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Relegated, but always resilient Women and their daily struggle for equality

Remarkable mobilization in a year in which women continued to take to the streets in defense of their rights even when substantial improvements in their daily lives and social achievements are still awaited. And it was women, perhaps, who were the most dynamic social actors on a planetary scale. Even above union and environmental protests. Resistant women, although relegated and ignored. Almost as always...



Difficult times continue to persist for women in Latin America and the rest of the world: poor health care, gender-based violence, and unequal incomes. Brushstrokes of a challenging picture despite the growing mobilization of gender and in favor of diversity.

Postpartum nightmare

No less than 40 million women suffer serious health problems annually as a result of childbirth. These include pain during sexual intercourse in the puerperium stage (35%); lower back pain (32%); anal or urinary incontinence (8%-31%); anxiety; depression

(around 15%); perineal pains; tokophobia or fear of childbirth, as well as secondary infertility.

However, very little has been written about it. Such is the conclusion of a series of articles published by the British scientific journal *The Lancet Global Health* in the first week of December under the title "[Maternal health in the perinatal period and beyond](#)".



[More than one-third of women suffer from long-term health problems after childbirth, according to new research.](#)

After reviewing the literature of the last twelve years on this worrying reality, the authors of the articles conclude that there is practically no serious documentation or respectable guidelines for the effective treatment of these problems, which represent barely half of those that usually accompany an experience as traumatic as childbirth. In addition, the data gaps are staggering, as there are no nationally representative or global studies. So it's no surprise that, despite the significant prevalence of these conditions, both day-to-day practices and government policies have largely ignored or neglected them.

The authors call for the health system to properly recognize the seriousness of these conditions, many of which occur when women are unable to access postnatal care services. And they also claim the critical importance of adequate medical care throughout pregnancy and childbirth, undoubtedly the best form of prevention. In this way, risks could be detected and complications that usually lead to long-lasting health problems could be avoided.

They also propose a holistic approach to reducing the risk of maternal mortality: paying attention to the immediate biomedical causes and the complex interplay of social, economic and environmental conditions that have a major impact on women's health. For example, "inequalities based on race or gender, as well as economic context, nutrition, health, environmental risks, or exposure to violence and conflict."

The lack of attention to these fundamental issues, argue the authors of the study published in *The Lancet*, explains why 121 countries (out of a total of 185 they analyzed) have not made significant progress in reducing maternal mortality over the past two decades. Consequently, they advocate that States develop adequate and multidisciplinary health systems not only to provide dignified and quality maternity services, but also to prevent poor health conditions and mitigate the impact of inequalities. If necessary, including through targeted interventions targeting the most vulnerable women and girls.

Femicidal Brutality in Latin America

In 2022, a Latin American woman was murdered every two hours – approximately 4,050 women, all of them victims of femicide as an extreme expression of inequality, discrimination, and many other forms of violence against women and girls. This is revealed in a Bulletin published in the last week of November by the [Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean](#)



The 8-year struggle to demand justice for her murdered daughter Photo: Gustavo Contreras UN.

Sponsored by ECLAC (Economic Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean), this Observatory processed data collected in 26 countries of the continent, which constitute the most up-to-date and recent information in the region on this subject. In 2022, more than 70% of femicide victims were between the ages of 15 and 44; 4% under 15 and 8% over 60.

Honduras has been the country with the most crimes of this type, with 6 per 100,000 women. Followed by the Dominican Republic, with 2, and El Salvador and Uruguay, with 1.6 each. Nations with fewer than one victim per 100,000 women were Puerto Rico, Peru, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Chile. Cuba had the lowest continental rate: 0.3.

These variations are small and do not reflect sustained dynamics of increase or decrease, so no trends can be determined. However, the study emphasizes, "it can be affirmed that femicidal violence continues in the region despite greater public awareness of it, as well as legislative advances, state response, and progress in measurement."

Specialized national surveys from ten countries on the continent show that between 42% and 79% of women (approximately two out of three) have been victims of gender-based violence. In addition, 88 million women over the age of 15 experience physical or sexual violence by a perpetrator who was or is their partner, which carries the risk of lethal violence. In addition, early and forced child marriages and unions, undoubtedly a harmful practice, are a manifestation of persistent and widespread gender-based violence that affects 20% of girls.



The Struggle for Justice Against Femicide Photo: Primavera Diaz, UN.

The study published by the ECLAC Bulletin emphasizes the need for urgent and decisive state responses. To prevent femicidal violence, it is also necessary to strengthen the adequate treatment of previous complaints of violence, as well as precautionary measures that make it possible to assess and act against the risk, all of which contribute to avoiding violent deaths for reasons of gender. It concludes that Latin American and Caribbean states should expand budget allocations and invest to strengthen policies against gender-based violence with new strategies to respond to the different manifestations of violence, such as gender-based violence in digital media.

Underpaid

No less worrying than the lack of postpartum medical care and gender-based violence is the wage inequality affecting women. According to the International Labour Organization

(ILO), despite some progress, "wage gaps between men and women persist and even increase in some occupations." These differences, the ILO points out, are not mainly due to different levels of education and, in general, do not shrink but increase with age. These are the main conclusions of its study [Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value: Where Do We Stand in 2023?](#), published at the end of September.

The data is compelling: the proportion of women in managerial and middle positions is less than 35% in half of the world's countries. "Men continue to earn more than women in most countries, and in almost all sectors, due to [a variety of factors](#), such as persistent gender segregation in an occupation or occupational group, interruptions in women's working lives due to maternity, unequal sharing of family care responsibilities, and unfair wage practices."



The permanent struggle for equal wages in equal activities. Photo: Luke Harold, ILO-Wikimedia.

According to the United Nations (UN), on all continents "women are paid less than men, with a gender pay gap estimated at around 20% globally." In addition, "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remain stagnant due to the persistence of historical and structural inequalities in power relations between women and men." Inevitably, poverty increases inequalities and disadvantages in women's access to resources and opportunities, and efforts to reduce that gap have been slow. While [equal pay has been widely supported by the UN, its implementation in practice has been difficult](#).

countless protests. On the same day, in Europe, hundreds of demonstrations were held among other countries in Spain; in France (about 100,000 participants); Germany; Switzerland; Italy (the organisers spoke of 500,000 demonstrators in Rome) etc.



Feminist mobilization day on November 25, 2023 with the axis of solidarity with
Palestine.

Other mass mobilizations had taken place on March 8 in the farthest corners of the planet, when women and the LGBTIK+ Movement raised their flags and defended their specific demands.

The more than 300,000 demonstrators – predominantly women – who mobilized throughout Switzerland on June 14 to participate in the Women's Strike with the purpose of demanding, among other points, equal pay between genders and respect for diversity, are also impressive social dynamics.

Not least, the biennial Assembly in October in Ankara, Turkey, which brought together more than a hundred representatives of the World March of Women from 62 countries, the most active feminist movement on a global scale.



International meeting of the World March of Women in Ankara, Turkey where delegates from 62 countries gathered.

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Segio Ferrari from Bern, Switzerland for La Pluma, December 18, 2023

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

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