ABOUT GIWPS

The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security examines and highlights the roles and experiences of women in peace and security worldwide through cutting edge research, timely global convenings, and strategic partnerships. The Institute is led by Melanne Verveer, who previously served as the inaugural U.S. Ambassador for Global Women's Issues. Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton serves as its honorary founding chair. The Institute is also home to the International Council on Women’s Business Leadership, which is a part of the Women & Economy Project launched in October 2014. Located in Washington, D.C., the Institute leverages Georgetown University's global reach to connect academia and practice, pioneer evidence-based and policy-oriented analysis, and inspire the next generation of leaders. To learn more, visit https://giwps.georgetown.edu/.

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There is a growing body of research and data that demonstrates the ways in which women play a critical role in transforming entire societies through their economic participation. However, across the globe, women continue to face significant structural, institutional, and cultural barriers to full and meaningful participation. It is critical that we focus our efforts on growing this evidence-based case to support women’s ability to drive greater peace and prosperity for all.

In this spirit, we established the Angelica Fuentes Foundation Fellowship on Women’s Economic Empowerment, through which we enable innovative research and fieldwork to produce an academically rigorous, policy-oriented report focused on women’s economic empowerment in Latin America.

This inaugural report, Integrating Violence Prevention and Women’s Economic Participation: Lessons from Mexico, provides a clearer understanding of the linkages between the prevention of violence against women and greater levels of women’s economic participation. Through her research and fieldwork in Mexico, Claire Charamnac analyzed several themes and developed recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of programs working to prevent violence against women and foster greater economic empowerment.

This report reminds us of the interconnectedness of these issues and the need for enhanced collaboration to ensure that women around the world are able to reach their full potential.

Angelica Fuentes
Melanne Verveer
Executive Director
Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past two decades, female labor force participation has doubled in Mexico within the context of decreasing rates of violence against women. The World Bank, the World Health Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other international actors have recognized that increasing female economic participation is one of the interventions needed to address violence against women in Latin America. However, there has been limited research conducted on the ways in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are already working to integrate violence prevention and economic empowerment, and the challenges they face in their work. The lack of knowledge of best practices and gaps on these issues impedes the government and organizations from replicating and scaling programs that work in tackling violence against women. The need for effective, evidence-based programming is critical, considering that violence against women affects almost half of Mexican women: 46.6% stated in 2011 that they had faced at least one form of violence.¹

This gap in knowledge prompted the following research into current programs in Mexico that address women's economic participation and/or violence against women. Several themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews with 16 key informants from NGOs working on these issues in Mexico.

All the leaders recognized the need to integrate women’s economic empowerment and violence prevention. However, many organizations find it difficult to include violence prevention and/or economic empowerment in their programming due to sensitivity around violence against women, lack of resources, capacity, and expertise, and a lack of data that makes it challenging to make the business case for integration. Some organizations do not include violence prevention or economic empowerment in their theories of change, which causes these issues to be neglected even further. Finally, few organizations seem to be working on the issue of economic violence, due to the lack of media and policy attention it generates, and the lack of perceived urgency around the issue as compared to other forms of violence against women, such as trafficking, which receives more funding.

Partnerships between violence prevention organizations and economic empowerment organizations are one solution to this issue, but they are rare due to NGOs’ lack of funding in this area and the non-profit world’s limited history with partnerships. Another constraining factor is NGOs’ small peer networks: they lack the network to expand or advocate for their work, especially with corporations.

This report provides recommendations for organizations in Mexico working on violence prevention and/or women’s economic empowerment. Funders should direct more resources toward partnership building, capacity building, and data collection and research, and the prevention of economic violence. Organizations should review their theories of change, and see how violence prevention and/or economic empowerment can be incorporated into programs to strengthen effectiveness. They should consider increasing male participation in

¹ Psychological, economic, sexual or physical.
programming where possible, and take into account the different forms of violence, especially economic violence, when addressing violence in their programs.

I. THE RISE OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN LATIN AMERICA

A. OVERVIEW

![Figure 2.1. The rise in female labor force participation has been steep and uninterrupted](image)

*Source: The World Bank*

Female labor force participation in Latin America and the Caribbean has greatly increased in the past decade, with the fastest growth of all regions in the world. Female labor market participation rates increased by 15 percent over the last decade on average, while that of men only increased by two percent. Female wages have risen in tandem: from 1992 to 2007, the net gender earnings gap narrowed from 16.3 to 8.8 percent of the average female wage.

However, the female labor force participation rate at 57 percent remains much lower than the male rate of 83 percent. Latin America and the Caribbean ranks fourth out of six regions in the world in terms of female labor force participation rates, and only has a higher participation rate than Middle East-North Africa and South Asia.

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Moreover, progress has been uneven across countries. Panama saw the largest increase (35 percent more women worked in 2010 than in 2000) while Ecuador and Honduras are the only two countries that saw no increase or even regressed.

**B. CAUSES OF THE INCREASE**

Female labor force participation rates have been rising steadily since the 1960s, from about 20 percent in 1980 to 51 percent in 2008, with the fastest increases occurring since the 1980s. This has been largely due to increases in educational attainment and changes in household characteristics, such as fertility rates and marital status. Latin America has

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education, with even a slight reverse gender gap. Unlike most regions in the world, primary school attainment is higher for girls than boys: primary school attainment rate was 1.1 percentage points higher for females. Other factors that have contributed to the increase in female labor force participation are changes in family structure, reduction in fertility rates, and delay in marriage. In Mexico, the economic crisis in the 1980s and growth in export-oriented manufacturing also contributed to the increase.

Views on gender equality have also shifted: according to the World Values Survey, “unfavorable attitudes toward women have shown to soften as more women enter the labor force, human capital accumulates and countries’ income rises”. In the Latin American countries included in the World Values Survey (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Peru), “attitudes have changed greatly, as documented by several waves of the survey, the first covering 1989-93. Over the decade and a half, the views of both men and women have become more egalitarian and inclusive.” In the 1990s, between 25 to 40 percent of men in the region believed that men had more rights to a job than women. Views on gender equality in political and economic spheres have improved rapidly, especially within younger cohorts and those with a higher education.

C. CONSEQUENCES OF THE INCREASE AND STEPS FORWARD

The increase in female labor force participation has had a significant impact on poverty reduction in Latin America. According to the World Bank, female labor market income contributed 30 percent of the reduction in extreme poverty, compared to 39 percent for male labor market income. Without this rise in female labor force participation, 17.7 percent of the population in the region would have been below the extreme poverty rate, compared to the actual 14.6 percent in extreme poverty.

Judicial reforms have been another important gain. In recognition of the increasing female labor force participation rate, governments across Latin America have started creating legal and institutional structures that are more conducive to women’s economic participation. Women Affairs Ministries or Institutes have been established in 40 countries in the region, while 19 countries have added employment and anti-discrimination regulations to their Civil Code or Labor Code. 18 countries have instituted maternity benefits and 11 have passed paternity benefits.

However, the increase in female labor force participation has not yielded progress in all areas. There is still segregation of women and men across sectors and occupations, and

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
there is a rising level of inequality between socio-economic classes. Women are over-represented in the informal sector: one out of every eight employed women in Latin America works in domestic services, while nearly 80 percent of women in Central America work in the five sectors of commerce, health, education, domestic service, and low-skill industry.

II. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA

A. OVERVIEW

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (United Nations General Assembly 1993).

Violence against women includes, but is not limited to physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, and economic violence. Women in Latin America have historically faced violence, especially during periods of civil war and military dictatorships. Femicide, which is defined by feminist scholar Diana Russell as “the killing of females by males because they are females,” has become prominent in Latin America, notably with an epidemic of violence in Mexico, although other countries, such as Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru, have seen cases of femicide. In addition, domestic violence is prevalent across Latin America, and is rooted in the concept of machismo, which has been used by scholars and in popular discourse to describe patriarchal attitudes within the Latin American context.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, 22 studies have been conducted in 15 different countries, revealing a wide spectrum of violence: between seven and 69 percent of women have been physically abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives. A similar disparity is found in studies of sexual violence within marriage, where estimates range from four percent of women in Ecuador to 47 percent in Peru. Demographic Health Surveys conducted from 2009 to 2013 in 12 Latin American countries show similar variability, with between one-fourth and one-half of women reporting having ever experienced intimate partner violence.

As such, one cannot draw a conclusive picture of the levels and types of violence against women across the region. The variability in data also makes it difficult to assess whether violence against women has been decreasing or increasing across the region.

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B. GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSE

Violence against women poses serious health and economic consequences for citizens and countries: it impacts national economies by affecting worker productivity and incomes. In Mexico City, for example, Lazano (1999) found that rape and family violence were the third highest cause for disability-adjusted life years (DALY) lost in Mexico City.\textsuperscript{15} The governments of Latin America have recognized these risks and have adopted critical legal reforms to prevent and counter violence against women. Latin America was the first region in the world where all countries ratified the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and was the first region to sign a regional treaty specifically aimed at eliminating violence against women: the Convention of Belém do Pará, or the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women.

The Convention of Belém do Pará called on governments to amend their national legislation and tackle violence against women publicly and politically. However, as of 2011, only eight out of 32 signatories had comprehensive laws on violence against women, with most of the laws focusing on violence within the family.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, the passing of laws does not guarantee their implementation: if anything, the continued high rates of femicide and violence against women in Latin America indicate that there has been a “failure of states to create a culture of justice”\textsuperscript{17} and that “much legislation has been implemented poorly or not at all”.\textsuperscript{18} For example, in El Salvador, only 16 out of 63 reported cases of violence against women were followed up with in 2011, while in the state of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, only 70 men were arrested out of 1,822 reported rapes.\textsuperscript{19}

III. THE MEXICO CASE

A. FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND VIEWS ON ECONOMIC RIGHTS

As of 2014, the latest year with available data, Mexico had a female labor force participation rate of 45 percent.\textsuperscript{20} Mexico has a lower female labor force participation rate than most other countries in the region, especially high performers such as Peru, Paraguay, and Bolivia, whose participation rates are at 60 to 70 percent. However, Mexico has still seen a substantial increase in female labor force participation in the past decade. In 1970, the female labor force participation rate was at around 18 percent, and only increased to 25

\textsuperscript{18} Morrison, Ellsberg and Bott, “Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Critical Review of Interventions.”
percent over twenty years. In the past two decades, the rate nearly doubled to around 50 percent, with the increase slightly slower than the regional average of 15 percent. Lower-income women have the highest rate of female labor force participation at 72 percent, compared to middle-income and high-income women’s participation rate of around 50 percent. Two factors could explain this: according to Oviedo’s study in 2013, the presence of maquiladoras and hotels has a positive effect on women’s economic participation. These industries tend to attract lower-income women. Furthermore, Oviedo found that the poorer the community, the more likely that women will participate in economic activities. This need for women to take on jobs can be understood within the context of the decline of purchasing power in Mexico since 1980.21

Although views have become more positive regarding women’s increasing political and economic roles, traditional opinions towards women’s economic roles persist around men’s right to jobs over women and women’s performance in the workplace. In a World Bank survey, around one-quarter of individuals (men and women) in Mexico said that men have a greater right to jobs within a context of job scarcity. In addition, individuals with only a lower primary education tend to believe that men make better executives than women: 30 percent of women believe that, while 40 percent of men do.

![Figure 1.21. Views on “Right to a job” and “Men make better political leaders,” by survey wave, age, and sex](image)

Source: The World Bank22

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22 Ibid.
B. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MEXICO

I. LEGAL REFORMS

In 2005, the Supreme Court of Mexico ruled that marital rape was a crime. In 2007, the government passed Decree 218, or the General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free from Violence. It also passed a national gender plan for 2008-2012, the National Program for Equality between Women and Men (PROIGUALDAD). A more specific plan targeting violence against women was passed in 2010, the Integrated Program to Prevent, Attend, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (2010-2012). Finally, the national mechanism overseeing these policies is the Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES).

One of the issues concerning legal reform is that Mexico is a federal state and faces the challenge of harmonizing state policies with federal policies. According to the Organization of American States’ CEVI mechanism, which oversees the implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention, there is no clear mechanism for coordination between state and federal policies.

Note: Lower, middle, and upper denote primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education (whether completed or not).


23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
II. OVERVIEW OF VIOLENCE IN MEXICO

In 2003, the Mexican government started conducting an extensive, nation-wide study on intimate partner violence, ENDIREH. Two more surveys have been conducted since, in 2006 and 2011. It is clear that violence against women has declined over time across all four types of violence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Sexual</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Expresiones y contextos de la violencia contra las mujeres en Mexico”

The results seem surprising considering the increased level of violence in the past decade: female homicides have risen within the context of the country’s violent drug war. The next ENDIREH will confirm whether this decrease in violence is a long-term trend or a temporary phenomenon.

What could explain these contradictory results over time? According to Casique, “although it’s hard to believe these numbers with the general increase in social violence, it is not due to methodological changes in ENDIREH. It is a very solid, representative survey. Although the four types of violence have decreased, keep in mind that the survey does not include male attitudes towards domestic violence”.

IV. THE LINK BETWEEN FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two main theories of domestic violence in relation to women’s economic empowerment:

1) Resource theory or “backlash” theory, where men use violence as a tool to control household resources and the behavior of partners in response to a perceived loss of control or authority in the household (due to women’s employment).

2) Feminist theory: as a woman’s economic power increases, her bargaining position improves and she is in a better position to leave an abusive relationship or negotiate for the violence to stop.

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26 Sample changes: 1st survey included only women, 2nd survey included married women and single women, 3rd survey interviewed all women over 15 years old
27 Interview with Irene Casique, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, August 2015
Although the empirical evidence to support the link between female labor force participation and violence against women is quite strong in high-income countries, it is scarcer in low and middle-income countries. A systemic review of evidence from 22 low- and middle-income countries, including Mexico, found that women’s employment decreased violence in some settings, but increased it in others.\(^28\) In Mexico, it found that women’s employment decreases intimate partner violence. A 2004 study by Rivera et al. confirms this, finding that one of the factors associated with violence in Mexico was a woman’s socio-economic status;\(^29\) the lower her economic status, the higher the risk of violence. One important caveat is that women in higher socio-economic classes may be more reluctant to disclose violence due to the stigma around it. Finally, Martinez (2008) finds that the level of structural inequality in the state mediates the effect of employment on violence against women.\(^30\) While she initially found that employed women have a higher probability of emotional violence than unemployed women, this difference can be explained by the state the women live in. Employed women living in more egalitarian states are at a lower risk of emotional violence than unemployed women. Overall, women living in more patriarchal states are at a higher risk of violence than women in more egalitarian states.

On the other hand, several studies in Mexico have shown opposite results. Liu and Fullerton (2015) did not find any evidence that female employment has an effect on violence against women after controlling for other social status variables such as education.\(^31\) Avila Burgos et al. (2009) found that women working outside the home had a greater risk of intimate partner violence, but cautions that this could depend on the socio-cultural context. Valdez-Santiago et al. (2009) found that work outside the home was one of the main predictors of intimate partner violence in eight indigenous regions of Mexico.\(^32\) What could explain these findings is what Jewkes argues is the short-term backlash against women’s economic empowerment: female employment challenges traditional gender roles and increases conflict in the household until “a high enough level [of empowerment] has been reached for the protective effects to predominate.”\(^33\) Heise and Garcia Moreno (2002) argue


\(^{30}\) Sonia Martinez, “Gender, the State and Patriarchy: Partner Violence in Mexico,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2008). Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?id=FzXolURqTcwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false


\(^{33}\) Morrison, Ellsberg, Bott, “Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Critical Review of Interventions.”
that partner violence is thus usually highest at the point where women begin to assume nontraditional roles or enter the workforce.34

Several studies outside of Mexico have confirmed that the impact of female labor force participation on violence against women depends on a variety of factors, such as the husband’s employment status and the woman’s educational level. A 1999 study by Macmillan and Gartner in Canada found that labor force participation decreases domestic violence when a woman’s partner is employed, but increases it when he is unemployed. Jewkes’ (2002) finding that occupational status and education level differences between spouses lead to domestic violence supports this.

These studies’ mixed findings on the link between female labor force participation and violence against women can be summed up by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine’s findings in 2011: “compared to alcohol abuse (where the association with partner violence is consistent), the role of economic factors on women’s risk of violence appears to be complex, context-specific and contingent on other factors (such as partner’s employment or education)”.35

B. PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS LINKING ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The World Bank, World Health Organization, and the Inter-American Development Bank have recognized that increasing female economic participation is one of the interventions needed to address violence against women in Latin America. World Bank researchers Morrison, Ellsberg, and Bott (2004) propose the “integration of violence prevention into the programming of social and economic development projects (e.g. urban upgrading, microcredit).”36 Unfortunately, there have been very few evaluations of the effectiveness of economic empowerment programs in reducing violence against women, and the few that have been done have focused on high-income countries.37

This prompted my research into current programs in Mexico that address female economic participation and/or violence against women, the best practices that have emerged from these programs, and the gaps that remain. Several themes emerged from semi-structured interviews with leaders (executive directors or key staff) from 16 NGOs working on these issues in Mexico (the full list of interviewees can be found in the Annex). All leaders who were interviewed recognized the need for women’s economic empowerment in order to prevent violence against women. Alejandra Cervantes of Migración y Desarrollo noted: “There is interest (among organizations) but not many are working on the link.”38

34 Ibid.
38 Interview with Alejandra Cervantes, Migración y Desarrollo, October 2015.
Those that have started working on the link have seen positive results. Carmina Calderón of Fundación ProEmpleo, an organization working on female entrepreneurship, found that enabling women to achieve economic independence led to personal empowerment. “By achieving economic independence, they become leaders of their life and business, which will help them face and handle situations of violence. They gain knowledge of their rights, on their value and the skills they have that can support their welfare.”

I. PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS ARE RARE AND DIFFICULT TO CREATE

1. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A SENSITIVE ISSUE

Multiple organizations mentioned that partnerships are difficult because domestic violence is still perceived as a ‘sensitive issue’. Pilar Alonso at Fundación Banorte, which works with 42 women’s NGOs across Mexico, explains:

“It’s difficult for NGOs working on one issue to work on another. Partnerships are difficult because NGOs working on domestic violence know it’s a very sensitive issue. Domestic violence organizations may be reluctant to work with economic empowerment organizations as they may feel that these organizations only look at their beneficiaries as productive workers, and do not keep into account the sensitive issue of domestic violence.”

2. LACK OF RESOURCES, CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Another reason partnerships are not occurring is due to a lack of funding. According to Ximena Andión, the Executive Director of Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir,

“The funding environment is decreasing since Mexico is a middle-income country. It’s not easy for organizations to expand and take on new programs. There is a lack of alliances in the non-profit world in Mexico. Although there is consensus among NGOs that domestic violence is a key issue, there are many specialized NGOs who are so immersed in the day to day of their work that it’s hard to take a step back.”

Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir had this issue with one of their programs. In one indigenous project working on economic empowerment, they did a diagnostic of the issues in the community, and saw that domestic violence needed to be addressed. However, since it was their first approach to the community, it was hard for them to broach the topic of domestic violence. It was an absence the organization noticed, but could not work on as they felt they did not have the expertise to properly tackle the issue.

Alejandra Cervantes echoes this view, stating: “It is primarily a lack of capacity: it scares us to integrate violence prevention in our work because we’re not experts on it. We’d have to ask for funds for experts to help us start, and we don’t necessarily want to become

30 Interview with Carmina Calderón, Fundación ProEmpleo, October 2015
31 Interview with Pilar Alonso, Fundación Banorte, August 2015.
32 Interview with Ximena Andión, the Executive Director of Simone de Beauvoir, August 2015.
experts on violence prevention.” Pilar Alonso also saw this lack of technical expertise in the organizations Fundación Banorte works with: “We encourage the ones working on domestic violence to include economic rights, but it’s hard for them to do so because they mostly do psychological counseling and are psychologists, so it’s not their expertise. The other problem is that it is not in their theory of change.” Organizations, especially non-profit organizations, use theories of change as a methodology to plan and determine their long-term goals. Patricia Carmona from the organization GENDES, one of the few women’s empowerment organizations in Mexico that works with men, notes that “if you are grounded in economic empowerment, it is not obvious [to see the link between economic participation and violence prevention], but if you are grounded in gender theory it is.” If organizations’ theories of change do not include tackling violence against women, they are less likely to consider it in their programming or partnerships. Finally, Alonso pointed out a final factor explaining organizations’ reluctance to form partnerships: NGOs tend to have small peer networks and don’t have the network to expand or advocate for their work, especially with corporations.

3. LACK OF DATA MAKES IT HARD FOR NGOS TO MAKE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR PROGRAM INTEGRATION

Violence prevention NGOs do not see the business case for including economic empowerment in their programming. Alonso notes that “they will sometimes have one limited program on economic empowerment, but not an ongoing program, and no point person to work on it.”

It is possible that a lack of data has made it difficult to create a business case for organizations to integrate economic empowerment in their program. Alejandra Cervantes from Migración y Desarrollo states, “We have empirical knowledge on the link, but no hard data that economic independence leads to a decrease in violence against women.” In addition, there is a gap between research and the work NGOs are doing. As Ximena Andión noted, there is not much South-South collaboration between NGOs working on this issue. “There is much more collaboration with organizations in the United States, but the research is not being disseminated.”

Patricia Carmona stated, “Most of our projects deal indirectly with economic empowerment, such as setting life goals. I think the link would be more evident for economic empowerment organizations if it was clear that if they get rid of gender violence, women are more productive.”

42 Interview with Alejandra Cervantes.
43 Interview with Pilar Alonso.
44 Interview with Patricia Carmona, GENDES, August 2015.
45 Interview with Pilar Alonso.
46 Interview with Alejandra Cervantes.
47 Interview with Ximena Andión.
48 Interview with Patricia Carmona.
II. ORGANIZATIONS SAY THAT ECONOMIC VIOLENCE IS MORE SUBTLE, LESS VISIBLE AND, THUS, NEGLECTED

Violence against women can take many forms: physical, economic, sexual, or psychological. Psychological and economic violence,\(^{49}\) in particular, are issues that are often overshadowed by the problems of drug violence, femicide, and trafficking. According to Patricia Carmona of GENDES,

“Gender based violence is less visible – both in the media and in policy – if it’s compared with social violence. Economic violence is not talked about as much in society because it is not seen as being as bad as physical or sexual violence. NGOs work on other forms of violence, as they seem more urgent (though not more important). Femicide violence, sexual violence and domestic violence are the main focus in public policy and NGO work. This is surprising since economic violence is the second most prevalent form of violence according to the 2011 ENDIREH survey.”\(^{50}\)

Luz de la Mora, who works on Vital Voices’ entrepreneurship program, notes that this could be because “violence against women is such a big issue, and women are getting killed. NGOs and the government may feel that first we have to stop the killing, and then stop the trafficking, before we deal with more subtle forms of violence.”\(^{51}\) Patricia Carmona believes that it is funding that drives NGO attention to the issue:

“The trends in NGO work are very influenced by funding trends in the international level. So if an issue starts being well funded – as is the case for human trafficking – there will be more new NGOs that have this social object and many existing ones will adapt their social object to fit if they can.”\(^{52}\)

The lack of attention to the issue is alarming considering its prevalence. Luz de la Mora has observed the subtlety of psychological and economic violence first-hand with their beneficiaries:

“The violence we have seen with the women we work with is more subtle and more difficult to correct. When you have male relatives telling women how to spend their money or time and telling them their family is more important, it’s creating a sense of not being enough or not being a good enough mother. It undermines women’s confidence and makes them question whether they should be doing what they’re doing. I’ve seen women who were passionate about their business or project and had

\(^{49}\) Economic violence can be defined as “behaviors that control a woman’s ability to acquire, use or maintain economic resources, thus threatening her economic security and potential for self-sufficiency”. Adrienne Adams, “The Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse” (Master Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2005). Retrieved from http://vaw.sagepub.com/content/14/5/563

\(^{50}\) Interview with Patricia Carmona, GENDES.

\(^{51}\) Interview with Luz de Mora, Vital Voices, August 2015.

\(^{52}\) Interview with Patricia Carmona.
a high social impact, but their boyfriend or husband discouraged them, and they closed their business.”

Alejandra Cervantes of Migración y Desarrollo works on the economic empowerment of rural women and communities with high migration.

“It was very difficult to get women, mainly young women, out of their houses to participate in trainings. They had to ask for permission from parents, male relatives in the U.S. They pressured them to not participate, not to ‘fool around’ and cut off remittances as payback. Once, we got funds for a field trip for a conference in Mexico City for 30 women in 2009. The day we were supposed to leave, only 10 out of 30 came. We tried to convince women to come and they were afraid. They told us: ‘If I go I will lose support from my family and I need the remittances.’ This is an example of remittances being used as economic violence: it is ‘silent violence’. I have not even heard of any organizations working on economic violence specifically.”

One of the ways organizations can tackle the economic violence facing the beneficiaries in their programs is by including men in programming. According to Patricia Carmona at GENDES, “in urban areas, economic violence is present because male identity is so rooted in being a provider.” What we found working with women is that you also have to work with men to change their view of gender. If you don’t work with men, the backlash [against women] gets worse.” Pilar Alonso has observed, “In so many women’s empowerment projects, if you don’t include men, violence will stay there the moment you leave, as it’s cultural and natural.”

Few organizations seem to be working on the issue of economic violence due to the lack of media and policy attention it generates, and the lack of perceived urgency around the issue as compared to other forms of violence against women, such as trafficking, which receives more funding. In order to tackle economic violence, the government and international organizations will need to increase funding toward programs that address economic violence, and organizations will need to consider including and engaging men in their programming in order to raise awareness about this subtle and invisibilized form of violence.

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53 Interview with Luz de la Mora.
54 Interview with Alejandra Cervantes.
55 Men may feel threatened when women take on economic roles and contribute income to the household. Their source of legitimacy and authority is often derived from their ability to provide income and resources to their family, and they may feel that their female partner is robbing them of this identity with their newfound economic empowerment and/or independence.
56 Interview with Patricia Carmona.
57 Interview with Pilar Alonso.
**SEMILLAS CASE STUDY**

Semillas is an organization that supports women’s groups and indigenous leaders with the common goal of improving the status of women in Mexico. Semillas has made violence against women a cross-cutting issue for its grantees, a decision it made in 2011 during its strategic planning process. Violence is so intimately involved with all its other programs that it wanted to strengthen its anti-violence work. The previous program it operated focusing on violence was a fund to finance organizations that work on the harmonization of federal laws with state laws. Another previous program worked on policy, safe houses, and legal assistance. Semillas was not convinced that funding direct services was strategic enough. It believes that services are the responsibility of the state, so it prioritizes programs that complement these services, and work with organizations on structural issues.

Although grantees working on economic empowerment started seeing positive results from their program, violence against women was an unintended consequence. Semillas saw the necessity for grantees to see how violence is linked to women’s economic empowerment.

To date, Semillas has taken the following actions, among others:

- Cooperatives did not have the resources of know-how to deal with violence against women, how to report to authorities, or provide psychological support to their beneficiaries who may be victims of violence. In the future, Semillas seeks to provide support to specialized grantees to visit the cooperatives and decide on adequate strategies to combat violence against women on the local level.
- An organization Semillas supports developed a guide on how to address violence against women from an intercultural and indigenous perspective (ways to address VAW within indigenous laws), and Semillas helped them present their work to other grantees.
- Semillas holds violence prevention workshops for its grantees during an annual grantee meeting. Facilitators lead discussions with heads of organizations, and create a safe space for these leaders to share their own personal experiences with violence.

Overall, Semillas recognizes that it is difficult to integrate violence prevention and women’s economic empowerment. “What we’re offering is limited, as we don’t have the resources to do something broader and bigger. It is difficult to mobilize resources on a cross-cutting issue.” Semillas sees that a lot of foreign funding is directed towards service provision and less funding is directed towards local solutions on how to build a non-violent culture. It believes that funders need to incentivize emerging organizations to work on preventive measures.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research explores the best practices and challenges that exist for Mexican non-governmental organizations in integrating violence prevention and women’s economic empowerment in their work. NGOs in Mexico have clearly demonstrated a desire and need to integrate violence prevention and economic empowerment in their programming, but lack the resources, capacity, and data to do so.

Very little funding and attention has been devoted to the issue of integration, despite the fact that economic violence is the second most prevalent form of violence. If the government and international stakeholders want to effectively tackle the issue of violence against women, they will have to address economic violence. International funders, such as multilateral organizations and international non-governmental organizations, have a role to play in lobbying the government to pay more attention to economic violence, and to fund programmatic solutions that integrate violence prevention and women’s economic empowerment. In order to strengthen their case, more research needs to be done to understand the effectiveness of these programs within the Mexican context in reducing violence against women. These funders should lead the way by increasing the amount of funding and capacity-building they provide for integrated programs, and by emphasizing the importance of addressing all forms of violence against women. Increased funding will enable organizations to build their capacity to integrate programming and build partnerships.

In conclusion, funders should direct more resources toward:

- **Partnership building**: Funders should encourage, incentivize, and help NGOs to build partnerships and alliances across sectors, and encourage NGOs that feel that domestic violence is a sensitive issue to talk about it. For example, Fundación Banorte organizes a biannual NGO roundtable and collaboration breakfast, which encourages their grantees to partner together.

- **Capacity building**: Many NGOs lack the skills and time to take a step back from their work and learn about how they can integrate violence prevention and/or economic empowerment in their work. For example, funders could hold workshops on violence and economic empowerment for their grantees during their annual grantee meeting.

- **Data collection and research**: Funders should invest more funding in data collection and research on the link between violence prevention and women’s economic empowerment in order to provide NGOs with the business case for integration.

- **Addressing economic violence**: Funding trends have been skewed toward trafficking at the detriment of other forms of gender-based violence, despite the fact that economic violence is the second most prevalent form of violence against women. NGOs will not be able to respond to economic violence without support from their funders.

Organizations should:

- **Review their theories of change** to see how violence prevention and/or economic empowerment can be incorporated to strengthen the effectiveness of
their programs.

- **Consider including men in their programming**, where possible, especially in relation to economic violence.
- **Take into account the different forms of violence**, including economic violence, when addressing violence in their programs.
Annex A: Interview Questions

1. What is the relationship between women's economic participation and domestic violence?
2. Has this link changed in the past decade?
3. How do you feel that research both locally and regionally has helped address this issue?
4. How do your organization's programs address this link?
5. If it is not addressing the link, why?
6. What else needs to be done to address this link (policy, law, etc.)?
# Appendix B: List of Interviewees

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Key informants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Paola Martínez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundación Banorte</td>
<td>Pilar Alonso</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir</td>
<td>Ximena Andión</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semillas</td>
<td>Laura García</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>Karin Mattson</td>
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<td>International Network for Women's Funds</td>
<td>Emilienne De León</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vital Voices</td>
<td>Luz María de la Mora</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development</td>
<td>Erika C. Reyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México</td>
<td>Irene Casique</td>
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<td>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México</td>
<td>Lolis López</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENDES</td>
<td>Patricia Carmona</td>
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<td>Migración y Desarrollo</td>
<td>Alejandra Cervantes</td>
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<td>Fundación ProEmpleo</td>
<td>Carmina Calderón</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida</td>
<td>Regina Tames</td>
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