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THE FEMINIZATION OF MIGRATIONS:

Testimony of Venezuelan migrant women

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The Feminization of Migrations: Testimony of Venezuelan migrant women

by: **Dhayana Carolina Fernández-Matos**[1]



It is common to say that mobility is not a new fact in history, on the contrary, it has been a constant in people's lives since time immemorial. And it is said people and not men, because it is necessary to recognize that women have moved and displaced since a very long time. It should be remembered that most societies are patrilocal, which means that, historically, women have left their home or place of origin to move and live where their husband was. Thus, women have been migrants by definition, while men could remain in their place of origin for life (Juliano, 2000).

Despite the fact that women's mobility is not a recent event, it is to analyze their experiences, needs and life paths, taking into account their particularities and viewing them as subjects of a project of their own life, not as an appendix to men, who were traditionally considered the central subjects of migratory processes. In this hand, to talk about the feminization of migration[2] does not imply a vertiginous increased in the proportion of women in human mobility – who currently represent 49% of the world migrant population and, in the Latin-American case, 50.1% (Ayuda en Acción, 2018)–, but to determine that gender, unequal power relations among men and women, the distribution of material and symbolic resources, become an organizing and structuring principle of the migratory process (Domínguez and Contreras, 2017). In other words, that men and women do not have the same experiences, so it should be visualized how each of these groups lives migration, according to their gender.

It is important to note that gender, by itself, does not explain differences and mainly, the inequalities that can occur, but it is necessary to incorporate an intersectional approach, which allows to understand how in the identity of people different categories intersect, including race, social class, ethnic origin, national origin, sexual orientation, among others, which can lead to the configuration of mechanisms of production and reproduction of multiple inequalities and forms of domination (Magliano, 2015).

A gender and intersectional perspective, for example, allows to assess the multiple present exclusions in the life of Venezuelan indigenous women who are forced to leave behind their territories in search of better living conditions. In these circumstances, it is highly probable that they share with other migrants the gender (being women), social class (being poor), national origin (being Venezuelans), but their identity is interwoven by other domination systems, among them their ethnic origin, which deepens their vulnerability to the extend they are excluded for being indigenous, because it is not understood the meaning for them of abandoning their ancestral territories and, moreover, not infrequently, because the lack of documents in them is even more serious (Velandia, 2020): it is not about they don't possess a passport, nor the visa to enter to a determine country, it is that

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2 This research assumes that in economic migration, people also flee situations in which their economic, social, cultural and labor rights have been violated, Therefore, in these cases, forced migration would also be present (Gzesh, 2008; Castles, 2003). That is why we refer to migration in the broad sense.

they never obtained a Venezuelan identification document. This implies that not only are they in an administrative irregular status in the host country, but that in their own country of origin, Venezuela, they do not have assured the human right to identity.

In addition to the intersectional and gender approaches, the human rights approach should be added, which implies the recognition of the rights of all people because they are born. States, in signing and ratifying international human rights instruments, recognize their universal character and therefore cannot argue the existence of differences in national, ethnic, gender or any other origin, to cease guaranteeing them to persons who are not nationals in their territory. In this sense, it is important to note that there are no "illegal" people because the law is subsequent to being a person. Furthermore, treating someone like that means denying the human right to legal personality (Fernández-Matos et al., 2018).

Nor is it correct to refer to migrants as "irregular", it should be borne in mind that those who construct migration as a social problem are the states themselves (Domenech, 2017), that implies that the irregularity is due to decisions of a political and normative nature, not to a condition of people who, being treated as "illegal or irregular" are stigmatized, which contributes to their exclusion and criminalization.

The correct way to refer to those who do not have documents to stay in a given country, according to its laws, is that of "persons in an irregular administrative situation". In the case of Venezuelan migration, considered the largest mass exodus in Latin-America by the number of people who have left their country of origin (5,478,377 in total) and the rapidity with which this phenomenon has operated-only comparable to the exodus of persons of Syrian origin leaving in the context of an armed conflict-, It is estimated that more than half are in irregular administrative status (only 2,467,675 have a residence or regular stay permit) (Platform R4V, 5 February 2021). Within this group, the largest proportion is found in neighboring countries.

This is a south-south migration since more than 75% of the entire migrant population is concentrated in countries of the region: Colombia with the highest percentage (31.6% of the total), Peru (19.2%), Chile (8.4%) and Ecuador (7.6%). With regard to the number of women in these migratory flows, it is very difficult to know with any certainty, due to the way in which the information is collected and the statistical limitations that do not incorporate a gender approach. This is a serious problem that must be denounced, since it affects public policies and strategies for the care of migrants; since the number of women and girls is unknown, their needs tend to become invisible.

One of the factors to bear in mind when talking about Venezuelan migration to States in South America is that these are characterized -like most countries in the region- by a marked social stratification, a persistent economic inequality (Herrera, 2016) and a high rate of informality[3]. These are complex societies, with unresolved structural problems -including poverty and social discrimination- and, before the massive influx of Venezuelan migrants, already had high crime rates[4]. To these data must be added the high index of gender-based violence. It should be borne in mind that Latin America is the region of the world where there are the greatest risks for women: 29.8% of women have been victims of violence by their partner and 10.7% have suffered sexual violence outside the couple (UN News, 2017). Without counting the invisible number of cases that are unknown because they are not reported.

The Venezuelan population is moved to these territories, where the greatest percentage of those in an irregular administrative situation is concentrated, who have left Venezuela without an organized migration project because it has been the severe humanitarian crisis, the economic and socio-

3 By 2018, the rate of informality in Latin America was estimated at 53%, which involved about 140 million workers (ILO, 2018). With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the loss of employment of many people, this number has increased significantly.

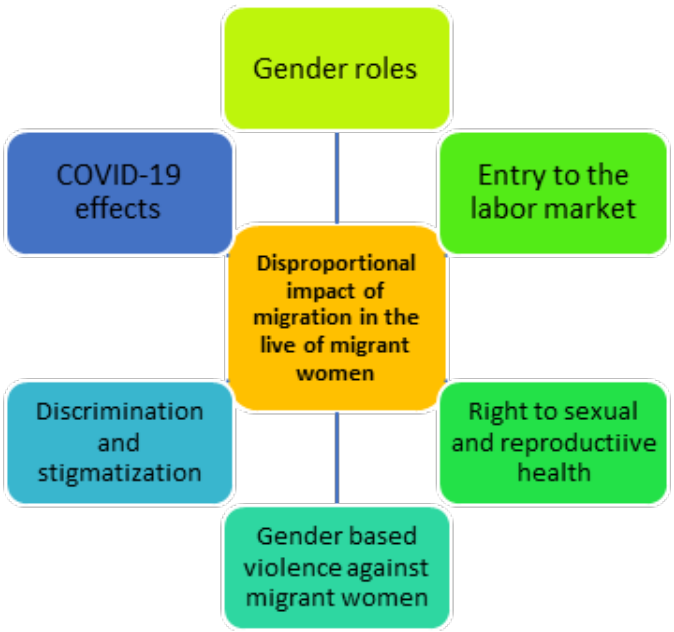
4 According to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants in Colombia was 35.7 in 2012 (before the mass exodus of Venezuelans) and 25.3 in 2018. In Ecuador, in 2012 it was 12.4 and in 2018 it was 5.8. In Peru, it was 6.7 in 2012 and in 2017 it was 7.9. Chile data not available (UNODC website). These data dispel the belief that the number of homicides and in general, criminality, has increased with the arrival of migrants from Venezuela.

political situation in the country that has prompted them to do so: is the permanent violation of their rights to food, health and, in general, to decent living conditions, which results in their displacement, in most cases, without sufficient financial resources, which leads many people to travel thousands of miles by bus or even on foot (Human Rights Council, 2019), in circumstances where risks are increased and vulnerability is exacerbated. They arrive to societies also marked by inequalities and lack of guarantees for the exercise of the human rights of their nationals that, before the arrival of the other, perceive a threat, a risk, to the already poor work possibilities and obtention of livelihoods.

In this context, the Venezuelan migrant population suffers from situations of discrimination, violation of human rights and social exclusion, which do not affect all persons in the same way. The migration process has a disproportionate impact on the lives of women and girls, who are increasingly affected by gender inequalities linked to traditional roles, mainly with regard to care; various manifestations of gender-based violence; entry into the labor market in precarious conditions; lack of guarantees for the exercise of their right to health, including sexual and reproductive health; discrimination and sexual stigmatization of national origin and, finally, in the current circumstances, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 1).

In the following pages, reference will be made to each of the factors identified in Figure 1, with the exception of gender-based violence against women, which will be addressed in another report. First, the testimonies of Venezuelan migrant women interviewed and, secondly, secondary sources have been taken into account[5].

Figure 1



5 In relation to the testimonies, these were obtained from two fieldworks: the first, through face-to-face interviews conducted between the months of September 2019 and March 2020 to seventeen (17) Venezuelan migrant women in the department of Atlántico, Colombia. The second, through virtual interviews, conducted between 2017 and 2020 (before the Covid-19 pandemic) to 22 professional Venezuelan women, living in: Canada (1); Colombia (2); Chile (3); Ecuador (4); Spain (3); United States (2); France (1); Luxembourg (1); Panama (1); Peru (2); Dominican Republic (1) and United Kingdom (1). In both investigations, a questionnaire of semi-structured questions was applied -but broad enough for the interviewees to feel freedom to express themself- referring to the reasons for which they left Venezuela, their couple relationship, the condition of insertion in the host country and in a broad way, on their human rights. To ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees, their names were changed.

I) Human rights of migrant women

Human rights, in general, can be defined as inherent human attributes that States are obliged to respect, guarantee and fulfil. However, it is important to note that this definition does not allow certain experiences that affect women because they are women and that need to be known to ensure the protection of their rights in a comprehensive manner. They are linked to: 1) The prohibition of discrimination on the ground of being women; 2) The exercise of the rights to sexual and reproductive health; and 3) The right of every woman to a life free from violence.

Thus, a comprehensive definition of women's human rights is presented by Gloria Bonder (2012, s.n.):

> ***The inherent and universal right of every woman in the world to live a life free from fear, discrimination and violence, being master of her body and mind, enjoying sexual and reproductive autonomy; both in the public and private spheres; both in times of peace, as of war. This right is, in turn, a prerequisite for the effective enjoyment by women of the full range of human rights.***

It should be reiterated that migrant women, including those in an irregular administrative situation, have human rights and are universal, indivisible, interdependent and non-hierarchical.

The universality discussed here refers to the fact that all migrant women have a set of rights that can be exercised anywhere without being limited by not being a national of a particular country[6].

Where are human rights written? They are contained in the international treaties, agreements and conventions that States sign and ratify, with which they undertake to ensure the exercise of these rights by all persons within their territory.

There are international instruments that refer in general to the rights of all persons and there are others that refer to a specific group that, for historical reasons, have been in a socially disadvantaged situation, among these groups are migrant women.

That said, it is important to bear in mind the set of international instruments adopted in the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS) that protect migrant women (Table 1).

6 The only limit is in political rights, the right to vote and to be elected to popular representative bodies, which continue to be anchored to components linked to national sovereignty and therefore require citizenship.

Table 1
International instruments protecting the human rights of migrant women

General: They correspond to all people
• Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948).
• International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN, 1966).
• International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN, 1966).
• American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (OAS, 1948).
• American Convention on Human Rights (OAS, 1969).
• Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Field of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Protocol of San Salvador" (OAS, 1988).
Specific: That protect migrant workers
• International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (UN, 1990). This convention establishes a set of rights that all migrants have by virtue of being persons, including life, freedom of expression, the prohibition of torture, etc. They are those that appear in general international instruments. Then there are the rights **linked to the fact of being a migrant, regardless of whether their administrative situation is regular or irregular**, among these: recognition of their legal personality; they may not be the subject of collective expulsion measures. In addition, they shall enjoy treatment no less favorable than that accorded to nationals of the State of employment in respect of remuneration and other conditions of work. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that migrant workers are not deprived of any of the rights deriving from this principle because of irregularities in their stay or employment. In particular, the employers shall not be exempted from any legal or contractual obligations, nor shall their obligations be limited in any way by reason of any such irregularities. This means that being in an irregular administrative situation does not mean that labor rights are lost. The rights of **migrants who are documented or in a regular administrative situation**. Right to be fully informed by the State of origin or by the State of employment, as appropriate, of all the conditions applicable to their admission and, in particular, those relating to their stay and to the gainful activities which they may engage in, as well as the requirements to be met in the State of employment and the authorities to which they must apply in order to have those conditions modified, among others (Fernández-Matos et al., 2018).
Specifics: That protect women
• Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979).
• Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (UN, 1993).
• Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Pará Convention) (OAS, 1994).

Source: Prepared on the basis of international instruments.

In this way, it can be pointed out that migrant women enjoy all the human rights that the rest of the people have, except the politic rights. In addition, they have the rights due to being migrant workers and being women. Some of the human rights of migrant women, both documented and in an irregular administrative situation, will be presented below (Table 2).

Table 2
Human Rights of migrant women

EQUALITY. All migrant women are born free and equal to men and non-migrants in dignity and rights. States must guarantee them equal protection of the law in all circumstances. Neither being a woman nor being a migrant should be an obstacle to the exercise of their rights.
DIGNIFIED LIFE. All migrant women have the right to life, liberty and security. They may not be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. There is an absolute prohibition of slavery, servitude and trafficking in persons. In the latter case, there is a strengthened protection that obliges States to act with due diligence when the victim is a migrant woman, by virtue of her vulnerability.
JUSTICE. All migrant women have the right to access to justice and to effective judicial protection. In case that legal proceedings are instituted against them, they are entitled to due process, regardless of their immigration status.
MOBILITY. All migrant women have the right to freedom of movement and residence. In addition, they have the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country. They have the right to seek and enjoy asylum in any country. MOBILITY IS A HUMAN RIGHT.
FREEDOMS. Migrant women enjoy the same freedoms as other people: of thought, conscience and religion; to develop freely and fully their personality, without arbitrary interference in their lives and respect for their privacy. To decide freely about their body and their lives, among other freedoms.
EMPLOYMENT. Migrant women are entitled to equal pay, including benefits, and to equal treatment with respect to work of equal value, and equal treatment with regard to the evaluation of the quality of work without their immigration status being a limit for the exercise of this right.
HEALTH. All migrant women have the right to an adequate standard of living that ensures their health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services. Besides, States should guarantee migrant women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, childbirth and the post-natal period, providing free services when necessary and ensuring adequate nutrition during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
EDUCATION. All migrant women have the right to education on an equal basis with the rest of the population.
TO A LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE. Which includes the right of all migrant women to be free from all forms of discrimination and to be valued and educated free from stereotypical patterns of social and cultural behaviour and practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination because they are women, for being a migrant and for their national origin.

Source: Elaborated on the basis of international instruments.

Knowledge of international instruments and the catalogue of human rights of migrant women is essential for staff working in public institutions, civil society organizations and the community at large, because they mark the route for their protection, ensuring the right to a life free of violence and without their national origin, their immigration status or any other condition being an obstacle to their exercise.

II) Reasons to leave Venezuela

It is important to note that the analysis of the feminization of migration with a gender based, intersectional and human rights approach implies, not only overcoming the model that places men at the center of the process, but also detach themselves from uniforming visions and understand the polyphony of voices in the life stories of Venezuelan migrant women. This is important to keep in mind, for example, when investigating the reasons why they left Venezuela and, although the Complex Humanitarian Emergency (EHC) has great weight in their decisions, each one tells their own story.

For some migrant women, there is a mixture of reasons linked to the scarcity of food, medicines, public services, the lack of conditions that would ensure a future for them or their children; to be victims of crime; to others, the lack of guarantees to carry out a pregnancy or the illness of a member of the family, a father or a mother, a child, or of themselves, is what moves them; There are those who leave by family reunification, since their partners or spouses did so first; in others, corruption, the deinstitutionalization of State bodies or the lack of guarantee for the exercise of human rights were more influential; also those who leave because they start a relationship or marry a foreign person; there are even those who leave because they have an offer of professional work abroad (although this group is quite small), among other motivations.

> ***Because of the food crisis. Go buy food and don't get anything to eat. You go out to buy anything and there is nowhere and the places where you can get the products, you buy them at a very high price, therefore, with the money you thought to spend on several items, you must spend it on a single item*** *(Daniela, 27 years old, Ecuador).*
>
> ***My husband was out of a job and he searched and searched, but he couldn't. He was desperate because there were days when we didn't have anything to eat, especially for the 4-year-old girl we had. His family helped us. Then he decided to come to Colombia with a friend and he did it, having almost a year and a half here, I came with the girl*** *(Milena, Atlántico, Colombia).*
>
> ***My dad has been presenting for years depression and anxiety. He gave up his profession of accountant and dedicated himself to executive taxi driver Caracas-Valencia, of course that deteriorated the standards of living of the family because I did not receive big salaries either. After the crisis and hyperinflation worsened, the costs of auto-parts were very expensive, then he sold his car and was unemployed, which led me to make the decision to leave the country*** *(María, 37 years old, Colombia).*
>
> ***... we had an intradomiciliary kidnapping, when I saw my dad and my mom tied in the bed and some guy pointed a gun at them, saying that if we were Arabs we had money, at that time I decided to leave my country, because in reality my country did not even exist*** *(Valentina, 25 years old, United States).*
>
> ***I no longer felt comfortable expressing my ideas freely against everything that happens in the country; I was experiencing the restriction of freedoms of everything. Secondly, because the situation of economic crisis made me feel that I was living in a situation of survival, I felt a lot of impotence to not be able to help my family that also has many needs...*** *(Paula, 31 años, Francia).*

It is also important to bear in mind that, although circumstances can be adverse and migrant women have to overcome many obstacles, some of them are proud of themselves for the way they have solved the problems they have had to face.

… You may now see other things that you didn't see in me before. For example, that I can with this and that I am fulfilling my goals little by little, with the favor of God *(Bertha, 35 years old, United States).*

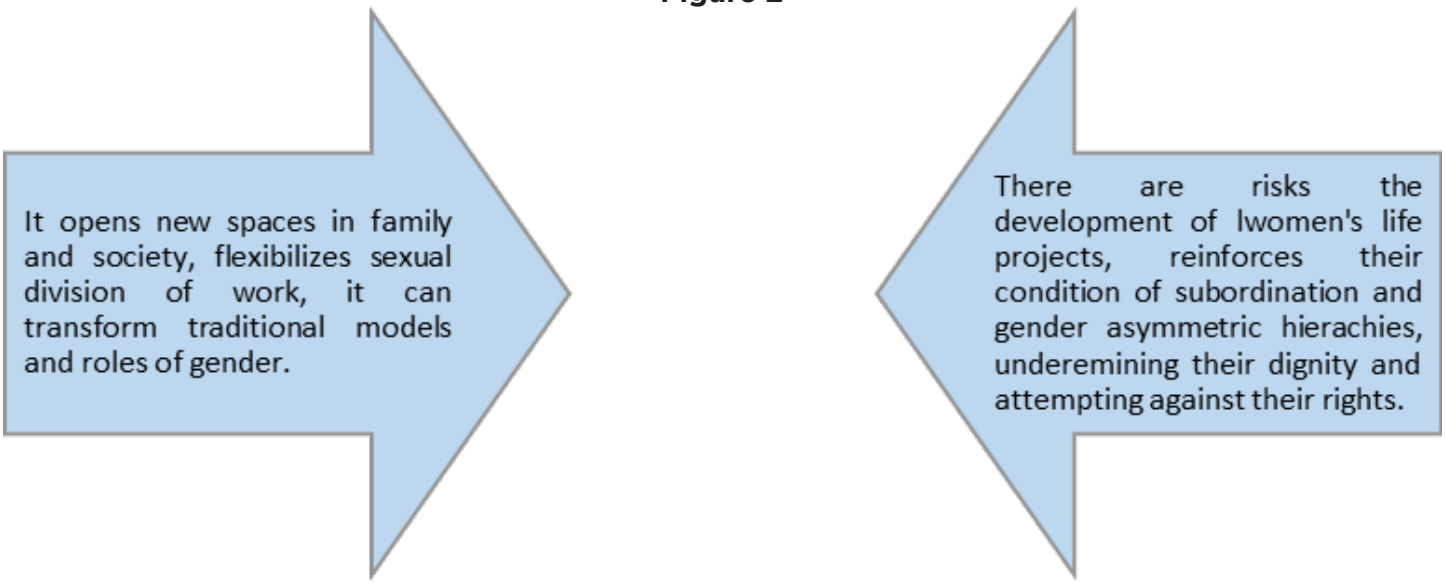
I have to do everything, sell coffee, clean restaurants, make food to sell, borrow, get into debt, everything! but here I remain firm, for my children and for myself (Karina, Atlántico, Colombia).

I don't regret anything. I would do it again a thousand times [she means to migrate] I've learnt so much, I am not the same wo left Venezuela, I've grown, I've changed for better *(Alida, 33 years old, Peru).*

These testimonies make it possible to overcome approaches to migration that only view women as victims, whether they are victims of relationships, public officials, the host society or human trafficking networks. It is undeniable that these factors are present and they must be studied, but there is more than that. Some have said that migration has meant an improvement in their living conditions and their insertion into the labor market in the host country (even in informal markets and precarious jobs), has empowered them and given them the autonomy they didn't have before. It should be noted that in some cases, where the transfer is done in couple and with the family, the gender roles are reversed because the woman becomes the main provider of the home (Fernández-Matos, 2006). This means that migration can mean for women a strengthening of agency capacity, insofar as it represents greater autonomy in decision-making and the development of personal projects (Domínguez and Contreras, 2017).

It can be said that, to analyze the feminization of migration, with a gender based approach, it must be keep in mind that this process can be a two-way journey (Figure 2).

Figure 2



Source: Martínez-Pizarro, 2007.

As indicated above, the gender of people influences the reasons for migration, its destinations and the routes used, the networks they create, the relations with the country of origin, the risks and opportunities in the countries of destination. It should be kept in mind that "the risks, vulnerabilities and needs faced by migrants vary greatly according to gender and belonging to different groups. The roles, expectations, relations and dynamics of power associated with men, women, boys and girls have a significant impact on all aspects of the migration process, which in turn can also alter these principles" (IOM, 2015, Paragraph 16). So far, the way in which traditional gender roles are altered and the agency capacity of women is strengthened has been analyzed. In the next point, reference will be made to how traditional gender roles can be deepened in the migration process.

III) Gender roles and care

Traditionally, society assigns to men and women a set of roles, roles and expectations, which mark the differences in the way of being, feeling and acting. These are the gender roles that, in the case of men, relate to power, paid work, public space, politics, while the roles assigned to women are linked to subordination, private space, care and families.

In the case of Venezuelan women, migration has often led to a deepening of traditional gender roles in that, now, in the country of destination, they are exclusively engaged in domestic or care work, while, in Venezuela, In addition to these activities in the private sphere, they worked outside the home and received an income, so that they had greater economic autonomy. It should be noted that 3 out of 4 women worked before leaving Venezuela (Carcedo, 2020).

> ***I had my hairdressing salon in the small town where I lived, it was not big, but I lived well. With the crisis, I had to close it because they raised my rent a lot and I worked on my own, I went where they called me (...) my daughter came first because her husband is Colombian and the idea was that when they were already well, she sent me to look for me to work. She got a good job and told me to come take care of the kids (the grandkids) for a while and then look for work in a hairdresser, but it's been over two years and nothing, I love my grandkids, but I want to work, I'm young, I'm not used to being kept*** *(Consuelo, Atlántico, Colombia).*

It is important to keep in mind that migrant women may also have the double workload that generally affects women: productive and reproductive, which is aggravated, in the latter case, because they don't have the family networks that in Venezuela contributed with care. To this must be added, in the case of those who are breadwinners and have their children with them, greater pressure to be the only providers of their family.

The testimony of Clara, a hairdresser with two sons aged 7 and 16, and a daughter of 14, shows this reality.

> ***I have to produce for my children because I have no one to help me (...) I come from the hairdresser really tired and prepare food, sometimes, I ask for homework to the big ones, but I do not have chance to help them, I get too tired (...) the girl helps me with the smallest, she practically does everything to him because I don't have a chance*** *(Clara, Atlántico, Colombia).*

This testimony makes it possible to show another reality that is becoming evident in the lives of migrant women, in this case, of adolescent girls, who have to take care of their younger siblings, sometimes relegating their personal development to the background.

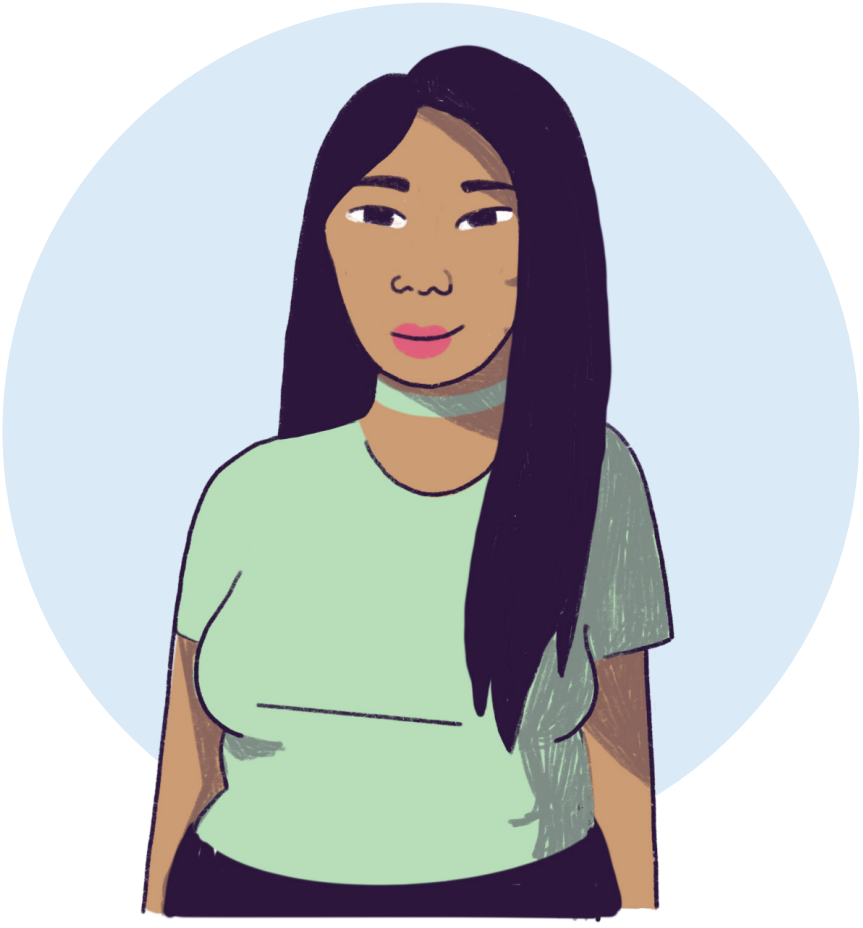
The issue of care has gained great relevance in studies on the feminization of migration. Global care chains, the social organization of care and its impact on migration policies, transnational care, among other aspects, have been addressed (Herrera, 2016).

The transnational family, understood as such, in which its members are separated physically and geographically most of the time, acquires particular relevance, but this does not prevent the remaining affective bonds, in which people feel part of a unit and perceive their well-being from a collective dimension, despite the distance (Parella, 2007). These ties do not have the same effect on men and women, since they tend to be stronger in the case of the latter, especially if the sons and daughters have remained in Venezuela, in the care of a relative, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, among others, for the most part, also women.

Some of the migrant women interviewed who left their children in Venezuela, do transnational care, meaning that it is done at a distance and that is facilitated by the use of information technologies.

They are with their grandmother in Maracaibo, but I talk to them eeeeevery day. Well, when you can, because you know how the blackouts are over there. But I am aware of everything, if they hurt something, if they go for a children's party, anything, I am always communicating with them *(Mayerlin, Atlántico, Colombia).*

He stayed with my mom, they keep each other company, but I am aware of what they lack, of how they are. We talk often *(Daniela, 27 years old, Ecuador).*



IV) Discrimination y stigmatization

Discrimination is exclusion, barriers and obstacles that people face in exercising their rights deriving from a social condition that may be linked to their gender, ethnic origin, social class, nationality, among other factors. In the case of migrant women, discrimination is based on the fact that they are women, Venezuelans, poor, in an irregular administrative situation, to which can be added factors linked to the fact of being Afro-Venezuelans, or indigenous, lesbian, have a disability, among others.

As Adela Cortina (cited by Pérez, 2018) points out, it is not the fact of being foreign that generates rejection but poverty. Therefore, this philosopher coined the term "aporophobia" which comes from the Greek aporos (without resources) and phobos (fear, panic). In addition, she points out that the economic recession exacerbates this fear of poverty because it shows that anyone is vulnerable, that a seemingly stable job can quickly disappear. Blaming migrants for their situation nullifies empathy and allows them to be ignored, precisely at a time like the present when there is an increase in inequalities (Pérez, 2018).

It is important to keep this in mind when analyzing migration, since situations of exclusion and discrimination are permeated by social class and even by the color of the skin. An upper-class Venezuelan woman, who maintains her social status in the country to which she emigrates, for example, Peru or Colombia, who is also fair-skinned, will not suffer the discrimination to which other migrants are constantly subjected.

For its part, in order to understand social stigma, it is useful to keep in mind the definition of stigma developed by Erwin Goffman: it is a brand, a deeply dishonorable and discrediting attribute for whoever has it, which leads to making it a tainted person. The fundamental thing in these cases, is not the attribute itself, but the social connotation given to it (Vidal, 2002). Thus, social stigmatization of Venezuelan women, linked to their nationality, is configured as a mark that all those who carry it are engaged in prostitution, that implies the sexual stigmatization of the national origin. How Ruiz (2017) points it out: "the articulation between sexuality and nationality naturalizes the distinctions between national women' and foreign women' and serves as a basis for justifying discrimination, exclusions and also marginal inclusions" (p. 44).

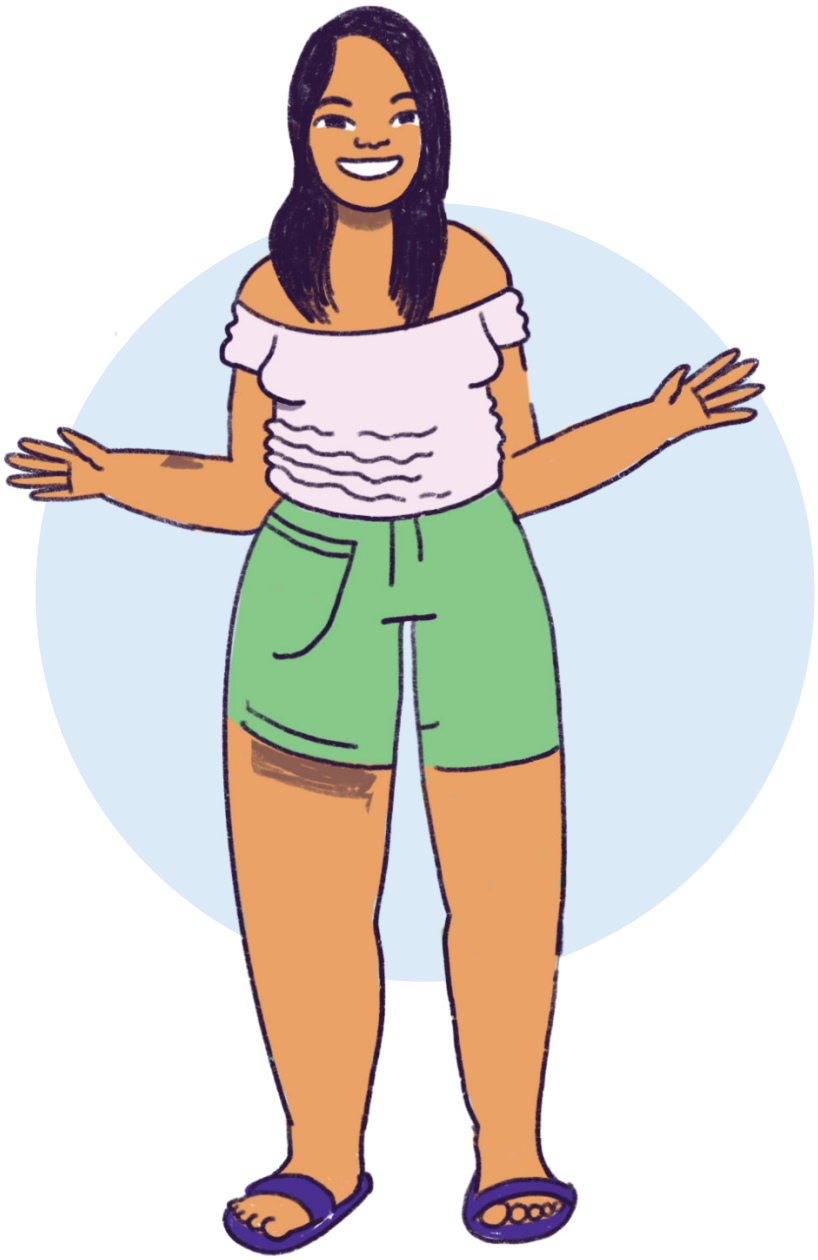
This phenomenon has not only occurred with Venezuelan women, women of other nationalities have also been affected in different contexts. But, in this case, the magnitude of Venezuelan migration is linked with existing stereotypes about the way of dressing, of acting, among others, which leads to pointing it out as the main problem.

Of the 22 professional women interviewed online, 19 replied that sexual stigmatization is the main problem faced by Venezuelan migrants.

> ***Discrimination, they believe that because you are Venezuelan you want to work as a escort or steal someone's husband (Daniela, 27 years old, Ecuador).***
>
> ***With Venezuelan women there is a lot of discrimination, the main one everyone believes are all easy women*** *(Inés, 50 years old, Dominican Republic).*
>
> ***Stigmatization in terms of prostitution, "home breaker," considering them shallow, lazy or tendencies to theft. Right now, I'm strong, wanting people to know more about Venezuelan women, seeing that we're not just the negative. We are also intelligent, hardworking, entrepreneurs that we like to dress up well, but that we are not only aware of the beauty*** *(María, 37 years old, Colombia).*
>
> ***Many, but I think that this answer I will focus on sexual harassment. The continent has an imaginary of Venezuelan women as beautiful, and in the north many people of other races believe that Latin women only know about rumba and sex, in addition to that, it is added that everyone knows perfectly well that we would rather die than return to***

Venezuela or lose the job we have abroad, the situation of vulnerability is such that it is no coincidence what has happened to many known Venezuelans, a lot, a lot of sexual harassment, it's sex with the employer or you're out (*Valentina, 25 years old, United States).*

This stigmatization is reinforced by the misogynist, sexist and xenophobic imaginary that is reproduced by some media and social networks, where Venezuelan migrants are objectified, thereby increasing vulnerability and exclusion.



V) Right to work

It is important to keep in mind that migrants, regardless of their immigration status -whether they have the documents that allow them to stay legally in the country of destination or are in an irregular administrative situation- have the right to work and to receive a fair wage. In practice, however, they are exploited at work, paid less for the same work as nationals, discriminated, among other factors that show the violation of their rights.

In the case of women, risks and exclusions are exacerbated. "The gender imbalance that permeates certain ideas about what is or is not appropriate work for women translates into a labor market where women's employment opportunities are limited to the performance of their assigned roles, such as caring for home, domestic service or the informal sector" (CEDAW Committee, 2008, paragraph 13).

It should be noted that of the 17 women interviewed in the Department of Atlántico, Colombia, 9 work in the informal economy, 4 in beauty centers and 4 in unpaid domestic and care work, but do not work outside the home. Of those who work in the informal economy, 6 do so by selling sweets, coffee and other food products at traffic lights or on large surfaces (mainly at doors or near supermarkets and shopping malls). This is the case of Mara, a 33-year-old migrant with 5 children between 6 months and 17 years of age, a breadwinner, in an irregular administrative situation; the lack of documents and information, as well as the obligations of care, lead her to work in these conditions.

> ***I came here because I had nothing to eat, my sister was already here and convinced me. I cannot look for work because the girl is very small and the children do not go to school (...) what I get is enough to pay the rent of the room, for the fare and for half-meal*** *(Mara, Atlántico, Colombia).*

The lack of a contact network and information limits the employment of migrant women. Valeria says she left Venezuela desperate, she has two girls of 5 and 8 years that she left in the care of her mother. She came to Colombia without a passport, does not have the Special Permit of Permanence (PEP), sells fruits in a traveling car, whose owner, of Colombian nationality, is his current partner.

> ***I was in trade there and I did not do badly. But here, since I do not know people, it is more difficult. When I arrived, I started selling ice cream with a friend. Eventually, I met this man who has helped me a lot and I took care of this post. He has another*** *(Valeria, Atlántico, Colombia).*

Another reason for the difficulties in entering the labor market is linked to the possibility of validating professional qualifications, either because it is expensive, because it is a profession that cannot be validated or because it is very cumbersome to process. All this leads to a de-qualification, since women cannot exercise their profession, according to their level of training and experience (Carcedo, 2020).

> ***I am a lawyer and the laws are very different here. I would have to pay and study again at some university, which is also expensive. I can't... I prefer not to think about that because it gives me a lot of sadness. Here I dedicate myself to this [manicurist] and I do well*** *(Nélida, Atlántico, Colombia).*

The last point to be highlighted is linked to labor exploitation. Venezuelan migrants who have some employer earn less than the minimum wage, have to work without a work contract and in some cases, more than 10 hours a day, with no rest days (International Course, 2020; CARE Peru, 2020). To this must be added the conditions of discrimination, sexual harassment and other types of gender-based violence.

VI) Right to health

The World Health Organization (WHO) argues that the migrant population is a huge global public health challenge. It also establishes that access to health services is a human right of all persons, without any distinction being made or limited by their immigration status: "This right must be promoted and protected without distinction as to age, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, language, national origin, place of birth, or any other status" (WHO, 2016, p. 1).

One of the central concerns of the strategies for the care of the Venezuelan migrant population is focused on pregnant women. Since the beginning of the mass exodus, many have left their country with the intention of being able to give birth in safe conditions that would not endanger their health or that of their children.

In the case of Colombia, more than three thousand births of Venezuelan migrants were attended in the country's public hospital network in 2018, which meant an increase four times greater than in 2017. In a research carried out between August 2018 and May 2019, it was found that 17.3% of those surveyed were pregnant before leaving Venezuela, that is, the majority (82.6%), conceived during the journey or after having arrived in Colombia (Rodríguez, s.a.). Other research has warned about the need for greater controls on pregnant women, since most had one or no control, which has consequences on maternal morbidity, gestational syphilis, among others (Ariza, 2020).

> ***Not all well, I received attention, my girl was born without problems [Did you have prenatal control?] No, the first time I went I was already in childbirth, but I was attended well*** *(Mara, Atlántico, Colombia).*
>
> ***Everything cool, the whole delivery I was controlled, the doctors pending, that if I took the meds, all right. When the baby was born all the attention. Not definitely not in Venezuela*** *(Bertha, 35, asylum seeker, United States).*

Little attention is paid to the mental health of migrant women, although they are greatly affected by the migration process: "family separation, lack of means of survival, the status of irregular migrants, barriers to access to the health system and discriminatory attitudes, are the main causes of the deterioration in the mental health of the migrants interviewed" (Vera and Cifuentes, 2020, p. 1).

In the interviews conducted, it was found that, for the most part, they have naturalized episodes of depression, anguish, stress, sadness, related to the migratory process and do not tend to make it visible as factors that affect their mental and physical health. However, deepening the conversations, it was found that several of them suffer from the so-called chronic stress syndrome of the immigrant or Ulysses syndrome (Achotegui et al., 2010), characterized by "four symptomatological areas, depressive (sadness, crying), anxious (anxiety, struggle, recurrent and intrusive thoughts, tension, irritability, insomnia, worry), somatomorfa (headache, especially tensional, asthenia, fatigue, osteoarticular discomfort, sweats) and dissociative (confusion, disorganization, depersonalization, derealization, time and space disorientation, attention and memory deficit)" (p. 25).

VI) Effects of Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic does not affect all people equally. While it is true that from the perspective of physical health everyone is at risk, social conditions make some populations more vulnerable, including the migrant, mainly those in an irregular situation. In addition, it has an unequal impact on the lives of women and girls.

In the face of stigmatization and discrimination against migrants who are seen as carriers of COVID-19, women may see health services, including reproductive health services for those who are pregnant, even more limited. Something similar can happen with psychosocial and legal care services in cases of gender-based violence. Fear of a migrant woman with COVID-19 may lead to her being denied her human rights, including the guarantee of a life free from violence because she is a woman. Their jobs are also affected for those who are employed and those who are in the informal economy, have seen their incomes decrease -or disappear altogether- by confinement.

In Colombia, the rates of paid work of migrants of Venezuelan nationality headed by women have fallen by 35 per cent, while the drop, in the case of those headed by men, is 23 per cent. Socio-economic and health factors in the context of the pandemic expose women to greater risks in the workplace, to be captured by criminals acting through human trafficking networks, drug trafficking and domestic slavery systems (Web Proyecto Migración Venezuela).

A fact that should be made visible and denounced is the situation of some migrants working in domestic service, since they may be subjected to labor exploitation. In informal talks with two Venezuelan women based in Bogotá, Colombia, it was reported that the people who employed them demanded that, in order to maintain employment, they had to stay overnight in the house and could not go out any day, to avoid the contagion of COVID-19. One of the interviewees did not accept the conditions because she has two children and needs to go home every day. The other, at first, accepted the conditions, however, said that because she was sleeping in the house, her employers thought she was available all day and all night, which did not allow her to get enough rest. In August 2020, she quit her job and both are currently unemployed (Telephone Conversations, October 2020). These data coincide with information available on the website of Proyecto Migración Venezuela: “During the quarantine, there has been an increase in the health risks for their workers, who, in some cases, have been required to work from inside doors” (16 September 2020).



Conclusions

If one thing should be clear in this journey, it is that the status of person and the ownership of human rights do not have a mark according to national origin, but that it belongs to all human beings. In that regard, Venezuelan migrant women had human rights and States were obliged to respect, guarantee and fulfil them.

It is also important to note that the migration process in the context of a complex humanitarian emergency such as the one that Venezuela is going through can be difficult for all people, however, it should be noted that it has a disproportionate impact on the lives of girls, adolescents and Venezuelan women, among other reasons, for the generic allocations, the sexual division of labour and the discrimination they face because they are women, migrants and Venezuelans. All this creates a framework of vulnerability that exposes them to repeated violations of their human rights. But it must also be acknowledged that some, even in the worst conditions, strengthen their agency capacity and autonomy.

Speaking of the feminization of migration implies precisely to make visible how this process affects women, taking into account their needs and experiences; emphasizing what generates greater vulnerability in their lives such as poverty, sexual stigmatization or the various manifestations of gender-based violence, both in the private and public spheres, but also the strategies they develop to face adversities. All this in order to establish comprehensive protection and care measures that place them at the center of decision-making, under a view that goes beyond family approaches and those that have men as models of the migration process. Only in this way can one contribute to their integral right as individuals.



Recommendations

To States of origin, transit and destination

- Develop a mandatory, permanent and continuous registry that ensures the collection of statistical data disaggregated by sex, which allows the visualization of women and their needs. In addition, age, educational level, economic and social status, among others, must be incorporated in order to record information that contributes to decision-making.

- Incorporate gender, intersectional and human rights approaches into all programs, projects, strategies and actions.

- Develop information, dissemination and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at the recipient population that contribute to the elimination of stereotypes and the eradication of the sexual stigmatization of Venezuelan migrant women.

- Design messages whose emphasis is on highlighting positive aspects and overcoming visions that are anchored in binary positions: victim of human trafficking or practicing prostitution.

- Develop integration projects between women from the receiving communities and migrant women that generate mechanisms of empathy and sorority among them, to raise awareness of the discrimination and social stigmatization that affect Venezuelan women, in order to contribute to their eradication.

- Design information strategies aimed at migrant women so that they know their rights, the entities they can contact and the processes they must follow to regularize their immigration status.

- To train civil servants of public entities working with the migrant population on issues related to gender-based approach, violence against women, women's human rights, discrimination and vulnerability, existing risks for being a woman, which contribute to provide comprehensive care for migrant women.

- Promote cooperation among key actors, such as international organizations, civil society, among others, specialized in the human rights of women and incorporate them into responses and strategies to care for migrant women.

- Apply territorial approaches that allow for a better understanding of migratory dynamics, situations and needs in geographical areas where the migrant population in general is concentrated and where there are greater risks of exclusion and violation of the human rights of women, teenagers and girls in particular.

- Design strategies to ensure the satisfaction of basic needs: food, medical care (both physical and psychological) clothing and accommodation, for women seeking refuge, victims of crime, in administrative migration procedures, as well as their children.

To media

- Develop awareness-raising campaigns aimed at journalists and the media in general on the treatment of information about migrant women, with respectful messages on human rights, with a gender and intersectional approach.

To Civil Society Organizations in the origin, transit and destination country

- Provide free legal aid to migrant women who have suffered violations of their rights in order to ensure their access to justice.

To Institutions and public/private organizations

- Overcome familyist visions in the attention of migrant women and strengthen the understanding of their own, individual and personal experiences. In this way, the vision that only gives her importance as a mother is eradicated and her agency capacity is recognized.

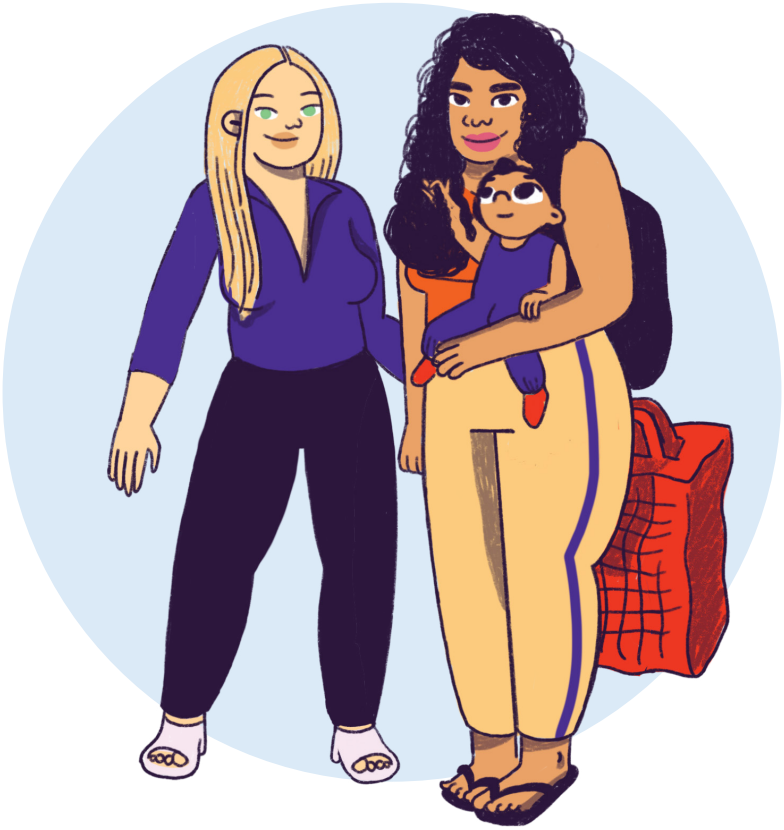
- Prioritize the issue of social organization of care in the agendas of assistance to the migrant population, with a view to contributing to a better labor insertion of men and women in the countries of destination.

- Strengthen health information collection mechanisms that incorporate sexual and reproductive health with a women-centered approach.

- Develop information campaigns and strategies to make pregnant migrants aware of the importance of prenatal control.

- Make advocacy for the investigation of cases of femicide and develop international campaigns to request the investigation of these facts.

- In relation to Covid-19, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive care model that takes into account the vulnerabilities suffered by the migrant population and the deepening of the risks to the lives of women and girls.



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Brasil: 180 (Women's assistance hotline)
181 (report criminal information)
190 (Military police)

Chile: 133 (Police)
134 (Investigation police)

Argentina: 911 (Emergency hotline)
144 (Buenos Aires Gender Based Violence hotline)

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