Submission to the United Nations OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

**CALL FOR INPUT | SPECIAL PROCEDURES**

**ISSUED BY Special Procedures**

**Follow-up to the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls’ country visits to Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Greece, Poland, Honduras, Chad, Samoa, Kuwait and Hungary**

**Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK**

**January 2024**

**By**

**Ariel Ozdemir**

**Luna Plet**

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to addressing human rights violations in the education sector. It was established in October 2020. A multinational team of dedicated human rights advocates collaborates extensively on researching violations in every corner of the world.

The organisation's primary activities include removing obstacles to education, promoting peace and tranquillity in society through intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and eliminating educational opportunity gaps across different demographics.

Broken Chalk works hard in advocacy and lobbying on behalf of these educational victims, engaging with international organisations to prompt action. Additionally, the volunteers and interns working remotely worldwide at Broken Chalk prepare comprehensive reports for international organisations, stakeholders, and governments, highlighting human rights violations in education. These reports aim to draw attention to the often-overlooked aspects of human rights violations, providing stakeholders with a complete understanding and calling for the international community to act in cases where conflict halts access to education and endangers civilians’ lives. This approach ensures that awareness is raised and necessary actions are taken to address these violations. Broken Chalk is genuinely international, achieving a local and global perspective in its work.

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**Honduras**

# Education

## Restricted Access to Education in La Esperanza

The Lenca, indigenous to southwestern Honduras and northeastern El Salvador, reside in approximately 50 villages within a 100-km radius of La Esperanza, the capital city of the mountainous Intibucá department.[[1]](#footnote-1) Most of these villages find themselves on the outskirts of the public education system due to factors such as poverty, age, geographic isolation, gender, and ethnicity. These circumstances collectively contribute to the difficulty in accessing education for many inhabitants.

The educational hurdles for Lenca girls in Honduras, especially in regions like San Francisco de Opalaca, are intricate and deeply influenced by socio-economic, cultural, and geographical factors. These challenges are marked by restricted access to education due to economic constraints, particularly affecting girls pursuing primary education. Gender-sensitive education proves to be a critical aspect of the struggles faced by Lenca girls. Prevailing patriarchal norms pose obstacles to their educational opportunities.

Concerns about the quality of education in public schools, notably in regions like San Francisco de Opalaca, are pronounced. Challenges include limited access to junior high schools in most villages and the geographic obstacles that impede education beyond grade 6.[[2]](#footnote-2) Inadequacies in the education infrastructure, such as a shortage of teachers and insufficient facilities, further hinder the provision of quality education for Lenca girls. Furthermore, with a literacy rate of 30-50%, the Lenca population typically spends an average of only four years in school.[[3]](#footnote-3) This low educational attainment contributes to a pervasive sense of inferiority and a lack of confidence in advocating for a democratic and civil society.

The need for revamping the curriculum to address gender equality, stereotypes, and violence is evident. Emphasis is placed on incorporating human rights workshops to create awareness about gender, cultural, educational, and employment equality.[[4]](#footnote-4) This approach strives to foster an inclusive and supportive educational environment, empowering Lenca girls and addressing societal challenges they encounter.

Stereotypes and violence present additional barriers for Lenca girls in their educational pursuits. Acknowledging these challenges, there is a recognition of the necessity for support meetings, individual counselling, and workshops to address issues related to school, gender inequality, geographic dislocation, and economic disadvantage.[[5]](#footnote-5) These interventions are designed to provide emotional, social, and cultural support while assisting girls in overcoming instances of abuse and exploitation.

While external influences such as military or religious factors are not explicitly mentioned, it remains imperative to consider the potential impact of such influences on education. Ensuring that education remains free from undue political, military, or religious pressures is crucial for fostering a balanced and inclusive learning environment aligned with human rights principles. In summary, the educational challenges faced by Lenca girls encompass a spectrum of factors, from economic constraints to gender inequality, hindrances in accessing quality education, and the imperative for adaptable curricula. Efforts to address these challenges aim to provide educational opportunities, empower girls, and create a supportive environment that extends beyond academic learning to encompass broader societal issues.

## Gender-Sensitive Education in El Progreso

In Honduras, fostering healthy masculinities emerges as a crucial strategy for achieving gender equality and combatting deeply ingrained gender-based discrimination.[[6]](#footnote-6) The negative impacts of patriarchal models of masculinity extend beyond reinforcing gender inequalities affecting women and girls; they also perpetuate issues such as bullying, depression, harassment, and child marriage among boys and men. The prevalence of gender disparities in education perpetuates cycles of limited opportunities for girls, hindering overall progress. Girls facing higher risks of sexual violence and potential child marriages find education to be a crucial shield against such adversities.[[7]](#footnote-7) The investment in girls' education emerges as a potent disruptor of the cycle of poverty, enabling them to challenge societal norms and emerge as advocates for gender equality~~.~~

Efforts to promote healthy masculinities in Honduras involve creating safe spaces for boys and young men to reflect on harmful masculinity's impacts within their communities. Through initiatives led by organisations like the Global Fund for Children, grassroots efforts are gaining momentum.[[8]](#footnote-8) These initiatives focus on transforming social attitudes related to dominant masculinity and gender roles, encouraging nonviolent expressions of masculinity that prioritise empathy, care, and respect.

Key principles guiding these transformative initiatives include the understanding that healthy masculinities are an ongoing individual and collective process integral to community well-being. The process is sustained by care and joy, recognising progress and setbacks, and incorporating art, play, and creativity to connect with boys and young men on a deeper level. Promoting healthy masculinities begins with the individual, encouraging self-discovery, emotional expression, and breaking free from rigid gender stereotypes.

Crucially, fostering healthy masculinities is not merely an action but an identity, requiring responsible facilitation~~.~~ The ultimate goal is to empower boys and young men to be allies in the pursuit of gender justice, challenging societal norms and contributing to the eradication of gender-based violence, including manifestations like child marriage.

In countries like Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico, local organisations, with support from entities like the Global Fund for Children, are at the forefront of creating youth-led, culturally-based programs and safe spaces. These initiatives aim to redefine masculinity, promote comprehensive sexuality education, and advance gender justice, acknowledging the integral role boys and men play in achieving equality for all.

## Revamping the curriculum to address violence

In Honduras, persistent violence and the resulting family breakdown due to irregular out-migration have severe consequences for young individuals, leaving them vulnerable to the influence of gangs and hindering educational pursuits. To address this critical issue, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) spearheads the School-Based Violence Prevention Activity, locally known as Asegurando la Educación, spanning 200 schools across 11 Honduran cities.[[9]](#footnote-9) This initiative aims to cultivate secure and inclusive learning environments, discouraging youth from migrating and empowering them to embrace education, graduate, and build careers within their local communities.

With Honduras grappling with the highest femicide rate in Latin America and elevated rates of violence against women and girls, Asegurando employs a comprehensive approach. The program integrates a gender and social inclusion (GESI) lens into its activities, recognising the pivotal role of awareness, equity, and inclusion in tackling gender-based violence. Social-emotional learning programs, including Influencer 504 and School-for-Parents, are crucial in challenging entrenched gender stereotypes. Asegurando also actively involves school leaders and committees in training sessions, emphasising equal gender roles and gender-based violence prevention.

The initiative acknowledges the deeply ingrained social norms affecting all genders in Honduras. It confronts these norms by providing educators with tools such as the Educators for Peace and Teacher Well-being programs. These programs address various forms of violence impacting education, incorporating gender concepts, stereotypes, and social norms into their curriculum. Asegurando's multifaceted approach extends to psychosocial support for students, particularly those at risk of falling victim to or becoming perpetrators of violence in the school community.

By championing respect, equity, and inclusion as fundamental social norms, Asegurando endeavours to create a tangible impact preventing gender-based violence in schools. Collaborating with the Ministry of Education, the program seeks to institutionalise and scale these school-based violence prevention practices, ensuring that authorities, teachers, and students are well-equipped to foster safe learning environments and combat gender-based violence effectively.

# Gender Realities of Migration in La Esperanza

## Fleeing Violence

The regions surrounding La Esperanza witness a disturbing surge in violence, compelling families and individuals to seek refuge elsewhere. The migration experience exposes women and girls to heightened vulnerability, increasing the risk of physical and sexual abuse. This underscores the pressing need for comprehensive interventions and support mechanisms.

Consider the experiences of individuals during migration, where the stories highlight the complex layers of violence faced by women in transit. These narratives emphasise the necessity for targeted support to shield them from gender-based violence throughout the migration process. Beyond individual stories, it is crucial to acknowledge the broader context of violence in the region, including reports of rising organised crime and gang-related activities. This contributes to an overall atmosphere of insecurity, further complicating the challenges faced by women and girls and making them more susceptible to exploitation and harm during their journey.[[10]](#footnote-10)

## Escaping Poverty

The economic challenges in La Esperanza perpetuate a persistent struggle against poverty, disproportionately affecting women and girls and limiting their access to education and employment opportunities.[[11]](#footnote-11) The migration crisis, driven by economic desperation, exacerbates these disparities, deepening the cycle of discrimination.

Consider the situation of a talented young student compelled to abandon her education due to economic constraints. The migration crisis further restricts opportunities, highlighting the critical link between economic struggles and discrimination against young girls.[[12]](#footnote-12) Addressing this issue is pivotal for breaking the cycle and creating opportunities for socio-economic advancement. Delving into the economic factors contributing to the migration crisis reveals challenges such as unequal distribution of resources, lack of job opportunities, and limited access to credit.[[13]](#footnote-13) These structural issues push individuals, particularly women, towards migration to escape economic hardship, emphasising the need for comprehensive economic reforms.

## Lack of Economic Opportunities

The scarcity of economic prospects in La Esperanza drives many towards migration in search of better opportunities. However, women and girls encounter additional barriers in accessing employment and resources, perpetuating gender-based discrimination and hindering their socio-economic advancement.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Consider the experiences of a skilled artisan whose talents are constrained by limited market access. The migration crisis further marginalised individuals like her, underscoring the need for targeted initiatives to empower women economically.[[15]](#footnote-15) Addressing the lack of economic opportunities is crucial for breaking the cycle of discrimination and fostering an environment where women can thrive and contribute meaningfully. Beyond individual stories, it's essential to examine the broader economic landscape, including challenges such as an informal economy, limited access to credit for women entrepreneurs, and a lack of infrastructure for small businesses. These factors limit economic opportunities and contribute to gender disparities in La Esperanza, emphasising the necessity of targeted economic policies to uplift women and create sustainable livelihoods.

# Privatisation and Vulnerability: A Gender Perspective

## Economic Vulnerability

The wave of privatisation sweeping through regions like La Esperanza has profound implications for economic structures. Disadvantaged groups, especially women in poverty, find themselves on the front lines of vulnerability[[16]](#footnote-16). The privatisation of essential services, such as healthcare and education, often results in increased costs and reduced accessibility[[17]](#footnote-17). This economic strain disproportionately affects women, limiting their access to vital resources and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

Consider the impact on single mothers in La Esperanza who face difficulties providing for their families due to increased costs in healthcare and education. The economic burden placed on women in similar situations not only hinders their ability to escape poverty but also amplifies gender disparities, emphasising the need for a nuanced understanding of the economic consequences of privatisation[[18]](#footnote-18).

Moreover, examining the broader economic landscape reveals that privatisation can contribute to income inequality[[19]](#footnote-19). As key industries are privatised, profits often concentrate in the hands of a few, exacerbating existing disparities. Women in poverty, with limited access to economic opportunities, bear the brunt of this inequality, facing increased difficulties in breaking free from the cycle of economic vulnerability[[20]](#footnote-20).

## Educational Disparities

The privatisation of education can exacerbate existing disparities, particularly for women living in poverty. Reduced government funding often leads to higher fees, limiting access to quality education for disadvantaged communities[[21]](#footnote-21). Women and girls, already facing obstacles in pursuing education, find themselves further marginalised by the privatisation of schooling[[22]](#footnote-22).

Consider the challenges faced by promising young students in La Esperanza who experience increased fees due to their schools' privatisation, leading to their education's abandonment. This educational setback not only perpetuates the cycle of poverty but also underscores the gendered impact of privatisation on educational opportunities for women and girls.

Expanding on the educational aspect, it's essential to recognise that privatisation can lead to a reduction in educational resources. Privatised institutions may prioritise profit over educational quality, leaving women in poverty with fewer educational support systems. This, in turn, perpetuates systemic disadvantages, limiting the potential for upward mobility through education.

## Healthcare Challenges

Privatisation in the healthcare sector can pose significant challenges for vulnerable populations, particularly women. As essential healthcare services become privatised, the financial burden on impoverished women intensifies, limiting their access to crucial medical support. The lack of affordable healthcare options further entrenches gender disparities in health outcomes[[23]](#footnote-23).

Consider the experiences of women in La Esperanza grappling with health issues exacerbated by the privatisation of healthcare services. The financial strain forces them to forego necessary medical treatments, highlighting the detrimental impact of privatisation on the health and well-being of women in poverty.

Expanding on healthcare challenges, privatisation often results in a shift towards profit-oriented models, where preventive and primary healthcare take a back seat[[24]](#footnote-24). This disproportionately affects women, who may face barriers to accessing reproductive health services and maternal care[[25]](#footnote-25). The gendered consequences of privatisation on healthcare outcomes underscore the urgent need for inclusive healthcare policies.

## Employment Insecurity

Privatisation often leads to changes in the labour market, impacting job security and working conditions. Disadvantaged women, relying on vulnerable employment opportunities, face increased insecurity as privatised industries prioritise profit over worker welfare[[26]](#footnote-26). The privatisation-induced shifts in the labour market disproportionately affect women in poverty, leaving them with precarious employment situations.

Consider the real-life impact on workers, including many women, in a privatised industry who face job cuts and reduced labour protections. This underscores the gendered vulnerabilities that emerge after privatisation, emphasising the need for policies that safeguard women's rights in the workforce.

Expanding on employment insecurity, privatisation can contribute to the informalisation of labour, leaving women in poverty without job security, social protection, or access to benefits[[27]](#footnote-27). This perpetuates a cycle of economic vulnerability, making it imperative to address the gendered dimensions of employment instability in the context of privatisation[[28]](#footnote-28).

In light of these challenges, it is crucial to recognise the gendered dimensions of privatisation's impact on vulnerable groups, especially women living in poverty. Insights, research findings, and recommendations from the international community are essential to inform policies that mitigate the adverse effects of privatisation on gender equality and promote inclusive, rights-based approaches.

# Femicide

## Current Situation of Femicide and SGBV in Honduras

Despite a significant decrease since a peak in 2013, the country still experiences severely high rates of femicide and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). As of mid-2018, Honduras has the highest reported rates of femicide in Latin America when adjusted for population.[[29]](#footnote-29) Moreover, the Instituto Universitario en Democracia, Paz y Seguridad, as part of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras’ (IUDPAS-UNAH) stated in their Observatorio Nacional de la Violencia (ONV) 2019 report that Honduras saw a significant increase in violence and femicides in that year, particularly during the ramping-up of the Covid-19 pandemic. While these rates of reported incidents of violence decreased slightly in 2020 and 2021, they have picked up again in 2022 and 2023.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Furthermore, ONV-IUDPAS-UNAH has reported an increase in the cruelty of femicides, as evidenced by the fact that 34.2% of femicides in 2018 demonstrated signs of excessive cruelty while in 2022, it increased to 51.0% (here meaning a level of cruelty that goes above the effectiveness of the crime, including the combined use of weapons and means to kill, mutilate, dismember, and/or disfigure).[[31]](#footnote-31)

These rates point to systemic issues that are impacting crime rates across Honduras. However, while violence is a systemic and deep-rooted issue within the country, the experiences of violence are unique to the various communities and identities targeted, as well as the individual victims. As such, attempts to lower rates of homicide, femicide, and SGBV must take into account the intersecting factors that exacerbate experiences of violence for the most marginalised members of the country – including but not limited to racism, classism, misogyny, ableism, ageism, and homophobia.

In light of this, the lack of accessible data that disaggregates femicides and SGBV based on identities is both concerning and telling. Most major reports on femicides, domestic violence, and SGBV publish, at most, information about the occupations, ages, and regions where the victims lived. Other readily available information pertains to the nature of the crime – the method of the crime and weapon used, the relation of the victim to the perpetrator, the location of the crime, etc. However, it is extremely difficult to find information as to sexuality, gender identity (beyond the binary), class, ability, or ethnicity of the victims and perpetrators. While the TGEU’s trans murder monitoring map does provide preliminary data on the number of trans people in Honduras, their map does caution that the collected data does not include all countries and that not all trans and gender-diverse murder victims are identified as such in the reports of their deaths. Regardless, TGEU’s map highlights Honduras as having the highest number of murders of trans people of any country recorded, with 11,487 murders per 100 million inhabitants between 2008-2023.[[32]](#footnote-32) Further reliable data collection and reporting within major organisations and data analysis institutions is still lacking. As a result, the intersecting oppressions of such things as racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and classism and their combined impact on the lived experiences of violence of different individuals and communities remain obscured. This could be a result of a lack of data on victim/perpetrator identities in police reports or a lack of institutional awareness of the importance of gathering such information. The lack of inclusion of readily available and reliable data on the intersecting identities of victims and perpetrators plays an active role in the concealment of these intersecting oppressions and both daily and long-term experiences of systemic violence, which, in turn, results in inadequate attention paid within socio-political discourse to these issues.

## Femicide, SGBV, and the Covid-19 Pandemic

As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic saw a significant increase in cases of femicides, SGBV, and domestic violence. In April 2020 alone, during the height of the pandemic, there were over 10,000 reports of physical violence against women.[[33]](#footnote-33) Likewise, while there had been a steady annual decrease in femicides since 2014 after a record high in 2013, this promising decline ended in 2019, with a 4.7% increase in victims compared to 2018, equalling a death every 29 hours and 36 minutes.[[34]](#footnote-34)

According to PBI Honduras, one of the primary reasons for the increase in femicide and domestic violence during the pandemic was the fact that men were spending more time than ever at home, and women and girls' freedom of movement was severely restricted. Coupled with factors such as a highly machista society, increased food insecurity, increased financial insecurity and economic inequality, economic dependence on aggressors, lack of healthcare resources, and difficulties in accessing preventative and responsive resources, the pandemic worsened an already precarious situation and shed light on systemic issues within Honduras’ response to femicide and SGBV.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Notably, significantly fewer women called the National Emergency System to report instances of domestic violence during the pandemic. This decrease is attributed to a lack of follow-up on reports of domestic violence, officials refusing to travel to register new complaints, as well as fear and economic dependence upon the aggressor.[[36]](#footnote-36) Impunity is a deep-rooted issue in Honduras, a country in which less than half of the approximately 200,000 annual reports of domestic violence received by the Supreme Court see any follow-through. The weak response to reports of domestic violence impacts femicide rates since many occurrences of domestic violence, when unaddressed, can escalate into femicide.[[37]](#footnote-37) Since its criminalisation in 2013, only 15 cases of femicide in Honduras have resulted in conviction.[[38]](#footnote-38) Some civil society organisations say that over 90% of reported femicides go unpunished.[[39]](#footnote-39) These issues of widespread impunity were exacerbated by the pandemic and contributed to an increasingly precarious and unsafe situation for Honduran women.

In the unique case of Honduras, the impacts of the pandemic on femicides and SGBV were intensified by the ongoing reverberations of authoritarianism following the 2009 coup and ensuing narco-dictatorship. The authoritarian government ushered in an era of corruption, impunity, and militarisation. Suyapa Martínez, a member of the Tegucigalpa-based feminist organisation CEM-H, says that "the militarisation of the country since the coup has increased the threat to women's lives, there are guns everywhere, and we know that the police have links to criminal gangs"[[40]](#footnote-40) Human rights advocates assert that the government took advantage of the pandemic to increase control and crack down on vulnerable and marginalised communities and those who opposed any aspects of the government.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The coup and resulting authoritarian government also led to a growth in machismo culture within the country. Machismo is not specific to Honduras, nor did it originate in 2009 – many scholars trace its roots back to the colonial projects in Latin America as "the product of the rape of indigenous women, the response to indigenous imperial ritual, and the sublimation of indigenous male sexuality" as well as a "response to social and religious control of the male body”.[[42]](#footnote-42) However, authoritarianism allowed for machismo to become ingrained into Honduran institutions and society, which, in turn, acted as a catalyst for femicide, corruption, and institutional impunity.[[43]](#footnote-43) In this sense, machismo must be understood not as discrete unequal power relations between individuals but as a characterisation of the broader power structures embedded within Honduras' socio-political, financial, and cultural institutions.[[44]](#footnote-44)

These intersecting factors are highlighted in the murder of Keyla Martínez in police custody in the department of Intibucá in La Esperanza, after being detained for breaking the pandemic curfew in February 2021. Honduran National Police officers claimed Martínez was drunk and disorderly at a traffic stop due to breaking curfew, while friends claimed she had been sober. The officers further claimed that Martínez had attempted suicide in her cell and was taken alive to the hospital, despite doctors asserting that she was dead upon arrival and could not have died during transport. The medical examiner asserted that she had died as a result of strangulation, ruling her death a homicide. Dr. Edgard Velásquez Orellana, who was detained with Martínez but separated upon arrival at the police station, claims he heard Martínez yelling for help. He is currently in hiding due to fears of retribution from the police.[[45]](#footnote-45) Karol Bobadilla, the lawyer in Martínez’s case and member of Foro de Mujeres por la Vida (Forum of Women for Life), a feminist civic organisation, stated that this case highlights "how these cases have been handled for a long time, and how public institutions have established a pattern of labelling femicides as suicide.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Olivia Zúniga Cáceres, congresswoman, member of the Libertad y Refundación party, and daughter of the Indigenous environmental activist Berta Cáceres, stated that “the suspension of constitutional rights, supposedly to curtail Covid, has not reduced the level of infection, but has increased the systematic violation of human rights by the police. Women are not safe at home, in the streets, or in custody”.[[47]](#footnote-47) Berta Cáceres herself was murdered in 2016 in retaliation for leading a campaign to stop the construction of a hydroelectric dam, which was initially falsely claimed to have been a "crime of passion" by the then minister of public security Julian Pacheco – who himself had alleged ties to the company hired to build the dam.

Corruption also hindered governmental public health support and economic relief efforts, contributing to the economic crisis and increased violence against women. For example, the $420 million response package passed by the National Congress in March 2020 is stated to have ignored contracting regulations and evaded the National Anticorruption Council (CNA) to authorise the construction of 94 health centres, which were never built.[[48]](#footnote-48) In a similar case, the anti-corruption and anti-violence organisation Association for a More Just Society (ASJ) found that the government overpaid an agency for seven mobile hospitals by over $12 million.[[49]](#footnote-49) The prevalence of corruption and impunity within governmental and healthcare institutions factored heavily into the ineffectiveness of institutional response and prevention mechanisms for femicide and SGBV.

The 2021 election of Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento saw the end of the authoritarian Partido Nacional and ushered in new hope for free, democratic, and effective Honduran institutional systems.[[50]](#footnote-50) The current administration has begun debating several new laws aimed at strengthening SGBV prevention and protection efforts.[[51]](#footnote-51) Moreover, on March 1, 2022, the National Congress repealed the Law for the Classification of Public Documents Related to National Security and Defense (commonly known as the Secrets Law), marking a major step towards increased transparency and anti-corruption efforts.[[52]](#footnote-52) However, optimism for the new administration must be met with caution. The legacy of authoritarianism cannot be easily removed, and the shadow of corruption, impunity, and rampant disregard for the safety of women are embedded deep within Honduran institutions. The International Crisis Group cautions against excessive optimism over the new administration's supposed progress on reforms and points to President Xiomara Castro's return to heavy-handed tactics to address corruption and crime as a sign that the future of reforms is under threat.[[53]](#footnote-53)

## Femicide and Violence in a “post-COVID” world

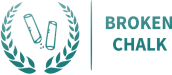
While Covid hasn't disappeared, much of the world is renegotiating its relationship with the pandemic, and we are arguably entering a somewhat "post-COVID" era. As such, it is vital to understand the long-term impacts of the pandemic on femicide and SGBV in Honduras. One of the primary long-term impacts affecting women's security is decreased economic security and autonomy for women. Poverty and lack of economic and labour opportunities have long been established as a determining factor in rates of violence, in which "violence should be viewed as the product of several chains of events that ultimately lead to it”.[[54]](#footnote-54) Investigations into SGBV in Honduras demonstrate that the worsened economic conditions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic through government-mandated curfews and loss of employment, which intersected with the crises of mass displacement as a result of Hurricane Iota and Eta disproportionately affected marginalised communities such as women and those living in poverty.[[55]](#footnote-55) In this era of economic disaster, “Women were pushed further down the economic ladder and have been more likely than men to experience unemployment”.[[56]](#footnote-56) While the IMF has reported that Real GDP is now above pre-pandemic levels and inflation is slowly easing, women’s economic empowerment continues to be an area in need of financial and institutional support.

## Violence Response and Prevention: Areas for Improvement

The rampant use and availability of firearms poses a significant barrier to women’s safety and security. According to anONV-IUDPAS-UNAH report, in 2022, firearms were used in half of all reported intimate femicides (here referring to femicides committed by past or current partners of the victim, including husbands, partners, boyfriends, or suitors). The UNODC Global Firearms Programme signed a Letter of Understanding with the Cabinet of Prevention, Security, and Defence of Honduras on November 8, 2019. However, despite this promising action towards increased regulation of firearms in the country, the Honduran government has taken little further action to restrict access to firearms. Strong efforts to remove firearms from circulation and limit future access to firearms would play a significant role in reducing femicides, homicides, and SGBV.

Shelters and safe houses are fundamental to response mechanisms and violence prevention. Shelters offer a multitude of important resources for vulnerable communities, including prevention and care services for victims of SGBV, as well as accompaniment and advocacy services. A draft law on Safe Houses was passed by the National Congress in 2018 but has not been debated since. The law aims to provide state funding to the ten existing shelters in Honduras and ensure that they do not rely solely on international funding and cooperation. On August 12th, 2022, two meetings were held in which the draft proposal was shared with the Minister of the Secretariat for Women's Affairs (SEMUJER), the Vice-President of the National Congress, and other relevant political actors to advance its approval and/or inclusion in other laws being passed. The meeting was also attended by various civil society organisations, such as the Casa Hogar Foundation and the Network Against Gender Violence of Santa Rosa de Copán.[[57]](#footnote-57) However, no further progress on this law has occurred. Passing the Safe Houses or similar law is an integral step to providing and safeguarding adequate resources for those seeking refuge from violent environments and offers a vital step towards severing the pipeline from occurrences of domestic violence to femicide.

Ciudad Mujer (CM), a program created by the Honduran government, aims to provide services to women and girls, such as services aimed at increasing economic independence, violence prevention, decreasing teenage pregnancies, and providing sexual and reproductive health services.[[58]](#footnote-58) In a report by CM, certain program strengths and weaknesses were outlined. Strengths of the program included strong political support and public opinion, a relatively good governance structure, successfully managing to begin the operation of the first two centres, and adapting to local contexts.[[59]](#footnote-59) Weaknesses included issues with administrative structures and management models, as well as operational links and coordination and communication between the National Directorate, Centers, and Management levels. Other weaknesses involved issues with the complete and timely provision of services, monitoring that provision, and holding onto the support of strategic, political, and technical bodies. Furthermore, questions were raised about a lack of effective long-term training plans for female employees.[[60]](#footnote-60) Further, CM operations need to address these structural and implementational issues to provide adequate services and ensure the program's long-term viability.



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