

A stylized map of the Americas, showing North and South America, rendered in a light blue color against a dark blue background.

XXVII

Summit of the Americas

Virtual Summit

**Permanent Council
of the OAS**

Committee Bulletin

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Welcome to HACIA XXVII

Dear delegates of the XXVII Summit of HACIA Democracy,

It is my pleasure to be the first to welcome you to our virtual summit for the twenty-seventh meeting of HACIA Democracy. My name is Juan C. Venancio and as the Director of English Committees at HACIA XXVII, it is my job to ensure that all of you have a rewarding experience in committee while substantively debating a series of intriguing topics endemic to Latin-America.

My interest in HACIA and Latin America stems from my own Mexican and Honduran heritage. Born and raised in Houston, Texas, I grew up in a predominantly Latin-American ethnic enclave, and this upbringing has driven my personal interests in government, economics, and law. It was through these influences that I developed a natural passion for the region, having participated in organizations like Model United Nations, since my time in high school. As is the case for many, conferences like Model UN allowed me to explore several world issues, contemporary political struggles, and engage with potential solutions with other brilliant minds throughout the country. Now, as a junior at Harvard, I have continued to explore these interests through my previous participation in HACIA, Harvard's Institute of Politics, and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin-American Studies.

At last year's HACIA, I co-directed the 1948 Costa Crisis Cabinet and was amazed by the talent that HACIA attracts every year. This year, I have worked with our talented team of committee directors to select a thematically and temporally diverse set of committees, ranging from the internal displacement of citizens in El Salvador, to women's rights through the OAS, and even current public health issues across the Latin-American region.

HACIA is unique because the issues that we discuss are diverse, well-researched, and relevant. Not only that, but all of you, as delegates, derive from a diverse set of countries, schools, and backgrounds, which all serve to provide multiple perspectives on these hot topics. This highly social type of group learning is an invaluable skill to refine, especially in the context of increased socio-political, environmental, and public health dilemmas. As a result, I would like to encourage all of you to come to this year's conference with unique ideas, well-researched arguments, and out-of-the-box proposals throughout the course of the conference.

In conclusion, I can't wait for our conference to begin and to meet all of you in March! I'm also looking forward to the productive conversations that we will facilitate over the course of our conference.

Sincerely,

Juan C. Venancio, Director of English Committees english_committees@hacia-democracy.org

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From your Chairs

Welcome to the HACIA XXVII and the Permanent Council of the OAS!

As your chairs for this conference, it is an honor to be able to address such a wonderful group of delegates. We, Zavier Chavez and Ellen Hwang, are so thrilled to be able to work alongside you during this conference. The Permanent Council of the OAS, as one of the most crucial standing committees in the OAS, has delegates discuss issues plaguing the independent states of the Americas and find comprehensive solutions together, with our topics for this year focused on significant barriers to education for women across all ages and the worrisome trend of femicides in Latin America. We cannot wait to see how this conference will improve you all as writers, speakers, and diplomats when tackling these issues.

Zavier is a junior at Harvard College studying Philosophy with a secondary in Environmental Science and Public Policy and American Sign Language (ASL). The grandson of immigrants from Mexico and having worked with local organizations supporting citizenship access in high school, Zavier is interested in working for Latin America's future. On campus, Zavier serves as a Freshman Peer Advising Fellow and tutor for Project Access, writes for Harvard College Children's Stories, and discusses topics in ethics for the Harvard Ethics Bowl team and Effective Altruism. Zavier also has a strong appreciation and respect for the arts, with his interests lying specifically in music composition and piano/percussion.

Ellen is a sophomore at Harvard College studying sociology with a secondary in neuroscience and French. She was born and raised in Southern California, more specifically La Habra. Living in a town filled with such a diverse Latinx community, her upbringing was heavily integrated with this amazing and rich culture. It was such a wonderful opportunity for her to be able to learn more about the cultures of so many different countries while being able to share her Korean culture. She is also involved in the Project for Asian International Relations as well as working in design and marketing for Harvard Student Agencies. Outside of school, she loves the arts like playing instruments (cello and piano) as well as painting, pottery, and thrifting.

Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions about the committee. We are so excited to see what amazing solutions and ideas you come up with for this council. See you in March!

Warmly,
Zavier Chavez & Ellen Hwang
Co-Chairs, Permanent Council of the OAS

Topic A:
**Equitable Access to Education
for Women in Latin-America**

Introduction

In Soacha, Colombia, a 33-year old Gloria Vasquez, a single mother of four teenage children, leaves home to clean motels for more than 24 hours at a time to support her family, struggling to make even the monthly minimum wage for the country. While all four of Gloria's children, two boys and two girls, were in public school prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they all faced severe gaps in communication between their schools and teachers once school was closed due poor management from school administration and inability to access technology for virtual learning. This led to the two boys being gradually pulled away from an unengaging and difficult secondary education experience to work in jobs like recycling collection, while the two girls were the first to fully drop out to assist their mother with her work and domestic tasks. Having dropped out of secondary school when she was 14 to help raise her siblings, Gloria was inspired by the idea that her children would not have to face the same challenges she did. As the situation surrounding access to education for her children seems to stagnate, however, her hope begins to fade.

The struggle faced by Gloria and her children is just one family's example of the circumstances for many surrounding access to primary and secondary education in Latin America that have recently spiked due to the uncertainty and challenges to operation presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. But, the problem of accessible education in Latin America is not a new happening nor is it equitable across genders, with the problem having disproportionately affected women for decades.

Across the board, Latin American schools face general barriers to accessible education for all students, due to causes such as poor school infrastructure, inadequate flow of teachers and resources, and low government social spending for education. Though many schools in recent years have nearly 100 percent in

gross primary school enrollment, these high enrollment numbers do not extend into secondary school nor do they track the amount of students who drop out without completing. Women across Latin America are more consistently more likely to be among these numbers of those who do not continue into secondary education or drop out of school without completing primary education. Causes for this disparity include women being more likely than men to feel compelled to take responsibility for domestic tasks, career opportunities offered to women being more limited thus decreasing incentives to continue schooling, and more uncertainty surrounding health and personal safety in public schooling environments. These barriers are even more significant for students in rural settings, with many rural schools struggling to afford consistent electricity, water, and amenities to its students and some only offering attainment up to third or fourth grade.

In addition, there also exists a prominent gender gap in wages, with women's earnings on average being "17% below those of men of the same age, education, number of children in the household, the presence of other sources of household income, rural status, and type of work." This both discourages women from continuing education as well as feeding into a harmful cycle whereby women have lower pay and decreased access to educational opportunities, further discouraging them from pursuing and receiving further educational opportunities. This results in a decreased number of women in higher-paying and more varied occupations, which then further increases the divide in equitable pay between women and men. Despite the consistency of these conditions across communities, especially lower-income and rural, in Latin America, the large number of contributing factors toward the current state of the gender gap in educational access and inconsistency in accurate reporting for progress statistics will require thoughtful deliberation on what the most effective and appropriate measures will be.

Education is a basic human right that should be offered to all peoples, but these challenges that significantly affect women in Latin America make the fulfillment and acquisition of that right less possible. Education also

exists as a “driver of economic growth and social wellbeing,” with improvements in equitable access to education for women in Latin America not only being critical to affirming the prosperity and health of the women themselves but also to boosting incomes and economic growth for families and communities in Latin America. As such, I encourage all member states to evaluate their current state of educational access and note gender disparities that exist across education and other relevant sectors like poverty. Furthermore, member states should consider how highly they hold education as a priority in large-scale governmental spending and support efforts.

History and Powers of the Committee

The body that is now known as the **Organization of American States (OAS)** was first established in 1948 in Bogotá, Colombia, with the signing of the Charter of the OAS. The purpose of this charter was to organize and plan for how the OAS would come to and continue to operate, defining aspects of the organization such as fundamental rights, core principles, purposes, divisions/committees, and the groundwork for future developments within itself. The OAS is the oldest regional organization in the world, with a history of inter-American cooperation tracing back to the Congress of Panama convened by Simón Bolívar in 1826 and beginning more formally in the First International Conference of the American States in Washington, D.C., from 1889 to 1890. These Pan-American conferences, operating under the organization title of the Pan-American Union, would continue from 1890 until the OAS' founding in 1948, with a total of nine conferences being held. It was at these conferences that the foundation and leading ideals of conflict resolution, international communication, reciprocal agreement, and cooperative solution were solidified. These duties and ideals would come to expand greater as the committee continued to meet, include new member states, and address solutions for new issues, making the **Organization of American States** what it is today.

From "Article 1" of the OAS' founding charter, the OAS' most critical guiding purpose is to achieve "an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence." Though originally only including 21 member states, the current incarnation of the OAS has all 35 independent member states of the Americas and recognizes an additional 69 states and the European Union as "permanent observers." The OAS operates as a regional agency within the greater body of the United Nations (UN). Because of this, the OAS has been

involved in many projects relating to “peace and security in the region” and discusses/follows through on UN goals within the Americas. The institutional system of the OAS operates on the four main pillars:

- **Democracy** -- bolstering effective political systems and supporting the growth of democracy as the superior option in favor of peace and cooperation
- **Human Rights** -- establishing and taking measures to protect human rights across all peoples in the Americas
- **Security** -- setting shared goals for all member states and establishing plans for mutual protection and mitigation of outside threat
- **Development** -- prioritizing high level discussion on social and economic solutions that extend across all the Americas, such as sustainable development and employment

These four pillars have generally reflected the goals of inter-American democracy in the conferences and organizations that operated before the OAS’ official establishment, but the emphasis on international security in the OAS’ founding charter was highly influenced by WWII. With most Latin American nations joining the Allied Powers, a mutual defense treaty called the *Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance* was adopted in 1947. This treaty would be expanded and the sentiment of security would be included as a major part of the OAS during the ninth and final Pan-American conference in 1948, where the OAS was established.

Following WWII and development in the OAS from that period of time, the practical focuses of the organization changed from the security pillar with protecting the Western Hemisphere to the other pillars of democracy with global support for democratic institutions, development with special social and cultural projects, and human rights with investigations and accountability measures protecting the rights of the nations' people. This shift led toward the establishment of new specialized regional institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and expansion of previously established institutions like the Pan-American Health Organization. These changing commitments are also reflected in the OAS' important documents and documents revisions, such as the *American Convention on Human Rights* in Costa Rica in 1969 that included new definitions of civic and political rights and conditions surrounding them and the *Inter-American Democratic Charter* in Lima in 2001 that offered a functional definition of “democracy” and methods of sustaining it within nations.

Consisting of 35 members in the Americas, the OAS has three branches: General Assembly, the Permanent Council, and the General Secretariat. Our committee, the **Permanent Council of the OAS**, reports directly to the **General Assembly of the OAS**, the supreme organ of the OAS that handles finalizing of agreements and deciding of general action as an organization. While the General Assembly meets annually and includes many representatives from each member state, the Permanent Council consists of one “Permanent Representative,” an ambassador that is selected to attend on behalf of their state's government, per member state. Because of this, the Permanent Council is able to operate on tasks of all sizes in between meetings of the General Assembly. The discussions and plans that are created by the Permanent Council are put into effect by the General Secretariat, who handles administration and execution of OAS policies and agreements. The current Secretary General Luis Almagro has focused on large-scale improvements to human rights and an ending of “unnecessary fragmentation,” which delegates in our committee should keep in mind when

navigating solutions to dire social and economic issues that limit people from accessing and effectuating their rights.

Our committee, the Permanent Council, is particularly responsible for ensuring relations among member states remain productive and cooperative, existing as a body to help mediate and assist disputes as well as consider new/monitor existing international projects between and relating to the OAS, UN, and other inter-American institutions. With all member states having equal voices, the Permanent Council is the part of the OAS that consults the General Assembly and the General Secretariat and drafts action plans that solidifies the cooperation the organization seeks to promote. As such, it serves one of the most critical roles both in facilitating high-level communication surrounding topic issues and in facilitating inter-American diplomacy as a whole.



Aims of the Committee

Now that we have observed the basics of the topic issue and the powers of the OAS, we must consider what we as the Permanent Council of the Organization of Americas seek to do regarding this issue during this committee session. The OAS has a fundamental commitment to upholding democracy and educational, social, and economic development within the Americas. Yet, the current state of broadly accessible primary, secondary, and higher education within Latin America presents serious barriers that disproportionately and often uniquely affect women. Barriers to consistent education not only limits economic, social, and educational growth for nations as a whole but also hinders the ability for affected women within said nations to practice protected rights.

To address and limit these barriers, member states must consider why the educational gender gap exists in their nation and critically examine what current actions may mitigate or exacerbate it. Member states must then decide how to navigate a solution that balances individual circumstances and needs for women in each nation and the interests and capabilities of the nation as a whole. This will require comprehensive policy reform and introduction of new support measures and programs that attack the causes of inaccessible education for women -- such as career mobility, access to healthcare, and personal safety concerns -- as well as their roots, much of which traces back to patriarchal aspects of systems in governments, economies, and societies within the Americas. By recognizing and committing to decreasing these inequities and their causes, nations can create more unity among people within the Americas and undergo large-scale development that benefits all. Such development is especially crucial now, as many nations still struggle to recover from the past and present of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though our primary goals are solutions for the Americas, the OAS' status gives it the opportunity to make regional and international precedent in cooperative action taken to decrease gender and educational

inequities alongside each other. Currently volatile conditions for institutions like public education mean that many considerations will require short-term solutions to become stabilized, but member states must keep long-term goals in mind as well. The educational gap and related gender inequities are not a new phenomena; as such, multilateral standards must be put in place to ensure progress is also made against the underlying causes that put women in situations of inaccessible education. It is then up to each member state to uphold and keep fellow member states accountable to upholding agreements that will be set during this committee session.

The focus of this topic and bulletin will be on accessible education for women specifically in the Latin American region, but the committee must not forget that women in all parts of the Americas and beyond face similar challenges in access to education and gender inequities. Every member state should then offer solutions based on their nation's past and present, as all member states play a critical role in developing and supporting efforts to solve this problem regardless of the state of educational accessibility for women in their nation. The capability and scope of the Permanent Council make the unified approach this complex issue demands more than feasible.



Topic in Context

Difficulties surrounding accessible education and the educational gender gap, referring to the inequity in accessible education between men and women, in Latin America has a long history, with women and societies as a whole being affected from the very start. Since many of the factors that influence the educational gender gap did not occur at one particular point in time, it is instead better to look at when nations began to address commitments to improving education internationally.

The first time when nations began to recognize and isolate education as a focus area of improvement was the International Conference on Public Education in 1934, where leaders in education from various nations met through the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to set recommendations and goals for improving public education. Since then, access to education has been gradually become a more primary objective in the international development efforts, such as being set as agreed upon targets in the United Nations signed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Both of these sets of goals also included some form of gender equality as a focus area with similarly high priority, marking one of the first times in this international context when the intersection between accessible education and gender equality was addressed. With progress on many international projects being halted and sudden new challenges introduced to Latin America through the COVID-19 pandemic, the difficulties surrounding accessible education and the educational gap has been especially exacerbated. Now more than ever should the focus be put onto the women in Latin America whose lives and futures are substantially impacted by said difficulties.

As a note before moving into this section, barriers to education for individuals in Latin America exist along all levels of education, but childrens' future education is crucially dependent on the primary and secondary school levels. If school quality and student progress is poor in the primary level, then this trend tends

to continue into the secondary level. If school quality and student progress is similarly poor in the secondary levels, then higher education is often not even an option. Barriers to school before primary education, higher education, and alternative education outside of school should be appropriately considered but special focus should be placed on the barriers that are present or begin in primary and secondary education.

State of Education: Overview

One of the biggest struggles facing Latin America's public education situation in the 1980s and 1990s was school enrollment and completion on both the primary and secondary levels. This coincided with the economic crises that many nations at the time were undergoing, and primary school completion rates in Latin America reached around an average of 40%-50%. Due to factors like economic expansion and large-scale political change, primary school completion rates now sit at around 80-90%. As for enrollment rates, enrollment in primary school today is nearly universal and enrollment in secondary school is around 80% on average. Governments across Latin America now spend around 3% more of their GDP on education, which ranges from funding and research to school resources and infrastructure, than they did in the 1990s.

Despite this increase in educational access for many, high drop-out rates still remain. Enrollment rates for primary and secondary school students in Latin America are high, but only around 40% of these students complete secondary school, which is where a majority of job skill preparation and development begins. Many of the students that dropout of secondary skill do so due to job responsibility; however, many struggle with lack of preparation and economic shock, leading them to lose their jobs. With the inability to return to the secondary school system and the limitations of an underdeveloped professional skill set, these students remain out of school and out of work. Such students make up around one in five individuals between the ages of 15-24 in Latin America, with two-thirds of these individuals being women.

The state of school quality, in addition to drop out rates, is also reflected in student test achievement. Latin America is around 2.5-3 years of schooling behind the Organization for Economic Cooperative and Development (OECD) average, which sets standards for measuring academic achievement and readiness in international student populations. The OECD's 2015 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) -- which consists of tests in Math, Reading, and Science and is taken by 15 year-old students across different countries every three years to observe comparative rankings in educational quality -- showed that 50% Latin American students did not achieve the standard requirement in the science test, which was measured through testing in areas like data interpretation and simple experiment design. This trend continues with 63% of Latin American students in the math test and 46% of students in the reading test failing to meet the basic level. Though the PISA is not the final measurement of academic achievement nor capability, these low scores do have drastic implications when considering how public education may lead to cycles of lower education beginning in primary school and into secondary school and limit opportunities for STEM-related careers that have high technical barriers to entry.

School quality is often directly related to teacher performance, which is also a struggle related to the current state of education that many education systems in Latin America face. To offer an example, the OECD's Teacher and International Learning Survey (TALIS) reported that 24% primary and secondary school teachers in Mexico claimed they felt underprepared for their jobs, lower than the 7% average for countries outside of Latin America that participated in the survey, and only 62% reported they had completed an official teacher training or education program.

The Educational Gender Gap

The factors that led to the current state of education across Latin America are vast and vary from country to country. Consistent among prominent educational barriers, however, is that the large majority of them have clear limitations that disproportionately affect women and also include barriers that are largely exclusive to women. These factors together make the phenomenon of the educational gender gap.

One of the most major barriers to accessible education in Latin America is poverty. There is a clear connection between income level and educational opportunity. For example, 72% of children living in conditions of poverty and 96% of children living in conditions of extreme poverty have parents who have less than nine years of schooling. Since educational quality in primary and secondary school highly influences career mobility and possible futures, the quality of a student's educational experience in Latin America is often directly related to the quality of their parent's educational experience, with parents who either dropped out of school or had poorer educational experiences having children who follow a similar suit.

Families living in conditions of poverty face significant challenges in navigating educational costs. Public education still requires additional costs beyond tuition and books, such as school supplies and transportation, that lead to children beginning primary or secondary school then being unable to complete due to costs. This leaves students with incomplete primary school experiences and associated regressions in literacy and numeracy, leaving them often unable to return to primary school or start secondary school due to work obligations or other responsibilities. If unexpected costs like medical emergencies or housing loss occurs, then managing costs for school becomes even more difficult for those already struggling under conditions of poverty. Beyond the monetary costs of education, poverty especially limits students' educational opportunities as it often requires them to leave school or divert attention elsewhere in order to support their families. The stress associated with attempting to focus on education while balancing these other responsibilities also has a significant effect on students' mental health and wellbeing, which is a formative part of a quality primary and secondary school experience.

Another major barrier to accessible education in Latin America is location. Students who live in rural areas versus urban areas often face more difficulty in accessing resources for school, due to limited technological access like computers, lack of reliable transportation, and distance from areas that offer reliable school supplies for school assignments. Furthermore, students who live in rural areas also have a decreased likelihood of attending a school with a wide breadth of functional school facilities. For example, in rural areas of Peru, Bolivia, and Guatemala, there are many schools that are one classroom large and only offer primary school up to a fourth grade level. Water, electricity, and sanitation facilities are also limited in rural schools, with many in these areas not having them within the school's building at all. The educational barrier of poverty also has an intersection with location, with 20% of Latin Americans living in rural areas accounting for 30% of the area's population under conditions of poverty.

Related to both of these barriers to accessible education is another barrier that exclusively decreases the educational opportunities available to women in Latin America: prioritization of domestic tasks. Especially in rural and lower-income homes, women hold the responsibility of domestic chores, such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of sick family members, and childrearing. Young women in these families will often then leave school to focus on these domestic tasks or begin working to gain skills specifically related to these tasks, greatly limiting their career mobility and reducing possibilities to pursue completed primary, secondary, or higher education. Even while at school, especially in rural schools, young women will be expected to perform these domestic tasks in addition or as a replacement to school curriculum. While careers in completing these domestic chores are an important part of these young women's communities, the pressure that many women feel to fit these standards from their communities, families, and societies at-large make them feel as though they have no other choice or make it so they simply end up being unable to move into other careers or opportunities due to lack of education. The patriarchal ideal of men deserving priority when educational opportunities are limited also influences this

effect of women's education being selectively chosen as either lesser than that of men's or as sacrificable in service of training for domestic work.

Due to barriers such as these, economic opportunities for women in Latin America are also limited. With a woman in Latin America needing an average of four more years of education than a man to earn a similar salary or receive similar opportunities, many women choose careers that will be more certain for them to be able to acquire, which often exclude STEM careers or other high paying opportunities. Furthermore, according to 2019 research on women's labor participation published by the UN's Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), women still make "17% below those of men of the same age, education, number of children in the household, the presence of other sources of household income, rural status, and type of work." Taking into account the previous barriers that disproportionately impact women, simply having had less education opportunities creates a cycle of lessened further educational opportunities and economic opportunities that can be difficult to break.

Some families also selectively chose to keep young women out of school due to fear of discrimination or violence, especially sexual violence, that may be faced walking to school or in school, representing another major educational barrier that disproportionately affects women. Regardless of whether families make this choice for young women or not, it certainly looms as a fear over many young women in Latin America, leading many to choose perceived safer choices for their education or career outside of public spaces. There currently is not accurate data on how many cases of violence, sexual or otherwise, against women occur across Latin America schools, but this fear is a serious consideration, with Latin American having the highest rate of reported gender-based violence in the world. This threat posed to women and the associated fear is also extended to taking workplace opportunities, leading to some women feeling hesitant choosing to work in places with long walking commutes, large male populations, or less safety enforcement for example.

A final important educational barrier influencing the educational gender gap is limited access to education about reproductive health. Latin America currently has the second highest rate of teenage pregnancy around the world, with an estimated 15% of all pregnancies per year in Latin America occurring in women younger than 20 years-old. Furthermore, young women who have only primary education or below are up to four times more likely to become pregnant than young women with secondary or above. Those from lower-income homes are also around 4 times more likely to become pregnant than those from higher-income homes. These figures are significant as having a child almost guarantees a young woman will leave the primary or secondary school institutions that they are in either to handle the pregnancy or care for the child, often never being able to return. The threat of pregnancy ending young women's educational prospects in Latin America is especially high, given how equitable access to healthcare is challenging for many in the region and made more challenging by bans and heavy restrictions on abortion in seven Latin American nations. Poor quality sex education in schools and limited public access to contraceptives also influence this high number. In addition, widely varying conditions in healthcare and hospital access causes maternal mortality to be one of the most common causes of death in young women aged 15-24 years-old in Latin America, with 1,900 dying during or shortly after pregnancy or childbirth in 2014 alone. Relatedly, the inability for young women to find sanitary products and be afforded private spaces within public schools in Latin America results in many young women fearing to attend school or dropping out entirely, acting as another barrier to accessible education.

Overview of Educational Reform

Large-scale efforts to implement universal public education date back as far as Argentina's building of colleges and schools with the presidency of Domingo Sarmiento in 1868, which influenced similar developments in Chile and Paraguay shortly after. Creation, rapid expansion, or reform of public education systems would

continue in countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Cuba, and Peru into the 1970s. In 1948, UNESCO made an official recommendation that all 37 member states make “free primary education compulsory and universal,” with the OAS making a similar suggestion for all member states that same year. This emphasis on accessible education for all would culminate with education being listed as a human right in the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

The educational expansion programs in Latin America that worked prior to the 1950s, however, were not sustainable, as they only focused on the creation of public education and very broad improvements to educational institutions without enough emphasis on making the education itself accessible. This led to Latin American nations collectively focusing on universal primary education enrollment, seeing primary school as where barriers to education began. Research by Latin American nations and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s prioritized compensatory programs that could publicly fund the educational experience to combat economic inequity and incentivize institutions to include discrimination monitoring systems and politically-conscious curriculum to combat social inequity. These efforts saw high success rates in making progress toward UNESCO policy objectives, but stagnated in the 1970s following financial disruption in the Western Hemisphere due to the U.S.’s economy and the Vietnam War. Latin American nations that had borrowed high amounts of money from the U.S. to fund large-scale governmental and social expansion now had to make severe budget cuts to sustain operation, with educational accessible efforts being one of the first to be deprioritized.

Seeing the negative effects of this period of limited educational expansion in the form of low school enrollment and completion rates, presidents of the Americas met through UNESCO 1998 in Santiago, Chile to set objectives to revitalize education. Some of these objectives included improvements to early childhood education, access to education for women, and an emphasis on “literacy, numeracy, and critical life skills.” From this period on, development in education among Latin American nations varied wildly with approaches. Some nations have achieved much higher growth on increasing educational accessibility, such as Mexico and Chile in

the early and mid-2000s with the introduction of technical training programs that allowed job skills to be learned to account for the inevitably inconsistent rates of school completion and Colombia and Peru with more recent focus on making careers in secondary education more attractive, while others have had less but still significant improvements. Consistent among education developments in Latin America, however, is disproportionately limited access to education, especially secondary education, for women and lack of growth and accountability in large-scale programs to specifically address educational barriers faced uniquely by women.

State of Education: COVID-19 Pandemic

Any educational barriers that existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic have been drastically exacerbated since. Since February 2021, around 120 million primary and secondary students in Latin America are at risk or have already lost the equivalent of a year in educational growth due to school closures. Many of these students have also abandoned education in the interim or entirely, with Mexico losing around 1.8 million primary and secondary students and Peru losing around 90,000. With schools only just beginning to reopen in Latin America, the World Bank predicts that the students below the OECD average will increase from 55% in 2018 or 77% and that 15% of the 100 million students still outside of school will not return. The educational and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that affect all of Latin America's students has additional negative impacts for women, given the additional educational barriers that exist for women in Latin America. Women have begun to make up a much higher amount of frontline healthcare workers and caretakers at home than men, leading many to turn focus away from school and to tasks relating to work. Furthermore 60% of women in Latin America work in insecure or informal job markets, making their income even less stable under conditions that have already caused mass job loss and increasing risk of poverty.

Ultimately, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is critical to avoid risks of undoing improvements to educational access for women, but it cannot be understated how disproportionate educational barriers for women have existed prior and will continue to if considerations not taken to address the root causes of these barriers.

The Crux of Debate

Ideological Conflicts

Despite the consensus that access to education is a major concern that provides additional barriers to women across Latin American countries, there still exists debate over key topics relating to these barriers. There are many that may come up during committee, depending on the particular perspectives of member states, but some prominent disagreements are over prioritization of education for women, access to abortion, and short-term versus long-term solutions to educational inaccessibility. An additional issue that arises around the debate for access to education for women in Latin America is reliable data.

Prioritization of Education for Women

Each nation has its own set of priorities that influence what make up their top goals, interests, and programs of funding. Some may be focused on other projects handling concerns such as food and housing security, leaving them with less effort and funding for projects that specifically tailor access to education for women. Even if such accessible education is a concern of the nation, it is more difficult to effectuate robust action plans when the topic is prioritized lower than other action plans. The prioritization of this issue is also influenced by the sociocultural sentiment regarding the gender role of women that exists in many places across Latin America. Namely, the idea that domestic work and other certain careers like healthcare are where women should be can influence the direction in which leaders take efforts to improve educational accessibility, such as focusing special projects instead on access to education generally without accommodation for the unique

barriers faced by women or choosing to reaffirm gender roles traditionally placed upon women in school curriculum and in school activities.

Access to Abortion

Given that Latin America has a very high level of teenage pregnancy and that teenage pregnancy is a major educational barrier that affects women in Latin America, the legality of abortion as a means of mitigating the effects of this barrier is a central topic of discussion. Only 3% of women live in places in Latin America where abortion is broadly legal, so debate over this topic does not manifest itself in differing laws per country but rather differing sentiments between governments and social advocacy groups and certain non-government organization. Some view abortion as a necessary piece of accessible healthcare, while others view it as a religious or moral violation and accountable through other means like abstinence in sex education.

Short-term v.s. Long-term Solutions for Educational Accessibility

Related to prioritization of education for women, the newfound setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic have influenced some nations to put the long-term goal of policy reform toward access to education for women behind the short-term goal of simply reopening schools or stabilizing basic educational resources. The debate on this issue surrounds how much effort and funding is appropriate to be put toward attacking the root causes of educational inaccessibility for women when the scope of educational inaccessibility has seemingly increased drastically than previously. Additionally, there exists the question of when in the process of recovery should a nation specifically address the long-term goals again, which is largely dependent on the circumstances of each member state and as such varies significantly.

Reliable Data

An auxiliary yet wide-reaching issue relating to the ability to even have debate and create solutions to educational disparity is the inconsistency of reliable data collection and synthesis. Data relating to educational barriers as a whole are largely reported through UNESCO by member states themselves, commonly leading to a difference between the statistics given within reports and actual statistics or merely the lack of statistics on a subject entirely. Regarding educational barriers faced by women within Latin America, data relating to the amount of sexual assault in school, the operation of rural schools, and amount of students currently unaccounted for in the educational system are either not fully reliable across all member states or simply not reported or collected. The concern then lies in whether it is better to begin work on large-scale projects risking a basis in incomplete or inaccurate data or focus on data collection and begin work after more centralized data is collected.

Interest blocks in the within the committee

All member states have a vested interest in improving the educational experience of women, as doing so increases the economic capability and diversity of a nation and reaffirms commitments made through the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The stance a member state holds on the key debate questions will be highly dependent on their own nations' current circumstances and priorities in development. Though all member states may agree to large-scale programs supporting education for women in official documentation, the degree to which a nation is committed to decreasing educational barriers for women will be better shown through previous action done on the subject and sociocultural sentiments within the nation.

Despite this, there are some general features that would influence member states seeing similarly on debate questions. For example, Mexico and Brazil as two nations with large populations that saw unprecedented amounts of students leave the education system behind may view the urgency of educational reform more similarly than other nations that did not see as much of a loss. On the topic of abortion, nations that have legalized abortion or have largely increased access like Cuba, Guyana, Uruguay, Canada, and the United States of America will likely view solutions to this educational barrier differently than nations who have more strict laws or have banned it entirely. Finally, member states that are outside of Latin America or have comparative more stabilized educational systems, though all certainly still having barriers to education for women present, may be more inclined to offer support considerations and favor prioritization of long-term solutions over short-term solutions to inaccessible education.



Powers of the Committee to Address this Topic

Committee Jurisdiction

As the Permanent Council of the OAS, this committee has a wide range of opportunities within its mandate that can be done toward this topic issue. The Permanent Council could decide to draft a particular agreement that could then go on to the General Assembly for discussion between the OAS, UN, and other inter-American institutions. If voted favorably with two-thirds of ministers in the General Assembly, then the Permanent Council's proposal would become a policy that the General Secretariat is required to act upon. Additionally, the Permanent Council could also make direct provisions that would allow the General Secretariat to take more immediate action, change the method of policy implementation, or make administrative changes to operation.

Relating the topic of accessible education for women in Latin America, the Permanent Council has the jurisdiction to effectuate small-scale or large-scale projects to address its effects, causes, and other considerations. Both the OAS and the UN as a whole has pledged to protect human rights, and access to education is one such right that the OAS and UN have both great interest and a duty to act upon. The effects of these educational barriers for women not only have direct effects on the quality of life and opportunities for the women themselves but also their families and households, by virtue of their education playing a major role in economic prosperity and securing basic necessities like food, housing, shelter, and more. Even broader, nations with equitable opportunities and support given to women to flourish have less gender disparity and a much higher likelihood of undergoing other critical social, economic, and governmental development, which is a founding pillar of the OAS. Securing the personal safety of women fearful of violence and discrimination and at

risk of harm in school or at home across the Americas should also be a significant responsibility to the Permanent Council.

Previous OAS Action

The two OAS agencies relevant to previous action on the topic issue are the Inter-American Commission of Women (ICM) and the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE). The ICM, established in 1928, consists of delegates who advocate for recognition of women's issues, consult other agencies, and develop action plans and suggestions to effectively consider women's issues across the OAS. The CIE, established in 2003, consists of ministers who promote dialogue on educational issues and considerations, draft initiatives to implement positive change for the state education, and follow up on the initiatives that are signed and effectuated.

Between these two agencies, the most significant recent action that has been taken to address accessible education for women was the adoption of the *Inter-American Education Agenda* during the IX Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education in The Bahamas in 2017. This document, though still relatively new, prioritizes and makes commitments to projects prioritizing “Quality, Inclusive, and Equitable Education; Strengthening of the Teaching Profession; and Comprehensive Early Childhood Care.” All of these policy priority areas are highly relevant to the topic issue, with equitable education being directly related and teacher support and assistance for childcare being critical for addressing school quality and options for school-age women with children or women seeking to return to education. This initiative is being carried out in part by Working Groups formed by member states’ Ministries of Education, which work together to create specific action plans that account for the needs of each member state involved. The most recent plan of action was that of Antigua and Barbuda in 2019, which emphasized “intersectorality” and reinforced the UN SDG of equitable

quality education to be achieved by 2030. This plan specifically included commitments to “analysis of initiatives and models targeted to the most vulnerable school populations” and “the right of women to be valued and educated free of stereotyped patterns of behavior and social and cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination,” among others.

As for the CIM, the most recent action this agency has conducted was a meeting between the delegates and governmental authorities to discuss creating an agenda on gender issues from nine member states in the OAS. The focus of this agenda was addressing “political rights and parity, economic rights, violence against women,” and many other issues that have been especially exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The agenda agreed upon in this meeting will go on to influence later action across any piece of the OAS that uses the CIM.

Bloc Positions

Given the largely universal agreement across member states on recognizing the benefit and importance of accessible education for women, there will not be much official bloc-related collective action. Groups with different solutions, as discussed earlier in the debate questions, will likely form alongside differing prioritization of women's access to education comparative to other topics a nation might find of greater importance. Nations that seek out more large-scale social and public policy reform to address the root issues of the educational gender gap will group together, and nations that prefer a more short-term approach to recover, stabilize, or test pilot solutions before committing to large-scale change will group together. Subsections of a comprehensive policy plan -- like any section addressing women's access to abortion as a means of contraception -- may also cause fragment due to the question of abortion.

Since equitable quality, accessible education for as many people as possible is a social good that benefits individuals, communities, and nations, member states must critically consider what position is best for both their own nation but also all women and families impacted by this issue across the Americas. The complexity and harsh realities of this topic issue will require member states to collaborate in challenging yet necessary deliberation and solution drafting.

Questions a Resolution Paper Must Answer

Is a single, unified solution possible? If so, how can this effectively account for the individual circumstances and needs of all member states?

Does every member state play the same role in promoting accessible education for women across the Americas?

Does a member state's current state of education mean they should occupy a different role?

How will the committee address private schooling and schooling that exists outside of the public education system?

What kind of support beyond increased funding can be given to schools to improve career mobility for women?

How does the committee plan to enforce measures to protect women at-home and in schools?

Should sex education be reformed in public schools? Should public schools provide resources for contraception?

Should governments play a role in limiting the degree to which one's family can choose their career for them?

Is large-scale social reform necessary to effectively reduce barriers to education for women? If so, how will governments that have deep patriarchal histories themselves support and enforce proposed reform?

What role does Latin America play in being a model for educational quality and international regional collaboration as a whole?

Should member states undertake large-scale policy change at a time where even basic educational needs are drastically limited? If not, then when should member states do this?

How can member states improve oversight and reliable data collection, especially for lower-income and rural areas?



Position Papers

Writing position papers is a test in being able to understand and make realistic decisions that align with your member state's point of view. As such, the perspectives, beliefs, and values that guide your government in real life should be the same that you take into these position papers. Since there is essentially universal precedent in Latin America for recognizing education as a human right through international action and the importance of equitable education for women, all member states should consider a solution that addresses this clear problem in some way. Where member states will differ is in the nuanced distinction between the degree to which they prioritize accessible education for women and are willing to practically act upon potentially major commitments to reduce it, the extent to which abortion, sex education, and contraceptives should play a role in a solution, and whether member states are stabilized enough to commit to educational reform. All of these decisions should be made in line with your member state's *position*.

Papers should look into what each member state is willing to do with regard to the topic issue at hand. Every nation has a different history with educational accessibility, and a brief view into this unique history and how it influences policy today and in the future should be included in the paper. When considering specific solutions, you should keep in mind what educational barriers seem most severe, feasible to address, and relevant to development across the Americas. Based on the history of educational reform in Latin America, there have been many attempts at focusing simply on higher funding and better institutions. A good paper will articulate whether your member state believes the solution lies in a method of support that revamps this traditional approach and fixes what it originally could not or policy reform and programs tailored to the root of educational accessibility barriers. Depending on your country's allies or role in the international community of the Americas, you may hold additional responsibility and find opportunities to make change. Regardless of

status, however, all member states and their positions hold an important stake in inter-American democracy and diplomacy.

Do strong research and be well-informed about your country, but ultimately prioritize collaborative discussion and creative solutions, as that is what HACIA is really about. Because of restrictions in OAS power and respect for national sovereignty, solutions will necessarily be up to each nation, but try to push yourself to find ways of holding actors in your member states and other member states accountable for agreed-upon development.

Proposed Solutions

In order to offer some guidance, I'll put two possible solutions to the problems under this topic and discuss some of their strengths and weaknesses. Keep in mind that your solution does not need to look exactly like this, and that the two below are not necessarily indicative of an ideally comprehensive solution nor are they a comprehensive set of solutions. Like I said before, be relevant and creative with your solutions but feel free to take inspiration for the two below:

One way in which member states should approach the problem of accessible education for women in Latin America is by recognizing the importance that equitable healthcare and sex education plays in giving women control over their educations, careers, and futures, making commitments for large-scale change to these systems by 2045. This would then entail member states committing to increased offerings and improvements in sex education classes, in order to inform young women about teenage pregnancy and offer resources to protect them against unwanted pregnancies. Member states could also increase equitable accessibility of contraceptives and birth control through these classes for those who cannot traditionally afford hospitals, either because of cost or time, or lack institutions for such resources in their area. Member states should then have a reliable method of data collection on the success of proposed sex education curriculum, to share and collaboratively develop what does and does not work.

This is one way of addressing a facet of this issue. Solutions may include multiple of these, given how broad and complex the nature of educational inaccessibility is. This solution effectively addresses the high rates of teenage pregnancy in Latin America and proposed a large-scale effort to make changes to public school curriculum and related resource offerings. It also includes provisions to account for the current lack of reliable

data collection that affects UNESCO data broadly. One of the main weaknesses with this solution includes that it may be off-putting to other member states who have very different views of what effective sex education should be, if even in schools at all.

Another way in which member states should approach the problem of accessible education for women is by recognizing the role that teachers play in quality education for school systems and the influence they have on creating inclusive environments in the classroom. This would entail member states committing to improving pay, benefits, training, and accessibility to public school teachers by 2045. This would also create national methods of hearing teachers' perspectives and complaints on the state of education, using this feedback within each state to make improvements and changes to programs for reaching the teacher improvement goals. Finally, this solution would also create training for teachers on gender inclusivity with the input of gender-conscious leaders and collaboration from the successes of other member states creating similar training.

This solution addresses the teacher component of the access to education problem by suggesting that large-scale improvements be made to the job market for teachers in public schools using the input of teachers themselves to ensure teachers do not feel ignored by their governments. This solution also addresses how teachers can play a significant role in either reaffirming or dissolving gender roles that make women feel limited in life and career prospects. One of the main weaknesses of this solution is the differences in budgetary capabilities that exist across member states, making something like development in career benefits for teachers relatively easier for some but extremely difficult for others.

Warm regards,

Emilia Cabrera
permanentcouncil@hacia-democracy.org

Closing Remarks and Research Recommendations

Education is something all humans are owed. When individuals face threats to fulfilling this right to education, it is the duty of the government and organizations that work with governments to mitigate harm and discover a pathway for positive change. Because of this paramount responsibility, organizations like the OAS and the governments of its member states must work passionately and collaboratively while honoring and critically considering the circumstances that influence each perspective. Barriers to accessible education for women in Latin America not only affects the direct lives of millions of women across the region but also has downstream opportunity consequences for the womens' families, the womens' communities, school institutions, and nations as a whole. Patriarchal systems that lead to many of these educational barriers are deep seated and will be difficult to reconcile without directly acknowledging the impact they have on the lives of all people, but we should be encouraged by this and set our sights on leading toward a better future of empowerment. Governments and societies that are committed to improving equitable conditions and gender-conscious leadership are the truly one of the keys to the future, and the new opportunities afforded to a nation through investment in womens' education may be one of the most powerful methods of recovering from the still ravaging COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information on any of the complex issues discussed in this bulletin, I recommend looking at official reports by the United Nations agencies or organizations like the World Bank to find refined, credible, and relevant data for crafting your future discussions and solutions. If you choose to comb through some of the reports that are especially long, make sure you utilize the table of contents to sift down your search. The only prerequisite you need to have a formative time at this conference is a willingness to learn and desire to discuss critical topics in the Americas.

If you ever have any questions or need any advice during the writing process, feel free to contact me any time.

Looking forward to seeing you at HACIA 2022!

Sincerely,

Zavier Chavez

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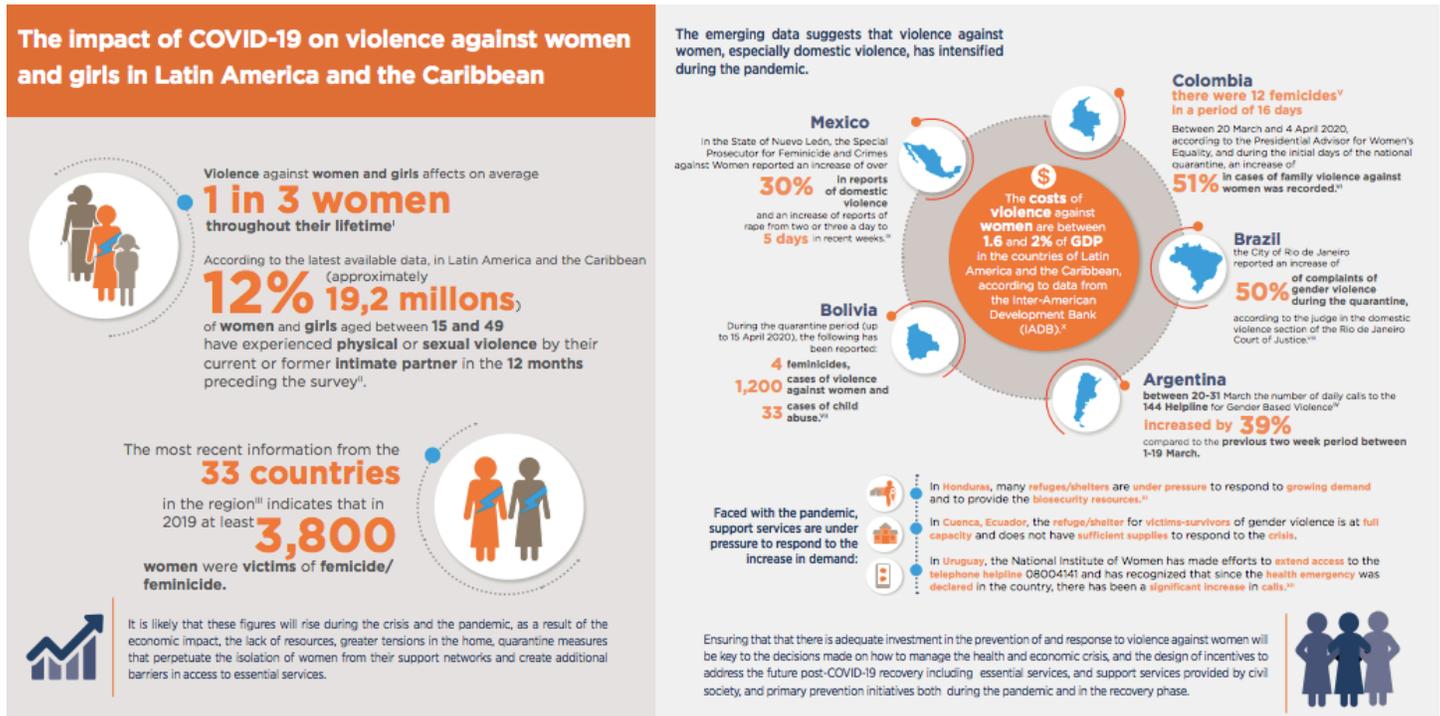
Topic B:
Femicide In Latin-America

Introduction

Introduction:

On February 9, 2020, Ingrid Escamilla, a twenty-five-year-old woman in Mexico, was murdered by her partner. Brutal images of her body were published in papers around the country. Just days after this tragedy, seven-year-old Fatima Aldriguette Antón was tortured and killed. These appalling murders sparked protests outside Mexico's presidential palace. Protestors threw red paint onto the palace and spray-painted the names of femicide victims on its wall as ten women are killed everyday due to their gender. Despite this high volume of murders, less than 5% of them are solved and even less are taken to court. The Mexican government's complacency and lack of effective measures is not unique to the country however; Chile saw protestors chanting "violador en tu camino" (rapist in your path). Femicide cases are broadcasted on the news almost everyday in Peru. Femicides are not a new tragedy, but more media attention and a higher willingness of women reporting

crimes have led to an increase in civil unrest.



UN Women states that “35% of women and girls experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, most frequently by an intimate partner”; the current pandemic’s stay-at-home orders and movement restrictions have exacerbated this issue as they lack the mobility to move away from their abusers. In addition to restricting women’s ability to isolate themselves from their abusers, the economic insecurity and increasing daily stress from the pandemic has increased women’s vulnerability to being a victim of violence, especially in Latin America as the region historically had the highest rate of sexual violence in the world.

Brazil has one of highest rates of violence against women with a study done in 2017 estimating around 67% of reported victims of physical violence/aggression being women. 86% of sexual violence cases reported consisted of female victims with 90% of these cases occurring “in the context of the armed conflict”. São Paulo’s Military Police announced in March 2020 that the beginning of the mandated quarantine coincided with approximately a 45% increase in domestic violence calls compared to March 2019. Bogotá’s Police

announced that the lockdown period of March 20 to June 15 had an increase of 187% in domestic violence calls.

Despite women being at such a higher risk of being victims of violence, the government has failed to effectively respond to this crisis. Women and allies have taken to the streets to protest and call for change. However, protestors should not have to hold the government accountable for protecting their citizens. Additionally, the government should focus on root issues like unequal access to education and gender wage gaps when discussing femicides; other factors like the machismo culture cannot be as easily tackled by the government but by generational changes. This committee will be discussing institutional and systemic factors that contribute to femicides and what can be done to rectify them.



History and Powers of the Committee

History and Powers of the Committee:

A facsimile of the inter-American system now known as the Organization of American States began in 1826 with Simón Bolívar's Congress of Panama. This conference drafted the Treaty of Perpetual Union, League and Confederation that was signed by the attending countries and later ratified by Gran Colombia--modern-day Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela.

It was not until 1889, however, that an established meeting of American states was founded in order to forge a common platform to resolve issues. The United States encouraged this organization by inviting eighteen countries to the First International Conference of American States that was held in Washington D.C. in October 1889 to April 1890 in order to promote the Monroe Doctrine, a policy of isolation. This conference also established the Commercial Bureau of the American Republics in Washington as the Union's secretariat, which would later become the Pan American Union in 1910.

The horrors of World War II demonstrated to this committee that unilateral action would not protect the American nations from extra-continental conflict. To address this issue, in 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, they signed the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty), a system of collective security. At the Ninth International Conference of American States, located in Bogotá, Colombia on April 30, 1948, the OAS charter was adopted. This charter reestablished the responsibilities of each state, goals of this committee, and origins of each agency. The Ninth International Conference of American States also established the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogotá) and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. The conference also established the organization to be a regional agency within the UN system.

The United States and nineteen other OAS members established the Inter-American Development Bank in 1959 over fears of slow economic development; at the time, the World Bank prioritized loans for

rebuilding infrastructure rather than social causes like agricultural aid. The OAS eventually adopted the Act of Bogotá in 1960 that stated a hemisphere-wide commitment to social and economic development, setting the stage for the Alliance for Progress.

The OAS has considerably grown since its original conference. The OAS now works to protect democracy and promote economic, social, and cultural growth. This mission can be seen in treaties like the Charter of Punta del Este in 1961, which created a foundation to decrease illiteracy, stabilize prices, and establish democracies. The OAS also works to protect democracy in American elections like seen with the 2001 Inter-American Democratic Charter, which was adopted in Lima by a special session of the OAS General Assembly.

OAS began with twenty countries, and it has now grown to include all 25 American nations. It now consists of three branches: The General Assembly, the Permanent Council, and the General Secretariat. The General Assembly consists of foreign ministers or chief of states from each state and is responsible for making decisions about budget and supervising other branches. This branch meets annually, so they are limited when making day-to-day decisions. The permanent Council, consisting of ambassadors from each nation state, makes day-to-day decisions and acts as the provisional organ of consultation when the General Assembly is not in session. Lastly, the General Secretariat, consisting of a Secretary General elected to a five year term, executes the places voted in the General Assembly and Permanent Council. The current Secretary General is Luis Almagro, an Uruguayan diplomat. His mission statement is “more rights for more people”.

The three branches of the OAS work in tandem. The Permanent Council gives each member state an equal vote to make provisions. These provisions will allow the General Secretariat to continue with its administrative functions or alter how certain policies are implemented. The General Assembly can also receive draft agreements from the Permanent Council that would create unity between the United Nations, OAS, and

other Inter-American institutions. With these interactions between the three branches, the OAS can function properly and continue inter-American diplomacy.



Aims of the Committee

Aims of the Committee:

During this committee session, the Permanent Council of the Organization of Americas will discuss the factors leading to increased femicides as well as proposed solutions. The Permanent Council of the Organization of Americas' mission is to protect democracy and development in the Americas, thus they have a duty to protect the women living in those countries. Women in these nations have a right to be protected and have the right to feel safe in their own homes.

In order to propose solutions, member states must analyze vulnerability factors of the victims as well as root causes for the killings. The solutions will not only need to implement prevention techniques to deter perpetrators from committing the crimes, but it will also need to protect women and provide resources for victims. The policies must be comprehensive and thorough as femicides are a multifaceted issue; the policies must tackle cultural issues like the machismo culture and shame around feminine sexuality as well as infrastructural issues like unequal access to education and gender wage gaps. By recognizing these issues and proposing measures to rectify them, nations can improve quality of life for women as well as creating more stable social relationships between citizens, even more important now as the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these issues.

The Permanent Council of the Organization of Americas is mainly focused on developing solutions for the countries within the region, but the issue of femicides plagues all parts of the world. The Permanent Council of the Organization of Americas' status enables it to have a platform that allows any implemented changes to be seen as cooperation in the fight to work against gender inequality. While proposed solutions that tackle more institutional issues like generational expectations of women or societal stigma around sex work will take multiple generations to implement, short-term solutions like stricter laws around femicides can stabilize some civil unrest and lead to a more solid foundation for these long-term solutions to be placed into practice.

The focus of this topic and bulletin will be on preventative measures to reduce femicides by emphasizing factors that affect the Latin American region. Every member state should look at historical events and current situations in order to propose solutions as the issue of femicides is not unique to just one country but an issue that plagues the whole region. This unified front will present more effective and sustainable solutions.



Topic in Context

Diana Russell, a South American feminist activist and scholar had popularized the term “femicide” by publicly utilizing this word when testifying to the first International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in Brussels, Belgium, in 1976. She standardized the definition of femicide as “the killing females by male *because* they are female”. By standardizing and popularizing this term, Russell planned to raise global awareness of these fatal crimes.

There are various forms of femicides, but these are more commonly perpetrated than others in certain regions. In the Middle East and South Asia, “honor killings”-killings in which a family member, typically male, kills a female over behavior deemed adulterous or sexual in order to preserve the family’s honor-are the most common. In Latin America, non-intimate femicide-killings between a victim and a perpetrator they do not have a relationship with-has been steadily increasing. Sex workers or those who work in the night are disproportionately impacted by this awful trend. According to the United Nations, other types of femicide include “sorcery- or witchcraft-related killings, armed conflict-related killings, gender identity- and sexual orientation-related killings, and ethnic and Indigenous identity-related killings.” Russell’s definition of femicide, however, is not just limited to one-on-one sexist murders but also covert forms of female killings in which the an oppressive patriarchal force like the government leads to a women dying like from botched abortions or maternal mortality.

Data is limited on femicides, but available data shows that 66,000 women are murdered every year and account for 17% of homicides. Women who had been previously abused by their murderer, coupled but have a child from a different partner, estranged from a partner, or are attempting to leave an abusive relationship are at a higher risk of being a victim of femicide; pregnant women are also at higher risk, especially if they had been abused during the pregnancy. In 2017, more than a third of femicide victims were murdered by current or former partners. Other risk factors include level of education and financial independence as women without a college degree or are financially dependent on partners are at a higher risk of being victims of femicide.

Ethnicity, age, or social status had no effect; however, countries with greater gender inequality and less female representation in government typically had higher rates of femicide.

Although eighteen Latin American countries have passed laws in order to reduce violence against women, these efforts have been futile. 98% of femicides go unprosecuted in Latin American countries as government inaction and impunity for perpetrators fuels the rise in femicides.

The Crux of the Debate

The Crux of the Debate:

Lack of Prosecution of Perpetrators:

While women are now feeling more comfortable reporting crimes, many of the cases go unsolved and the minimal ones that are solved are not taken to court and prosecuted. Since there is a lack of punishment for perpetrators, there is minimal deterrence. There is a debate on whether implementing stricter measures like longer prison sentences or heavier fines would work as a deterrence or just lead to more escalation of violence.

Immobility and Lack of Resources for Women:

Women who are financially independent of their abusers or have a lack of education are often more vulnerable to being victims of repeated violence. By having a lack of resources and community support, abused women are unable to remove themselves from their abusive environment. This immobility prevents women from reporting crimes as they would have to return home to their abusers regardless of if there are charges; the charges could have a worsening effect and even cause an escalation of violence.

Short-term versus Long-Term Solution:

Short-term solutions can include deterrence for criminals, but the committee should also focus on prevention. Having a higher awareness around femicides or a larger cultural taboo against femicides can prevent these crimes from happening. Women need to be valued as equals in educational institutions; this idea should be extended to all walks of life: equal wages, employment opportunities, or representation in the government. These changes will take longer to implement but will lead to a more long-term solution.

Questions a Resolution Paper Must Answer

Questions a Resolution Paper Must Answer:

What preventive measures can be taken to deter perpetrators from committing crimes?

Does every member state implement the same measures? Does a member state's frequency of a certain type of femicides change the measures they implement?

What infrastructures can be in place to protect women and provide support (i.e. housing, counseling, legal counsel, etc.) in case they are victimized by aggression?

How can governments and especially police forces ensure women that any laws and legislation that is created will be effective and not just for show?

How can member states encourage victims to report crimes?

What type of programs/measures (e.g., mandatory anger management classes for aggressors or reformed sex education in schools) should be implemented to decrease cultural influences for violence against women? For example, measures can include decriminalizing sex work so sex workers can be better protected by the law and do not have to work in dangerous conditions.

How will the committee plan to enforce measures to prosecute and fully investigate cases and perpetrators of violence?

How will the committee enforce measures to protect women and support them once they are independent from their abusers (often their main source of income)?

How will governments with historical patriarchal roots include women in the executive process? How will it implement change within its structure?



Conclusion

Closing Remarks:

Every citizen should feel safe, especially in their own homes. When citizens feel like their government has failed to protect them, it is the duty of organizations like the OAS to intervene and rectify these issues. Every member state, however, must work tirelessly and dedicate themselves to rectifying this deep-rooted issue. Numerous factors like inequality in education, social dynamics, and generational beliefs feed into this worrying trend of femicides, so it is necessary to have short-term and long-term solutions that will change the social, cultural, and political landscapes of each member state. The patriarchy continually fuels violence against women and oppresses them, so member states should empower this demographic by protecting them and letting them know the governments and police are doing their jobs to protect them. By implementing these changes, we can work towards a better and more equal future for all.

For further and more country-specific information than what was found in this bulletin, the United Nations and organization like Unidas has credible and relevant data and reports that discuss femicides and violence against women in not only Latin America but regions all around the world. These reports have helpful infographics that contextualize the most pertinent information into an easily digestible graph or image. These infographics can be very helpful in visually contextualizing and comparing lots of data all at once. No one is expected to know all the intricacies of this complex issue as this bulletin as well as any additional research you choose to do is meant to educate you on this topic. All that is necessary is an open mind and willingness to learn more about these difficult and complex issues.

If anyone has any questions or concerns when writing the position papers, feel free to contact me at any time. I am very excited to get to meet and discuss these issues with you.

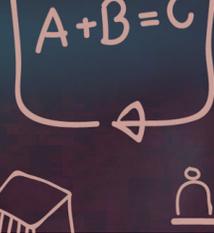
Warmly,

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