in order to guarantee their safety if needed.

We would like to highlight the point that the evaluation reports generated in the Chilean model made it possible to identify critical gaps and find solutions or implement new programs, strengthen regional teams, perfect intersectoral coordination, and introduce improvements.

Colombia

The government of Colombia reports that there are nine shelters in the country. However, we have identified an additional shelter in Cali and an alternate model called, "Mecanismo de Hogares de acogida" in Medellín, for a total of ten shelters and 1 program. According to the State's report, the first shelter was established in 2001 - Bonds of Love in Colombia Foundation, Yumbo, Valle de Cauca. (Fundación Lazos de Amor por Colombia, Yumbo, Valle del Cauca).

The shelter in Cali, managed by the Ministry of Territorial Development and Social Welfare, can accommodate 40 people.⁴⁴

While some shelters in Colombia are State-run, 2 are run by NGOs and 1 is run by a public-private partnership. Laws 1098 and 1257 primarily govern shelter operations,⁴⁵ but there are 2 additional public policies that also apply – one on Early Childhood and the other on Women Victims of Violence.

Bogota City Council Resolution 584, adopted in 2015, provides the office of the Mayor of Bogota with public policy guidelines on women and gender equity in the national capital region, alongside other provisions.⁴⁶ There is also a specific program, established in Resolution 631 and adopted in 2015, institutionalizing domestic violence shelters within the framework of law 1257 enacted in 2008.⁴⁷

Colombia has also designed a Treatment Model in response to “Development Plan 2020 – 2024, A New Social and Environmental Contract for a 21st Century Bogota,” which includes Purpose No. 3: “to inspire confidence in the legitimate right to live without fear and sit at the center of civic culture, peace and reconciliation;” City Goal No. 22: “to reduce misogyny and violence against women;” Strategic Program No. 3: “prevention of gender-based violence and reduction of discrimination;” and Program No. 40: “so that that more women are able to live a life free from violence, feel safe, and access the justice system with trust.” The strategic goals of Program 40 include expansion of the operational models of shelters in the city to protect the life and physical safety of women and their family systems, prioritizing women in rural areas and an intermediate modality.”

There are currently 5 domestic violence shelters in Bogota, with an annual budget of USD\$ 1,025,000.

The Medellin model of domestic violence shelters (Hogares de Acogida) is made up of single family homes that “provide temporary housing, food, psychosocial and legal counseling to women victims of domestic violence...”. A risk assessment is conducted prior to placement in order to provide immediate, temporary care to women over 18 years of age and adolescents within the municipality of Medellin (both rural and urban areas) who have filed a complaint or informed the authorities of an incident of domestic violence perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner that threatens their life or physical security. Treatment is also available for both male and female minor children (under age 18) with medical documentation of slight or moderate physical or mental impairment or who have diminished responsibility for their actions. The service is available for 42 days and provides residents with housing, food, psychological care – individual and group – and legal counseling and assistance. At the same time, a personal or family support network will be set up to receive the woman upon departure from the program to provide her the support and assistance she needs. Psychological counseling is also available for the male aggressors (spouses, long-term partners, brothers, boyfriends, sons, etc.) who request it or who are sent by the competent authorities.”⁴⁸

All domestic violence shelters have bylaws and protocols governing admission, treatment, referrals and shelter exit. Shelters in Bogota also have a behavior guide for residents.

Selection of shelter leadership depends on the managing organization. In Bogota, that is the District Secretariat for Women; in shelters managed by public-private partnerships, that responsibility lies with the General Director; and in privately run shelters, the selection is made by the Board of Directors of the Foundation or the Assembly.

All shelters have oversight and audit mechanisms, and while these tools were reported as existing, no reports were made available.

Shelter capacity varies between 10 and 42 people, depending on the facility. Age limits for male children also vary – in one shelter the limit is 14 years of age, in another two it is 17 years of age, and it is 18 in those that remain. The authorized length of stay is between 1 and four months.

Entry requirements are different in each shelter, although the vast majority primarily admit women victims of domestic violence. In Bogota, shelters admit women who have been granted an Order of Protection by a competent authority, in addition to those who meet the criteria established in Resolution 631 passed by the Council of Bogota in 2015,⁴⁹ and women sent by one of the competent entities involved in the ongoing armed conflict.

The safe house in Buenaventura, which is run by a foundation, requires that a woman survivor of violence and death threats must meet the following conditions in order to be admitted to the shelter with her minor children:

- a) Be subject to an order of protection issued by a competent authority due to the risk to her physical security
- b) Be of the age of majority and a victim of gender-based or domestic violence as defined in Law 1257 of 2008 and/or within the context of the ongoing armed conflict as stipulated in Law 1448 of 2011.
- c) Lack support systems
- d) Not be a user of hallucinogenic drugs
- e) Not be diagnosed with a mental illness
- f) Not be homeless
- g) Not be a directly affected minor as those situations fall under the purview of a separate government entity.

Most shelters are staffed with exclusively female personnel and the number of employees can vary from six in the smallest shelter to 22 in the largest. In general, staff are composed of multidisciplinary teams who receive periodic training and are licensed as required by existing labor laws. The criteria for referral for other services depends on the needs identified and by residents' request.

Costa Rica

The Costa Rican government reports the existence of three Specialized Centers for Treatment and Housing for Women Victims of Violence and their Children. (CEAAM - Centro Especializado de Atención y Albergue para Mujeres Víctimas de Violencia, sus hijas e hijos).

At the beginning of the 1990s, there was 1 shelter located within the Center for Women and Families with 11 staff members, which could accommodate 2 families, but which did not provide any specialized professional services. This shelter was the first in the San Jose Metropolitan Area. At

the end of 1994, the NGO PROCAL opened a larger shelter with more capacity, and in 2001 management of the shelters was transitioned to CEFEMINA, another NGO. Then in 2002 and 2003, they were taken over by a private contractor. The shelter in the Atlantic zone opened in 1998; and the shelter currently in Occidente opened in 2002 in Puntarenas. Finally, in 2005, all shelters were moved under the institutional structure of Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INAMU).

There are CEAAM located in three provinces: San José, Alajuela and Limón - all State-run, with an annual budget of US\$600,000. They can accommodate up to 20 women and 60 children total – with the age limit for male children set at 13 years, with no exceptions. There is no age limit for female children.

Authorized length of stay in the shelters is limited to three months, with the option to extend if necessary.

Shelter admission criteria specify that shelters are intended for women victims of violence whose lives are at risk and who are able to care for themselves and their children, and victims of human trafficking. The shelters clarify that they are not designed to assist women in the following situations:

- Women who are unable to care for themselves
- Active drug users
- Women with untreated or unmedicated psychiatric conditions
- Women with a contagious or infectious disease. (Women currently seeking admission to shelters are required to undergo testing for COVID-19. If they return a positive test result, they are housed in a separate space adjacent to the shelter until they complete quarantine requirements.)

Shelters also accept migrant women, lesbians, and disabled women who are able to care for themselves.

Every shelter has a set of operating protocols. In general, when a woman is admitted, shelter staff conduct an interview to share shelter rules, their methodology, and respond to any concerns. The shelters also have a box only accessible by the organization's Comptroller of Services, where residents can submit confidential complaints about their treatment in the shelter.

Referrals to different facilities are affected when the lives of the woman and her children are no longer at risk or when her particular situation falls under the area of responsibility of a different institution. Minor women, regardless of whether they have children or not, are the responsibility of the National Child Welfare Agency (Patronato Nacional de la Infancia); women who are active drug users are transferred to the Institute of Alcohol and Drug Depen-

dency (IAFA); women with psychiatric conditions that preclude their residency at a shelter are referred to the National Psychiatric Hospital; and women whose disabilities impede their ability to live independently are referred to the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. In addition, all transactions related to the legal complaint are conducted in coordination with the corresponding judicial entities.

The legal framework for shelters in Costa Rica is determined by 2 laws: No. 7586, Law against Domestic Violence and Law No. 7499, ratifying the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women. The country also has also set up a five-year National Plan for the Treatment and Prevention of Domestic Violence (PLANNOVI).⁵⁰ Organizationally, shelters are part of an institutional service unit within the INAMU that also designates shelter leadership and is responsible for their oversight.

Each shelter is led by a Director and is managed by the Department of Gender-based Violence, Office of the Coordinator for Gender within INAMU. The Planning Unit of INAMU also produces quarterly management and assessment reports on each of the shelters.

Each shelter has 22 people on a staff comprised of 19 women and three men, including: one unit lead, one administrative lead, one attorney, one social worker, one adult psychologist, one pediatric psychologist five support staff, one educator contracted through the Ministry of Public Education, four food service staff, four security personnel, and two housekeepers.

Staff training for professional staff is conducted over the course of the year depending on each professional staff member's function. Shelters also provide training and sensitization courses on different topics related to gender-based violence for food service staff, security personnel, and housekeeping staff.

Professional staff – leadership, administrative lead, legal counsel, psychologists, and the shelter social worker – are recruited via a competitive process led by the INAMU Department of Human Resources. Support staff, including food service personnel, security personnel, and housekeeping, are contracted through a third party, and are selected based on job requirements provided by INAMU.

The Unit Leader is responsible for managing the shelter, professional staff is licensed according to INAMU requirements, and staff undergo an annual self-care process.

Domestic violence shelters provide the standard services, training, legal and psychological counseling and assistance, and social services and collaborate with other institutions when needed. They also provide job skills training and weekly physical education and cooking classes to residents.

While INAMU does not provide financial aid, they can refer residents in need to the Joint Social Aid Institute where they can obtain a short-term economic subsidy.

Ecuador

According to the report submitted by the Ecuadorian government, there are six shelters across the country, five of which are managed by NGOs: Casa de Refugio Matilde (Quito, 1990); Casa Amiga (Sucumbios, 2004); Casa María Amor (Cuenca, 2004); Casa de Primer Acogida Paula, (Orellana, 2004); and Casa Hogar de Nazareth, (Guayaquil, 2008). They belong to the National Network of Domestic Violence Shelters (Red Nacional de Casas de Acogida), established in 2008. The sixth shelter, Casa de la Mujer, was established in the capital city of Quito in 2020 by the municipal government.

The funding for domestic violence comes from both the State and NGOs and is distributed on annual basis as outlined below:

• Fundación Casa de Refugio Matilde (NGO):	US\$434,278
• Fundación María Amor (NGO):	US\$662,382
• Federación Mujeres de Sucumbios- Casa Amiga (NGO):	US\$830,418
• Corporación Casas del Hogar de Cristo- Hogar de Nazareth (NGO):	US\$278,594
• Fundación Ayllu Huarmicuna Mujeres y Familia, Casa Paula (NGO):	US\$573,963
• Casa de la Mujer, Quito (Municipal government)	US\$360,000

In addition to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, the laws that govern shelters in Ecuador include the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (Article 70);⁵¹ the Law for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women (Articles 1 – 3)⁵²; and the Comprehensive Organic Code of Criminal Justice (Article 155 – 159).⁵³

Every domestic violence shelter has by-laws and regulations. In shelters managed by NGOs, leadership is selected by the General Assembly of the Foundation and management responsibility is assumed by a legally designated representative in each shelter. While we are aware that there are mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, there are no reports available. In the municipal-led shelter in Quito, leadership is selected by the Director of the Municipal Patronage Unit of San Jose, and shelter management is shared by the Director of the Municipal Patronage Unit of San Jose, the Director of Technical Implementation, and the Shelter Coordinator.

Shelter capacity ranges from ten places in the smallest shelter (Casa Paula in Orellana) to 20 in the largest (Hogar de Nazareth in Guayaquil). The age limit for male children is 12 years

and female children are admitted up to 18 years. In the publicly run shelter in Quito, the age limit for children of both sexes is 12 years.

Shelter length of stay is limited to 6 months in both private and public facilities.

Admission criteria are broad and exclude only women and children with mental disabilities who require specialized care.

Casa de la Mujer, the municipal shelter in Quito, admits women victims of gender-based violence age 18 and over. They do not admit drug users, homeless women, or women with a diagnosed psychiatric condition. Admission is guaranteed to documented and undocumented migrant women and their children, but due to the pandemic, the building previously reserved for physically disabled women is now used for confinement or quarantine. Prior to admission, disabled or women with impairments are evaluated to ensure the shelter has the ability to provide adequate treatment. Also, there have been no reports of lesbian or transgender women requesting admission to the shelter. The shelter is staffed by eleven women who receive training every 2 months and are hired by the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Technical Implementation of the Municipal Patronage Unit of San Jose. The Unit Director is responsible for final hiring approval. In addition to traditional services, the shelter also arranges medical appointments in the Public Health Service for women during their stay and provides educational support for women and their children. Shelters do not provide financial assistance.

The remaining shelters also have admission and treatment protocols. Residents are informed of their rights, upon entry, and are provided with a mechanism to file complaints. Referrals to other facilities depend on the individual needs of each woman and are based on a treatment roadmap.

There is an average of seven staff members in each shelter, and these are, primarily, women. The core team includes a psychologist, a social worker, an educator, facilitators, and an administrator, all of whom receive training approximately every six months. There are established recruiting and hiring processes and there is no role rotation.

The shelters' objectives are to guarantee personal safety, promote resiliency and empowerment and facilitate residents' transition to life outside the shelter. Residents receive psychological and legal assistance as well as an escort to police and other transactions. Every shelter also has a work group on violence and job training. Financial assistance for residents depends on the managing entity of each shelter.

El Salvador

El Salvador has five shelters located in three departments (San Salvador, Cabañas and Usulután). Two of the shelters are operated by NGOs, but receive funding from their local municipalities and coordinate their activity with them.

We do not have any information on the budget for each shelter. The report we received indicates that one of the shelters run by an NGO, CAMUJER in Sensuntepeque, receives US\$30 to US\$50 from the municipality per month. It is unclear whether that is the total amount for the shelter that the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer or ISDEMU) runs or if that is the amount granted per resident. While the shelter run by the shelter in San Salvador (Shelter for the Treatment and Protection of women victims of violence) mentions an amount, it notes that the US\$1,064,775 is the budget for the Comprehensive Program for a Life Free from Violence for Women (Programa Integral para una Vida Libre de Violencia para las Mujeres), and the shelter is just one component of the program.

The legislation that regulates domestic violence shelters in El Salvador is the Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free from Violence (LEIV, Art. 26)⁵⁴ There is also a National Policy for the Access of Women to a Life Free from Violence⁵⁵ and operation of the shelters is included in the Five-year Action Plan for the National Policy for the Access of Women to a Life Free from Violence 2016-2021.⁵⁶

With respect to rules and regulations, only the shelter run by ISDEMU reports having guidelines for the accreditation and operation of shelters, as well as, a guide for monitoring and evaluation.⁵⁷ Both instruments are currently being updated as part of the United Nations essential services package for women and girls subject to violence.

Nomination and designation of shelter leadership depends on the managing entity. For the shelter managed by ISDEMU, this responsibility falls on the Board of Directors of ISDEMU. For the shelter located in the Municipality of Sensuntepeque (Cabañas), which is run by a public-private partnership, the municipality itself makes the decision, and the in the mixed management (public-private) shelter in the Municipality of Santiago de María (Usulután), leadership is chosen by APROCSAL, the NGO that manages the shelter.

Leadership for the shelter for women victims and witnesses of violence run by the Justice system is selected by the Executive Technical Unit of the Justice Sector (Unidad Técnica Ejecutiva del Sector Justicia - UTE) and for the shelter for migrants, leadership is chosen by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Pública - MJSP).

There are no monitoring or evaluation mechanisms, and therefore no reports were provided.

Shelter capacity varies: the smallest can accommodate one family of four and the largest can house 15 women and 10 children of both sexes up to age 10.

There is no limit on the length of stay, which depends on the specific details of the cases filed by the women.

Admission criteria require an interview in order to determine if the woman is a victim of domestic violence, identify her risk level, and obtain her consent to enter the shelter. The report notes ISDEMU shelter offers protection to all women whose physical security is at risk, and has extended that protection to women with an irregular migratory status, lesbians, disabled women and transgender women.

In terms of treatment protocols, only the shelter managed by ISDEMU has specific guidelines and protocols. In the other shelters, these protocols are either currently under development or simply do not exist.

Referrals to other facilities depend on the individual needs of the women. All women receive psychosocial and medical treatment and accompaniment to other institutions if needed. For psychological treatment, they are referred to ISDEMU and for health care, they are referred to the Ministry of Health. All transfers are coordinated with the National Civil Police .

The number of personnel employed by shelters varies from three in the smallest shelter to 23 in the largest. Four (4) shelters did not provide information on training for staff, with the exception of the shelter managed by ISDEMU, which reported providing training, including self-care, every three months. Staff provide residents with psychological and crisis counseling, legal guidance, assistance in developing a life plan, identification of support networks, a security plan, educational support for women, adolescents and children, medical treatment, assistance, and vocational and training workshops.

Shelters also provide the standard services; the shelter managed by ISDEMU also promotes economic independence and provides financial assistance in coordination with other entities. Two of the shelters provide job training.

Guatemala

There are currently eight shelters operating in Guatemala: four of them are part of the Integrated Support Centers for Women (Centro de Apoyo Integral para Mujeres – CAIMUS) managed by the Guatemalan's Women's (Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres - GGM), located in Guatemala City, Escuintla, Suchitepéquez and Rabinal y Baja Verapaz. There is also the Nuevos Horizontes CAIMU in Quetzaltenango and another in the Asogen CAIMU in Chimaltenango. The Survivors Foundation (La Fundación Sobrevivientes) manages a shelter in the capital and

the Asociación Ak'Yu'Am (Nueva Vida) operates a shelter in Cobán, Alta Verapaz. Five (5) of the CAIMUS are funded by the State. The remaining 3 that previously received governmental funding have been maintained by private donors since 2017.

The first shelter in Guatemala was established in 1993 by the Nuevos Horizontes Association of Quetzaltenango.

Shelters are one of the various services the CAIMUS offers. "It is a safe and peaceful space for women who are at high risk and lack secure family support. It gives them the opportunity to begin the process of empowerment, allowing them to reflect and make informed decisions, while they consider all the options available to them as they confront the issue of violence... While the shelter is part of the CAIMUS, it is physically located in a close-by, but separate location to ensure safety."⁵⁸

Analysis of the funding CAIMUS receives must take into account that the shelter is only one of the services they offer, and not all their funding goes to the shelter. The government information on the annual State budget for five of CAIMUS:

• Guatemala:	US\$393,600
• Rabinal- Baja Verapaz -	US\$153,119
• Suchitepequez -	US\$130,872
• Escuintla -	US\$141,074
• Quetzaltenango-	US\$127,302

According to an NGO report,⁵⁹ the government has included a budget item for treatment for violence against women to be provided through the CAIMUS since 2007.

Every CAIMUS has rules, regulations, and administrative manuals. Shelter leader is named by the Executive Coordination and the shelter is managed by the Board of Directors and management.

In accordance with the guidelines in the administrative manual, monitoring mechanisms for the CAIMUS are shared by the National Coordinator for the Prevention of Interfamilial and Domestic Violence against Women (Coordinadora Nacional para la Prevención de la Violencia Intrafamiliar), the Presidential Secretariat for Women (Secretaria Presidencial Secretaria Presidencial de la Mujer), the CAIMUS National Coordination, and the CAIMUS Regional Coordination.

The law that governs shelters is the Law against Femicide and other forms of violence against women. There is also the National Policy for the Promotion and Development of Women,⁶⁰ which joins the National Policy for the Prevention of Violence and Crime, Civic Safety and Peaceful Coexistence 2014 – 2034 of the Ministry of the Interior.⁶¹ Further, there

is a long-term plan to combat violence - the SEPREM National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Interfamilial and Domestic Violence against Women 2020-2029 (Plan Nacional de Prevención y Erradicación de la Violencia Intrafamiliar y contra las mujeres – PLANNOVI) and the National Plan for the Prevention of Violence (Plan Nacional de Prevención de la Violencia) of the Ministry of the Interior.⁶²

According to the government's report, some CAIMUS have evaluation mechanisms that are conducted through the Guatemalan Women's Group (GGM), a not-for-profit organization. While evaluation reports do exist, none were submitted with the government's response to the questionnaire.

Shelter capacity ranges from one available space in the smallest facility to 36 places in the largest; and space for children ranges from two to 24. The age limit for male children is 12 in some facilities and 13 in others. There are no age limits for female children.

Length of stay also varies by facility. In the smallest shelters, it ranges from one to three days. In the largest shelters, the length of stay is unlimited, lasting for the duration of the protective order or protection mandated by a judge for adolescents and women when they resolve the situation and decide to transition out of the shelter.

The CAIMUS admits women survivors of gender-based violence. All women must arrive with documentation, preferably a police report and security protection. In general, admission is granted to women over the age of 18 and adolescent victims of domestic violence in possession of a court order, and acceptable mental capacity. Shelters will also receive migrant women and refugees in emergency situations.

Shelter residents are informed of their rights, are permitted to participate in the life of the shelter, and have access to the various services offered by the CAIMUS.

A 6 person team, made up of five women and one man. All except the driver, who is the male, stay at the shelter in shifts. The driver is on-call. In addition, there is an interdisciplinary team that provides comprehensive support in all the areas of services the CAIMUS offers, as well as, treatment for the women and children in the shelter. They support the organization and assistance of the activities, operations, and arrangements from admission to the shelter to departure. Staff receive bi-monthly training and are selected through an external job posting. Staff have access to a self-care process and functions are not rotated.

Shelter objectives prioritize the physical security of the residents, increasing their resiliency, and facilitating their transition out of the shelter.

Honduras:

Honduras reports the existence of eight shelters for women victims of violence. The first shelter in the country, Casa Refugio NOVA - No Violence Again, is run by an NGO. It was established in Tegucigalpa on June 5, 1996 by the Association for Quality of Life (Asociación Calidad de Vida). Each shelter is located in a different department; 3 are State-run, 3 are run by NGOs, and 2 are run by public-private partnerships.

Four of the eight shelters reported their annual budget (in \$US):

• Casa Refugio de la Mujer de Puerto Cortés (Municipal government):	US \$ \$20,833
• Fundación Casa Hogar Santa Rosa, Copán (NGO)	US \$ \$100,000
• Siguat-Milenum, Intibuca (NGO)	US \$ \$100,000
• - Casa Nova, Tegucigalpa (NGO)	US \$ \$176,800

State funds are furnished by the municipal governments.

The following laws and plans govern the operation of all shelters in Honduras:

- Law against domestic violence and amendments⁶³
- Second Plan for Equality and Gender Equity 2021-2022⁶⁴
- National Plan to combat violence⁶⁵

In San Pedro Sula, the shelter is also governed by the Anti-violence Program of the Municipal Bureau for Women (Programa de Violencia de la Oficina Municipal de la Mujer).

In general, shelters are subject to operational and care protocols and statutes. Selection of leadership and management of operations depend on the entity that runs the shelter. In Choluteca, for example, the Anti-Violence Network in the General Assembly has that responsibility; in Civil Society Organisations, it is the decision of the foundation assembly; and in others it is the local government.

With respect to monitoring, the Choluteca Center for Comprehensive Care for Women (CAIM) reports that the Center for the Rights of Women (CDM - Centro de Derechos de la Mujer), a Civil Society Organization, is responsible for its oversight. Other shelters are monitored by municipal governments some report no monitoring at all or did not provide any information on this topic.

No information was provided on mechanisms of evaluation, and there are no reports that would permit insight into the obstacles, challenges, or even achievements of the shelters.

Shelter capacity ranges from six women in the smallest, to 20 women in the largest. Casa NOVA reports that it can take in 100 women and 200 children per year. There are some age limits for male children. The Foundation Casa Hogar in Santa Rosa, Copán (Fundación Casa Hogar Santa Rosa, Copán) does not permit male children over the age of 10, a shelter in San Pedro Sula imposes a 14-year age limit, and the other six shelters in the country limit the age of male children to 12. There is no age limit for female children.

The maximum length of stay in shelters also varies. Three shelters limit residency to a maximum of three months, two shelters indicate that there is no limit on length of stay, which they determined based on the specific needs of the women seeking refuge. The remaining shelters did not provide information on this topic.

Admission criteria primarily refer to women victims of domestic violence. Admission criteria for the San Pedro Sula Shelter are as follows: women victims of domestic violence, referred by the justice system and groups that protect women's rights; who are over 18 years of age; and who enter and depart the shelter voluntarily. The Casa Hogar Santa Rosa de Copán clarifies that they admit women who have suffered gender-based domestic violence and women victims of human trafficking. They do not admit women with mental illnesses or infectious/contagious diseases because they do not have the appropriate staff to provide adequate care in these types of situations.

The majority of shelters in Honduras inform women of their rights upon admission to the shelter. Residents are permitted to contribute to life in the shelter and participate in activities, but they are not involved in decision-making. In general, women's participation in the life of the shelter is outlined in the protocols of care. In some shelters, referrals to other facilities are based on the individual resident's case. At the Hogar Santa Rosa, Copán there is a Care Roadmap that begins as soon as a woman enters the shelter, and she can be seen by a social worker or a psychologist and then move on to obtain legal counseling. Residents at the Shelter Casa Nova are referred externally when they require a service not available at the shelter.

The number of personnel working in the shelters ranges from three in the smallest shelter to 14 in the largest. In general, shelter staff are women. In one shelter staffed by four people, there is an Administrator (female), a fundraiser (female), a Coordinator (female), and Security (male). In another with nine all female staff members, there is a Director, an Administrator, an attorney, a psychologist, a social worker, general support staff, and a National Police Officer. The Casa Nova Shelter has a hiring guide, and the shelter in Copán reports that they solicit resumes, select candidates, conduct interviews, and choose the applicants with the highest number of points on a scale. The other six shelters did not provide information on shelter staff or hiring practices. There is no rotation of roles and no special licenses are required.

Half of the shelters conduct periodic training for staff. One shelter provides monthly training and the others provide it either semi-annually or annually.

With respect to the types of services available to residents, 5 of the shelters report offering basic services. The Shelter Casa Hogar in Santa Rosa, Copán and the Shelter Siguat Milanum in Intibuca) highlight that they provide financial assistance. The remaining shelters did not provide any information on this topic.

Mexico

In Mexico, there are 72 shelters for women victims of domestic violence: 34 run by civil society organizations, four sponsored by private funding, and 34 run by the State. Shelters in Mexico have existed since 1996, when the first two were established. There is also a National Domestic Violence Shelter Network that includes 44 of the shelters.

Since 2003, domestic violence shelters in Mexico are funded from the federal budget, increasing from a budget of \$2 million the first year to \$40 million in 2011. Shelters have several sources of funding, but civil society organizations and public institutions are autonomous and the only entity to provide information regarding the use of the resources is the Ministry of the Treasury and Public Credit.

The Federal funds for domestic violence shelters have been earmarked in Volume I of the Expenditure Budget. The official document that lists the resources approved for use in the Annex for Expenditures for Gender Equality, also known as Annex 13. Class 12, Program 20, Action Type 2, Number 448 refers to, “subsidies for shelters and care facilities outside of shelters for women victims of violence.”⁶⁶ For Fiscal Year 2020, \$ 405,003,76 mexican pesos (US\$ 20,250,188) was earmarked for these facilities in Volume I of the Federal Expenditure Budget.

The law that regulates domestic violence shelters in Mexico is the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence.⁶⁷ Article 55 stipulates that shelters should be safe spaces for victims, and that their location should remain hidden from unauthorized persons.

There is also a National Development Plan that addresses domestic violence shelters in Objective 12, paragraph 5 – Specific Strategies, special prevention of violence and crime⁶⁸ and a National Emergency Plan to guarantee the physical security, safety, and lives of women and girl children in Mexico.⁶⁹ In addition, the Support Program for Specialized Shelters for Women Victims of Domestic Violence and their children was developed for Fiscal Year 2020.⁷⁰

Each shelter has a notarized certificate that establishes the institutional structure and the protection and treatment objectives for women in violent situations for that facility. Each shelter is autonomous, and confers sufficient authority on a legal representative identified in

the constituting documentation. Shelter leadership is responsible for managing the facility in a way that optimizes its operation.

The Federal Public Administration conducts oversight and monitoring activities, through the institution that authorizes resources for the operation of shelters. Until 2019, the institution responsible was the Ministry of Health, through the National Center for Gender Equity and Reproductive Health (CNEGSR).

Beginning in 2020, responsibility for shelters transitioned to the Ministry of Welfare (Secretaría de Bienestar) through the National Institute for Social Development (Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Social - INDESOL). Federal Public Administration evaluations are conducted by the institutions that distribute the funds earmarked in the Expenditure Budget for the operation of shelters. As with oversight, the responsible entity is INDESOL.

While we did receive information that there are evaluation reports that use criteria established by the institutions that distribute the funds earmarked in the Expenditure Budget for the operation of shelters, no reports were submitted with the response to the questionnaire.

Shelter capacity varies depending on the size of the shelter. Some shelters can house 4 nuclear families, while larger ones can house 21 nuclear families and above. Some shelters, but not all, will also accept both male and female children up to the age of 18.

Article 57 of the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence fixes the length of stay in domestic violence shelters at three months, stating, "Women victims of domestic violence are limited to a maximum of three months in a shelter, unless the physical or psychological damage they suffered persists or they are still at risk."⁷¹

According to the Shelter Treatment Guidelines, admission to women's shelters is reserved for the following: "Women victims of domestic violence, of legal age, either alone or accompanied by their minor children, and who have been evaluated and determined to be in a high-risk situation by an accredited center or institution and who lack support networks. Women under the age of 18 in an intimate relationship, as well as, male and female children and adolescents who have experienced some form of gender-based violence that puts their life and physical integrity at risk, can also be admitted to shelters after evaluation and referral to the shelter by an accredited center or institution or a petition signed by their mother and/or father, legally designated guardian or parental authority. When this requirement cannot be met, admittance can also be gained through a petition submitted by the Public Prosecutor for Minors and Families of the DIF, the competent judge, and in emergencies by the Office of the Public Prosecutor, as a precautionary measure."⁷²

Migrant women, refugees, undocumented women and women subject to discrimination for other reasons, are also granted admission to shelters.

Each shelter has its own protocols and processes to admit residents and their children, when applicable. Women are informed of their rights immediately upon admission. While the decision to enter a shelter is voluntary, residents are required to sign a statement confirming their stay is voluntary. Residents can participate in the life of the shelter and have access to a box where they can file confidential complaints about their treatment in the facility.

Referrals to other facilities are made when residents and/or their children, when applicable, suffer from second or third degree injuries, serious illnesses, psychiatric conditions, or are disabled.

Shelter staff size varies with the size of the facility. However, the Shelter Care Guidelines recommend that the minimum staff for a domestic violence shelter should include⁷³ the following: one director, one social worker, one psychologist, one attorney, one nurse, one educator, one administrative assistant, one IT professional, one indigenous language translator, two security guards, one driver, and one housekeeper.

The functions of the team members depend on their profession. The Shelter Care Guidelines dedicate a chapter to each one of the functional areas. Personnel receive training in the subject matter that includes content that has been approved by the institution responsible for the distribution of the funds designated for shelters. As previously noted, until 2019, the institution responsible was the Ministry of Health, through the National Center for Gender Equity and Reproductive Health (CNEGSR) and beginning in 2020, became the responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare (Secretaría de Bienestar) through the National Institute for Social Development (Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Social - INDESOL). Each shelter manages its own hiring process, and personnel receive emotional support counseling in both individual and group settings. There is no role rotation.

Shelter objectives are to guarantee the personal safety of residents, promote resiliency, and facilitate transition out of the shelter. Security precautions are taken when transporting residents to the shelter and to medical appointments and court. Women whose lives are considered to be in extreme danger can be transferred to a shelter in another federal jurisdiction.

Overall, shelters in Mexico provide all the standard services, with the exception of financial assistance, and residents can attend working groups on violence, group therapy, and other educational courses.

Panama

There are 2 women's shelters in Panama, both State-run. The first shelter, the Casa Segura Nueva Vida, was established in 1994 in Panama City and has a current annual operating budget of US\$312,219. The other, Casa Segura de la Mujer, was established in Chiriquí in 2008, and has an annual operating budget of US\$104,076.

The laws that regulate shelters are as follows:

- Law 4, dated January 29, 1999
- Law 71, dated December 23, 2008
- Official Gazette 27305, dated June 10, 2013
- Law 82, dated October 24, 2013
- International, Regional, and Domestic Commitments on Violence against women

In addition, Panama has public policies issued by its Directorates on Human Rights⁷⁴ and Human and Economic Development as well as in the National Plan to Combat Violence against Women developed by the National Women Institute (Instituto Nacional de la Mujer, INAMU). There is also an Operations Manual published in the Official Gazette 27305, dated June 10, 2013.

Shelter leadership is selected by the General Director of INAMU, who is also responsible for shelter management.

According to information provided by the State, there are no monitoring or follow-up mechanisms for domestic violence shelters or evaluation reports.

With respect to capacity, the shelter in Panama City is able to house nine women, their children and/or at-risk female dependents. The shelter in Chiriquí can accommodate eight women with their children and/or their at-risk female dependents as well as one woman with disabilities. There is no limit on the number of children that can stay, but all children must be accompanied by their mother.

The age limit for male children is 12, with no exceptions; there is no age limit for female children.

The length of stay at the shelter in Panama City is up to three months, with the possibility for an extension when recommended by a risk assessment. The length of stay in the shelter in Chiriquí is up to six months.

Admission criteria stipulate that domestic violence shelters are intended for women over 18 years of age who are the victims of life-threatening violence. Admission is voluntary. Exceptions to these criteria include women with addictions to harmful and illegal substances

and/or who are accompanied by others with health conditions that require care from specialized personnel (psychiatric patients that could jeopardize the harmony and safety of other residents and technical staff). The shelter in Chiriqui also requires that applicants submit a negative COVID-19 test prior to admission. Shelters do not discriminate or restrict admission due to nationality, ethnicity, or religious beliefs – the only requirement for entry is that the women be in a violent situation or at risk of death.

Both shelters maintain admission and care protocols – residents are informed of their rights upon entry and are permitted to participate in the life of the shelter. Referral criteria to other facilities are outlined in the Care Flowchart in the Operations Manual and in the Treatment Guidelines for Victims of Violence.

The all-female, twelve-person team on staff at the Casa Segura de Panamá shelter fulfills the functions outlined in the Operations Manual (Official Gazette no. 27305, dated June 10, 2013): one administrator, two administrative assistants, three auxiliary staff, one general services staff, one kitchen staff, one social work staff, one psychologist, one attorney, and one child-care assistant. The Casa Segura de la Mujer shelter in Chiriqui has three staff members: two women (the Administrator and a manual laborer) and a male driver.

Panama did not provide any information on the type or frequency of training for shelter staff, who are recruited and hired by INAMU's. However, the report confirms that shelter personnel do receive training. With respect to licensing, shelter staff are covered by the Internal Regulations of the National Institute for Women (INAMU) General Management and the Department of Human Resources. The roles are governed by skills profiles, with specialized training on violence against women and children.

The shelter objectives are familiar – to protect the lives and safety of the residents. Shelters implement security precautions and conduct risk assessments. Residents have access to legal counseling and are escorted to the police, courthouse and to conduct other transactions. No financial support is provided. The shelter in Panama City also provides residents with job training.

Paraguay

According to the government's report, there are two domestic violence shelters in Paraguay: the Mercedes Sandoval Home for Women Victims of Violence, established in 2010 in Villa Elisa, Central Department and the Women's Shelter of Curuguaty, established in 2014 in the Department of Canindeyu. Both shelters are State-run and are managed by the General Directorate against all forms of violence within the Vice-Ministry for the Protection of the Rights of Women.

The budget provided in the report (Gs. 24,079,011,239, (US\$3,510,059) corresponds to the total budget for the organization that manages both shelters.

The laws that govern the shelters are Law No. 5777/16 “for the Comprehensive Protection of Women from All Forms of Violence” and Regulatory Decree No. 6973. There is also the Fourth National Plan for Equality⁷⁵ and the Second National Plan to combat violence against women 2015-2020, approved by Resolution No. 5140 in 2016.⁷⁶

Similarly, Paraguay has designed a Program for the Comprehensive Treatment of Women Victims of Violence and Human Trafficking.⁷⁷ Resolution No. 294/10, sets forth the administrative guidelines for the operation of the Mercedes Sandoval Home for Women Victims of Violence.

Shelter leadership is named by the highest institutional authority via resolution. Responsibility for shelter management falls under the General Directorate against all forms of violence within the Vice-Ministry for the Protection of the Rights of Women.

The mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation are government-led. In 2016, the Ministry of Women presented the Evaluation of the Services for the Prevention, Treatment and Protection of Violence against Women. This report was supported by the European Union.⁷⁸

With respect to shelter capacity, the Mercedes Sandoval Home for Women Victims of Violence can accommodate 50 women and their children; and the Women’s Shelter of Curuguaty has space for 25 women and their children.

The age limit for male children is 14 years. There is no age limit for female children.

There is no limit to the length of stay in both shelters.

Admission criteria stipulate that the shelters are intended for women with no other resources or family support and whose lives are in imminent danger. There are no restrictions on nationality, disability or sexual orientation. Since its inception, the Mercedes Sandoval Home for Women Victims of Violence has housed 15 foreign women with 19 children, nine disabled women with eleven children with some form of disability, and two lesbian women. The Women’s Shelter of Curuguaty has admitted five disabled women with a total of six children.

Care and treatment protocols are outlined in the Manual for treating victims of gender-based and domestic violence and human trafficking. Upon admission, residents are informed of the shelter rules of coexistence, as well as, their rights as established in Law No. 5,777/16 “Law for Comprehensive Protection for Women against all forms of violence.”

Residents participate in the life of the shelter with the assistance of staff, including, among other tasks, food preparation, maintaining the cleanliness of their respective spaces, and engaging in activities with their children. They also work with the social worker to begin the process of reintegrating back into the labor market, attending medical appointments, receiving psychological treatment, and providing educational support to their children. Referrals to other facilities depend on the needs of the resident and according to the recommendations of shelter personnel.

The shelter in Villa Elisa has 6 personnel on its all-female staff: the coordinator, a social worker, an educator, a psychologist and assistants, as well as 1 police officer. The shelter in Curuguaty has five people on staff – four females, and 1 male: the coordinator, a psychologist, a psychologist and assistant, and a driver.

The responsibilities of each role are set out in granular detail in the law that govern the shelters. Staff receive regular training from shelter professionals on the prevention, treatment, and protection of women victims of violence, as well as, on referrals and case coordination with other institutions. During 2020, as part of the “Paraguay protects women, children and adolescents from gender-based violence during the COVID-19 emergency,” project, shelter staff received virtual training on gender perspective, the cycle of violence, treatment protocols and referrals in compliance with Law No. 5777/16. In addition, training on feedback for the treatment of women victims of violence was also developed.

Shelter personnel are selected through a competitive process and staff receive therapeutic support. In 2019, this included a self-care workshop, “I take care of me, I take care of you,” which focused on helping shelter staff develop self-care strategies to protect their mental health and prevent burnout, both at the individual and team levels. The workshop was an initiative of the Ministry of Women, with the support of the Pan-American Health Organization. The workshop addressed the concept of compassion fatigue and its implications for those who work directly with victims and survivors of sexual assault/domestic violence. It encouraged participants to identify the symptoms of compassion fatigue, as individuals and, as a group, and what personal and institutional remedies could be adopted to both manage and avoid it.

Similarly, there is an effort to encourage awareness of the physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional self-care activities linked to personal wellbeing, and the importance of communication, cooperation and harmony on work teams to ensure the effectiveness of the institution. In addition, staff are encouraged to learn specific techniques (including physical and mental relaxation), to increase compatibility with others in the workplace, reduce the level of compassion fatigue and establish better personal and institutional self-care.

There is no role rotation in the shelters, and professional licensing complies with applicable labor regulations.

Shelter objectives are standard and they offer all typical shelter services, with the exception of financial assistance. Only the shelter in Villa Elisa organizes working groups on violence and both shelters provide job training for residents.

Peru

There are 34 domestic violence shelters (HRT) in Peru, the first established in 1999. They are distributed across each of the departments, with the majority of them six located in Lima, the national capital.

The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (El Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables - MIMP) is the Executive Authority responsible for national and sectoral policies on women and the promotion and protection of vulnerable populations. Its mission is to design, establish, promote, implement, and monitor public policies that support and empower women and vulnerable populations. It has jurisdiction over, among other areas, the promotion and strengthening of the inclusion of a gender perspective in public and private institutions; governmental policies, plans, programs, and projects; the promotion and protection of the human rights of women; the prevention, protection, and treatment of domestic violence; promotion and protection of vulnerable populations; exercise of the steering role over its areas of jurisdiction; and other responsibilities assigned to it by law. The General Directorate for Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination (Dirección General de Igualdad de Género y No Discriminación - DG-IGND) is the entity within the MIMP, reporting directly to the Vice-Ministry for Women, which controls and evaluates public policies on gender equality and non-discrimination.

According to the Technical Report of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP),⁷⁹ the HRT are essential in the fight to guarantee the protection, support, and recuperation for women victims of domestic violence and their impacted family members. Domestic violence shelters (HRTs) were established in Law No. 28236, and their regulation approved by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social – MIMDES) Supreme Decree No. 007-2005.

Later, Law No. 30364 to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate violence against women and family members and its regulation, incorporated specific provisions for the establishment and registry of HRTs.

Within this framework, the MIMP approved Ministerial Resolution No. 150-2016-MIMP, which includes the guidelines for treatment and operation of the shelters, criteria for referral to the shelters, and the basic shelter internal operational model. Similarly, Ministerial Resolution

No. 153-2016-MIMP approved General Directive No. 011-2016-MIMP/DGCVG, “Registration Regulations for Temporary Shelters.”

The regulations allow for shelters to be managed by private organizations, local and regional governments or by the MIMP itself. The General Directorate for Gender-based Violence (Dirección General contra la Violencia de Género - DGCVG) is responsible for accreditation and registry of the shelters. The MIMP, thus, has 2 main obligations, depending on the organization responsible for the management of the shelter: 1) if the MIMP manages the shelter through the National Aurora Program (Programa Nacional Aurora), they comply with the agreements that govern shelter implementation and management; 2) if a shelter is managed by a private organization or a local or regional government, the MIMP is responsible for accrediting and registering the shelter through the DGCVG.

All shelters are subject to Law No. 30364 to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence against Women and their family members.⁸⁰ There is also a National Plan against violence and applicable statutes and regulations. Shelter leadership is selected according to its managing entity: for State-run shelters, this process is conducted through the MIMP according to the Treatment Guidelines for public and private temporary domestic violence shelters. Shelters managed by civil society organizations or charitable organizations follow their own hiring processes.

Management of the shelters is the responsibility of different entities or programs. In some State-run shelters, management falls to the MIMP’s Aurora Program, which is present in various municipalities. In other cases, management is the responsibility of the charitable organization. In other municipalities, such as in Huamanga, Huancayo or Satipo, shelter management is the responsibility of the municipality itself. In privately run shelters, NGOs oversee shelter management.

There are existing evaluation mechanisms, known as Consultative Bodies (Instancias de concertación), as well as, governmental evaluation mechanisms, but no evaluation reports were submitted in the country’s response to the questionnaire.

Shelter capacity for adult women and their children varies between four and 30, depending on the size of the individual facility.

The age limit for male and female children is eleven years in State-run shelters. The Santa María Micaela Shelter in Lima does not accept children, and many of the shelters provided no data on this topic.

Length of stay ranges from one to six months. Three of the State-run shelters did not respond to this question.

Admission criteria refer to women victims of gender-based violence and do not exclude migrant women and their children; undocumented migrant women; and mildly disabled women without dependents who can care for themselves.

Entry and treatment protocols do exist, but several of the shelters provided no information. Residents are informed of their rights in the shelter.

Referrals to other facilities occur when the victim suffers from psychiatric disturbances, untreated contagious or infectious disease, or is dependent on hallucinogenic substances.⁸¹

The referring entity is responsible for addressing the complaint of violence prior to admission to the shelter or to file the complaint within 48 hours of the resident's admission to the shelter.

The response did not include information on the number of personnel employed by the HRT, but did list the functions they fulfill, as follows: coordination; psychological, legal, and social assistance; nursing; pediatric education; productive technical education; security; and food service.

The shelter provides psychological treatment, social work, childcare, medical care, and personnel for the continual support of shelter residents. Some shelters also provide technical job training and supervision.

The response to the questionnaire did not provide any information on training for shelter personnel, the recruiting and hiring process, if staff receive therapeutic support, or if they are licensed.

Shelter objectives are aligned with other similar institutions, but do not provide financial assistance.

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic has three domestic violence shelters. The first, Casa Emergencia, was established in 2007; the second, Casa Modelo I was established in 2009; and the third, Casa Modelo II, in 2015. They are located in three separate locations: National District, Northern Zone, and the Eastern Zone. All 3 are State-run.

The governing laws⁸² define two types of shelters: Emergency Shelters and Domestic Violence Shelters. The Emergency Shelters are designed to provide emergency shelter care to women victims and survivors of domestic violence and their minor children for 12 to 24 hours, a period of time that can be extended by a week, if necessary. These shelters can house a maximum of four women and their minor children, or unaccompanied women, not to exceed 16 people in total.

The Domestic Violence Shelters are intended for women victims and survivors of domestic violence and their minor children, for an initial length of stay of 30 days that can be extended to three months, depending on need. These shelters can house a maximum of 12 women with their minor children or alone, with a capacity not to exceed 40 people. In addition to the comprehensive services offered, residents participate in social and workforce reintegration programs that include their dependent minors.

The total budget for all 3 facilities is US\$1,248,340.

The Dominican Republic has a specific law, Law 88 (2003), establishing shelters to provide temporary protection to women victims of violence and their children. The law is accompanied by two Decrees: Decree 1467, dated November 1, 2004, for the application of the law, and Decree 1518-04, dated November 26, 2004, to order the creation of shelters to protect the physical, psychological, economic, and social safety of women, children, and adolescent victims of violence, and in cases of emergencies caused by domestic violence.⁸³ These instruments emphasize the logistical aspects and organization of the facilities.

Law 88-03 established the Governing Board for Domestic Violence Shelters, which is responsible for the coordination, implementation, application, and oversight of the mechanisms to ensure the law is effectively executed across the entire country.

The Governing Board comprises the State Secretary for Women, who presides over the Board; the Secretary of State for Public Health and Social Assistance (SESPAS); the Attorney General of the Republic; and the National Children's Council (CONANI), a civil society organization which works in the area of women and focuses on issues of assistance to child and adolescent victims of domestic violence.

Operation of the shelters is incorporated into public policies, as well as, in a national plan that is currently being updated.

Shelter leadership is named by the Ministry of Women and oversight is the responsibility of the Governing Board for Domestic Violence Shelters, led by the State Secretary for Women. There are evaluation mechanisms, but no reports were submitted with the response to the questionnaire.

Shelter capacity ranges from four women with space for up to twelve children in the emergency shelter and twelve women with up to 28 children in the longer-stay shelters. The shelters accept male children up to the age of fourteen; there is no age limit for female children.

Admission criteria stipulate that access to domestic violence shelters is reserved for women who lack access to other community, family or personal resources or find themselves in a situ-

ation where their existing resources cannot guarantee their safety and that of their children. In addition, women seeking admission to shelters must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The woman and her children are at risk of death.
- The woman and her children are at extreme risk of severe bodily harm.
- There is an existing report or complaint of sexual abuse against the children committed by the woman's current or past intimate partner that also puts the lives of the woman and/or her children at risk.

To ensure the safety granted by anonymity, there is no direct access to the shelters. Women victims and survivors of domestic violence must be referred for admission by the organizations that manage the shelters, licensed organizations, and by the specialized entities that make up the social and community networks in both the public and private sectors. (Art.21 Dec.Reg.)

All shelters have entry and treatment protocols and inform women of their rights upon admission.

Each shelter employs a staff of 12 people that comprises 10 women and 2 men. The women perform the technical and administrative roles and the men are the drivers. Staff receive training quarterly, are licensed and receive therapeutic support. They are recruited and hired according to State regulations. There is no role rotation.

Shelter objectives align with traditional shelter objectives. Risk assessments are conducted and security precautions are taken. The shelters also provide psychological treatment, legal advice, counseling, and escort residents to the police, to court, and other procedures as needed. The government's report notes that they are in the process of implementing a program of financial assistance. Residents can also attend workshops on violence and obtain job training.

Uruguay

Uruguay has four Short Term Shelters (CBE) or Halfway Houses and an alternative transitional housing program for women seeking to escape domestic violence. (MIDES – MVOT – MEVIR Agreement). The program, which has national coverage, was established in 2009 and homes were set up beginning in 2012.

The homes are located in three departments - Montevideo with two homes, and 1 each in Tacuarembó and Canelones.

All three facilities are managed by a public-private partnership between the government and non-government funding.

Annual Shelter Budgets:

• Short Term Shelter for women at risk of death (Montevideo)	US\$10,368
• Montevideo	US\$10,104
• Tacuarembó	US\$ 9,538
• Canelones	US\$ 4,149
• National Program	US\$ 2,121

There are 2 laws ordering the establishment of shelters: Law 17.514 Domestic Violence - Declaring the Activities on Prevention, Timely Identification, Treatment, and Eradication a topic of general interest, enacted on July 2, 2002⁸⁴ and Law 19580, Law on gender-based violence against women, enacted in 2017.⁸⁵ Uruguay also has a public policy, Gender-based Violence, implemented through the Institute for Women (Inmujeres) within the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES). There are also 2 national plans: 1) National Plan to Combat Domestic Violence 2004-2010; and 2) Action Plan 2016-2019: for a life free from gender-based violence, with a generational perspective.⁸⁶ The homes are also included in the Protection Program and in the Response System for Gender-based Violence, a process established by Inmujeres to help women leave situations involving domestic violence.

The homes for women victims of domestic violence are subject to established rules and regulations. Shelter leadership is named by the civil society organization it is tied to, with the support of Inmujeres/MIDES. In addition, the civil society organizations are responsible by agreement for managing the Inmujeres Response System for Gender-based Violence.

There are also monitoring mechanisms supervised by Inmujeres. Monitoring is based on a system of performance indicators and conducted online. The process is managed by the Directorate of Monitoring Evaluation in the Ministry of Social Development.

Shelter capacity ranges from 15 to 30 for the shelters and 200 for the national program. Capacity includes both women and their children. The age limit for children of both sexes is 18.

Length of stay is 30 days but can vary depending on the needs of the woman.

Admission criteria stipulate that entry to the CBEs be granted to women 18 years and older, alone or accompanied by their children, whose lives are in imminent danger due to domestic violence. Shelters admit women who request entry to the shelters without regard for nationality, residency location, or socio-economic status. Women do not require a police report or court order to enter. There are no other restrictions.

Admission criteria for the facilities managed by the National Alternative Transitional Housing Program are as follows:

- 1- Women 18 and older, regardless of nationality, alone or with dependents.
- 2- Must be attending a facility which provides psychological, social, and legal assistance that supports the woman's exit from a domestic violence situation.
- 3- Have received a minimum of 4 months of treatment for gender-based violence, which guarantee the assistance of the woman in compliance with the admission criteria of the program.
- 4- Possess certified proof of income, informal or formal (AFAM, TUS, pension, income tax withholdings, etc.), that will allow the resident to cover basic shelter expenses, such as any administrative costs associated with signing the contract, if applicable, as long as there is no negative impact on basic needs, taking into account the number of people declared in the nucleus.
- 5- Possess stable income that covers the basic expenses in the shelter (water, electricity, common expenses, utility fees and sewage)
- 6- Priority will be granted to women who cohabit with their aggressor.
- 7- In cases where the woman is the property owner, the legal situation of the residence of the aggressor will be taken into account.

Facilities also have protocols for entry and care. Residents are informed of their rights and are able to participate in the life of the shelter.

Referral to other facilities only occurs when residents have achieved greater independence, there is reduced risk to their lives or they have a condition which requires more specialized care (mental health, severe disability or addiction).

Shelter staff are primarily female and the number of personnel in shelters varies between nine and 23: two coordinators; three social assistants or licensed social workers; two licensed psychologists (one for women; one for children and adolescents); one attorney; eleven educators; one teacher; one consulting psychiatrist; one licensed nutritionist; one food service worker; and one support staff.

Shelter personnel provide the following services to women whose lives at risk due to domestic violence and their children: safe housing for a period of up to 30 days; an environment that nurtures a healthy daily routine (nutrition, hygiene, etc.); psychosocial counseling, support, and treatment focused on the specific crisis intervention needs of each case; a supportive, responsive space for children and adolescents; educational support and recreational activities for children and adolescents; information and counseling on the possible events and options related to their legal, familiar, or work situation; legal counseling on their rights with respect to protective measures for themselves and their dependents; and the execution of monitoring

and follow up actions within the socio-territorial context after departure from the facility, in order to understand the resident's exit route and increase connection to available resources.

The National Alternative Transitional Housing Program employs four women. Among others, they perform the following functions: i) receive and evaluate admission applications and relevant documentation for each transitional and/or permanent housing request; ii) participate in the inter-ministerial meeting (MIDES-MVOT-MEVIR) to review applications for entry, extensions, extension of CGA, cancellations, renewals of affirmative actions, if relevant, and possible definitive exit routes iii) deliver Rental Guarantee Certificates (CGA) in the city of Montevideo and metropolitan area and sign agreements between women and the co-executing agencies of the program (DINAVI-INMUJERES) that include clearly established commitments and deadlines to be assumed by both parties. Outside of Montevideo, they must visit each area, working with the local Ministry of Housing and Land Management (Ministerio de Vivienda y Ordenamiento Territorial – MVOTMA).

According to the regulations, training for personnel is required prior to hiring, and Inmujeres and the Ministry of Social Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social – MIDES) conduct training sessions. Selection of candidates is done by the agreed civil society organization with the evaluation and endorsement of Inmujeres and MIDES.

Shelter personnel do not receive therapeutic support and there is no role rotation. Staff is supervised and licensed.

Shelter objectives are aligned with those of other similar organizations. The shelters provide all standard services with the exception of financial assistance. Job training is conducted through third party agreement and coordination with other institutions.

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Unlike other States, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela did not submit an official report on all existing shelters in the country.⁸⁷ However, we did locate documentation developed by the State⁸⁸ and by the UNFPA⁸⁹, on the operation of a domestic violence shelter in the State of Tachira. The UNFPA reports that between 2001 and February of 2017, there were at least 4 shelters operated by Inamujer that provided housing to some 1,400 women and children whose lives were at imminent risk or whose physical safety was threatened by violent crime against women.

The Venezuelan Inamujer defines shelters as discrete, confidential and safe temporary housing that provide protection, support, treatment and empowerment to women victims and survivors of domestic violence, and their minor children under the age of 12 years whose lives or physical safety are in imminent danger.

The entry process to one of the Inamujer shelters is triggered when an incident of extreme domestic violence, as defined by the governing law, that threatens the life of a woman and her minor children under the age of 12 is made known to Inamujer. If the incident takes place in Caracas, one of Inamujer multidisciplinary teams that are located across the country or the National Ombudsmen's Office for Women's Rights, will then engage all the appropriate services to fulfill their functions according to the needs of the specific case.

Information on cases can arrive through a variety of channels: 0800-MUJERES, Offices of the Ministry of Popular Power for Women and Gender Equality and associated entities, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, State or municipal women's institutions or other public or private organizations.

Shelter personnel evaluate every case to obtain the following information: type of violence, date of incident, characteristics of the aggressor, family composition, and the existence or lack of support networks for the woman.

When the situation is determined to be life threatening, the team coordinates with 0800-MUJERES to initiate the process with the Department of Comprehensive Care and Prevention of Violence against Women, specifically with the Comprehensive Care (GAIPVCM), who has to guarantee the protection of the victim.

If there is no shelter in the state where the victim is located, Inamujer, in coordination with and supported by other institutions, will arrange transport of the victim and her minor children under the age of 12 to another state identified by GAIPVCM through the Office of the Coordinator of Comprehensive Care. 0800-MUJERES will inform the personnel at the identified shelter.

Entry to shelters is not extended to women and their dependent children who are homeless with no imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury due to domestic violence or to women whose cases require assistance with basic medical, housing, or employment needs rather than shelter from violence.

The shelters employ a multidisciplinary team that includes the following professionals: psychologists, sociologists, social workers, educators, and attorneys among others who guarantee the success of the fundamental objective of the program.

The Tachira Women's Shelter is government-run and managed by the Tachira Institute of Women. Its goal is to provide specialized care in cases where the life (lives) of the woman and her children are threatened by her aggressor or as a result of previous incidents of physical violence, the presence of knives or firearms in the home, or any other situation where the woman and/or her family could be killed (femicide) in the immediate future.

The law that governs the operations of Women's Shelters is the "Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free from Violence" (November 25, 2006), which establishes the creation of Women's Shelters in Chapter IV, article 32, named the Public Policies for Prevention and Care.⁹⁰

The women who staff the shelter in Tachira are trained in the human rights of women, self-esteem, feminism, critiquing patriarchy, empowerment, and socio-productive projects, among others. The maximum recommended length of stay is 3 months. Referral to other facilities is possible when the confidentiality of the location of the shelter or the safety of the other residents or staff members is at risk.

Entry to shelters is not granted to women suffering from addiction, psychiatric conditions or serious physical diseases that impact their independence, social abilities or ability to overcome the violence; women with contagious or infectious diseases; those with links to criminal organizations; and victims of human trafficking (who can only stay a week and must receive specialized treatment afterwards).

The location of the Tachira Women's Shelter is confidential. It has 2 treatment models: 1) Emergency Care (or first aid), which can last from 1 day to 1 week; 2) Temporary Shelter, with a length of stay limited to a maximum of 3 months, during which shelter staff will provide residents counseling or brief therapy concentrating on overcoming threatening situations, strategies for managing the aftermath, and encouraging a proactive approach to life.

7. BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Information provided by various sources, but especially that submitted by the States Party to the Convention of Belém do Pará, has allowed us to develop this analysis. We would like to highlight some best practices that we hope will inspire those institutions responsible for domestic violence shelters and serve as a goal to those charged with adequately protecting the safety of women.

Best Practices:

- **Mechanisms for evaluation and the compilation of periodic reports** that allow the detection of obstacles and achievements in order to improve the quality of care (Chile, Mexico, 2011 and 2015, Paraguay, and Uruguay). These are essential tools to help ascertain if the desired results were achieved, what critical issues existed, and what changes can be implemented to ensure good management and solve problems. Half of the States (eight out of 16) do not evaluate the operations of the shelters or follow up on the cases of the women who had been housed therein. Others noted that they did conduct evaluations, but did not submit reports on the results.
- Mechanisms to **file complaints from within the shelter**. (Costa Rica and Mexico) The domestic violence shelters (CEAAM) in Costa Rica provide a box where residents can submit their complaints confidentially. Access to this box is restricted to the Comptroller of services at the managing Institution.
- **Financial Assistance** for six months **for women housed in domestic violence shelters** (Argentina). This assistance provides women victims a minimum of economic independence, an essential factor in the process of leaving a violent domestic situation. Nine countries report that they do not provide this service and 5 countries clarify that they can connect women with other entities that can assist them with financial emergencies.
- **Visibility into shelter budgets for each shelter**. (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic, Uruguay). It is important to have visibility into the amount of funds designated to this measure for the protection of women, regardless of whether the source of funding is private or public.

Recommendations:

- **Systematic and periodic evaluation of the public policies** that govern domestic violence shelters, safe houses and other mechanisms that guarantee the safety of women and prevent threats to their lives and physical security.

- **Evaluation and monitoring of the operations of domestic violence shelters**, identifying both the issues that arise and successes achieved in each facility.
- **Increase the number of domestic violence shelters and expand their coverage**, since both are inadequate, especially in rural areas or provinces and/or regions far from national capitals. Even though Brazil has 178 shelters for women victims of domestic violence, they only cover 2.5% of the country's municipalities. It is essential to facilitate the access of women victims.
- It is essential to design programs that provide women a way to leave behind their economic and physical independence. In order to facilitate an exit from the shelter, we need **comprehensive public policies** that include plans for access to housing, job training, financial assistance, and access to employment.
- Specify the amount or percentage of the **national budget** allocated to services for women victims of violence, including: (...) shelters and safe houses, increase funding in the budget for domestic violence shelters. In most countries, funding for shelters is scarce, and during the pandemic, many countries reduced funding, some dramatically (Mexico and Guatemala).
- **Review the roles and functions attributed to shelter staff**. In some countries, staff roles closely track with gender stereotypes, assigning security and transportation to male staff and shelter administration and treatment of residents to female staff. These stereotypes work against the goal of transforming shelter residents' models.
- **Guarantee the secrecy** of shelter locations to increase the safety of victims.
- Conduct audits and **studies** on the shelters, not only to evaluate them, but also to review their models and analyze the suitability of the services they offer.
- When there are agreements with hotels and boarding facilities to house at-risk women and their children, we must **guarantee access to the comprehensive suite of services** and specialized care required by women victims of violence in these spaces. When these services are not guaranteed, these facilities are reduced to human depositories that may provide safety, but do not comply with the State's obligation to provide support to women victims of violence.
- Implement complaint **mechanisms** inside shelters to allow residents to share their experiences and improve the delivery of services.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 With the official responses from the States, a consolidated form was prepared, which is found in Annex II.
- 2 INAM. Women's National Institute. Systematization of the "Latin American Exchange of Experiences: Best Practices for Shelters for Women Survivors of Violence" Tegucigalpa, Honduras 2013. While the IMAM document refers to "risk of death", we prefer the use of the broader term "risk".
- 3 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Communication No. 47/2012, González Carreño v. Spain, July 16, 2014.
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- 6 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 65/228: Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women. Available in: Disponible en: https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/2010-2019/2010/General_Assembly-/A-RES-65-228.pdf.
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- 8 Ibidem. Paragraph 40, c, iii)
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- 10 United Nations – Beijing Platform for Action, Paragraph A-125. "By Governments, including local governments, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the public and private sectors, particularly enterprises, and the mass media, as appropriate: Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counseling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence." Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/BPA_S_Final_WEB.pdf

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