

unicef 

for every child



Girls' rights for an equal future: Renewing commitments in Latin America and the Caribbean

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Acknowledgments

Copyright © 2021 UNICEF

The authors of this document are part of Equipo FREE (Feminist for Rights Equality and Empowerment), made up of Ana Landa Ugarte, Carmen Porras Gómez, Ivonne Argueta Vásquez, Bruna Cristina Jaquetto Pereira and Macarena Aguilar Rodríguez.

This report was coordinated by the gender section of the Regional Office of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for Latin America and the Caribbean, under the leadership of Shelly Abdool, Regional Gender Advisor and Ivonne Urriola Pérez, Gender and Development Officer. In addition, the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean recognizes in a particular way the valuable contributions made by girls and adolescents who participated in the Girls’ Rights digital consultation in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by Taysha consulting. Special thanks to the adolescent girls, feminist leaders, activists and institutions who shared their views and dreams with us.

Special thanks to the UNICEF colleagues who reviewed this document and contributed to its preparation by providing technical inputs: June Pomposo, Esther Ruiz, Emilia Numer, Patricia Núñez, José Sierra Castillo, Constanza Solís and Erick Solís; as well as Nazareth Mateos, from the Spanish Committee of UNICEF. The edition was in charge of Gladys Hauck of the UNICEF regional communications team and the graphic design was done by Moisés Pérez Arenas.

About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

More information about UNICEF’s work in Latin America and the Caribbean on gender equality can be found on the website of the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean: www.unicef.org/lac/

Contents

Background	4
Key findings according to the Strategic Objectives of the Girls' Chapter.....	6
Girls' wish list.....	12
Conclusions	13
Girls' Priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean.....	15



The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995 in Beijing, China, was an unprecedented milestone in the international community's commitment to launch a broad and comprehensive platform aimed at advancing women's and girls' rights and gender equality: the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). One hundred and eighty-nine countries, numerous international organizations, 17,000 participants and more than 30,000 feminist activists participated¹ in the conference, committing to the advancement of women, girls and gender equality as a national and global priority.



PICTUR CREDIT: UNICEF LACRO / 2020 / González

The Platform identified 12 critical areas of concern (CACs), the last of which (CAC L, hereafter referred to as the Girls' Chapter) was dedicated to address the rights and specific concerns of girls.

For the 25th anniversary of the Beijing BPfA, the UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) undertook an analysis aimed at answering two guiding questions 1) 25 years later, are the objectives of the BPfA still valid according to the data and adolescent girls?; 2) In 2020, what do girls in Latin America and the Caribbean say is needed to exercise their rights? The uniqueness of this effort is centered on giving voice and visibility to the experiences and opinions of girls in the region, taking into account their diversity and multiple, intersecting identities.

To this end, extensive work has been carried out to review and compile documents, analyze databases and consult with girls in the region, as well as with adult women, both leaders of feminist organizations and specialists working for girls' rights.

This is a research effort that takes into account different sources of information, both quantitative and qualitative and aims to give greater visibility, presence and reason to the voices of the girls consulted, compared to what is given to them in other situation analyses based primarily on secondary sources and quantitative data analysis. This methodological premise was established from the beginning to identify girls' priorities from their perspective. This approach also aims to help make up for a systematic lack of quantitative data and information on girls; a gap deepened when it comes to quantitative data that allow for intersectional analysis..

1,419 girls from 26 countries in Latin American and the Caribbean participated in the consultation, carried out through different online instruments due to mobility limitations imposed by COVID-19 containment measures. Afro-descendant, indigenous, mestizo, white, trans, lesbian, bisexual, disabled, migrant and displaced girls from Central America and Mexico, the Southern Cone, the Andean Region and the Caribbean were consulted through 16 in-depth interviews and an online platform, where 1,403 responded to a survey about their perceptions and priorities on and for girls in the region. In addition, 16 leaders of feminist organizations and specialists working for the rights of girls were interviewed.

This report also takes into account commitments derived from the Regional Conference on Women held every three years. It likewise recognizes and considers the agendas arising from the Feminist, Intergenerational Dialogue on Gender Equality and the Rights of Girls and Women (October 2018, Antigua); the Feminist Youth Declaration (January 2020, Santiago, Chile); and the side event entitled "25 Years of Commitments for Girls: An intergenerational dialogue" developed by UNICEF in the framework of the XIV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (January 2020, Santiago, Chile). Intergenerational dialogues organized in the first months of 2020 by UNICEF and partners in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru have also contributed to this report.

Thus, the identification of girls' priorities presented in this report, as well as suggested recommendations, are intended to position the voices, needs and demands of Latin American and Caribbean girls on national and public agendas and in Organizational strategies responsible for their implementation; they are not intended to be exhaustive or complete, rather a stimulus to further discussion and debate. It is also hoped that they will be taken into account by women's and feminist organizations and all those concerned about girls' rights and gender equality in the region.

¹Participation by age in the fourth world conference to understand participation of young and teenage girls is unknown.

It is also important to emphasize that this report was conceived before the impacts of the global pandemic due to the COVID-19 virus could be imagined. However it was developed in the context of the pandemic, with lockdown measures and social distancing imposed which varied by country and over time. The consultation, therefore, included specific questions for girls around Covid-19 impacts – either identified or expected in the future; these findings are included in a brief section in the situation analysis of each Strategic Objective (SO) of the Girl's Chapter.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNICEF LACRO / 2020 / González

The report is structured in 3 parts. Part I presents the context and objectives that gave rise to the report, methodology developed, scope and limitations encountered. Part II provides an overview of the current situation girls face in relation to issues addressed in the Girls' Chapter, including other issues that have emerged and gained relevance during this quarter of a century. Part III describes a series of recommendations linked to the priorities expressed by girls, responding to the current context of the region and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In keeping with this structure, having already indicated the objectives of the work in this background section, this executive summary is organized into three sections: 1. Key findings according to the Strategic Objectives of the Girls' Chapter, 2. Conclusions and 3. Girls' priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Key findings according to the Strategic Objectives of the Girls' Chapter

The study takes the PAB Girls' Chapter and its 9 Strategic Objectives (SO) as a reference and starting point. However, the organization of topics addressed in the SO contains some variations compared to the original organization of contents of the Girls' Chapter SO. This has been done in order to facilitate their presentation and approach in the current context, taking into account the close interrelationships between the different issues addressed. It is also important to note that the issues originally addressed in the Girls' Chapter SO2 and SO9 are all addressed here in SO2, as they are closely and directly related. Thus, SO9 has been dedicated to address an important issue that has gained relevance in the region in the period but was not present in the agenda of the Girls' Chapter: climate justice for girls.

Also, several SO have included issues that, although not addressed by the Girls' Chapter 25 years ago, were either absent or have emerged and gained relevance in the last 25 years: economic support of mothers and fathers and paternal co-responsibility (SO1); adequate school infrastructures for menstrual health and hygiene and access to ICTs - Information and Communication Technologies - (SO4); violence against girls in the digital world (SO7); girls' social mobilization (SO8); and climate justice for girls (SO9).



SO1 Key findings - Eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls

- Significant progress has been made in the region in terms of the approval of regulatory frameworks that protect the exercise of girls' right to identity and filiation, as well as in birth registration rates, with no significant differences by sex. Further disaggregation would be necessary to analyze whether there is a relationship between the sex of the daughter or son and fulfillment of parental responsibilities, particularly of fathers.
- The role of fathers in the region is changing, and more and more fathers are taking on caregiving tasks. Despite this, co-responsibility and paternal abandonment - both economic and care-giving - continues to be a serious problem for the exercise of girls' rights, especially in single-parent female households.
- Laws formally protect girls' right to succession and inheritance on an equal footing with boys. However, the limited progress in women's access to property, particularly land, reflects the obstacles they face in practice to exercise this right. More analysis and studies are needed in this area.
- Child marriage and early unions continue to be one of the pending challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean, being the only region in the world where child marriage rates have not decreased in the last 25 years. One out of every four girls and teenage girls is married or in union, and the probability increases with poverty, and in rural and/or indigenous communities. The Covid-19 crisis will have a very negative impact, increasing the incidence of this harmful practice throughout the region.
- Much more effort should be made in all of the above areas in generating studies and data in relation to this objective and girls with disabilities and LGBTI+ girls, on whom information is currently practically non-existent.

S02 Key findings - Eliminate cultural attitudes and practices that are detrimental to girls and teenage girls.

- Although the countries of the region have made progress in adopting more inclusive and egalitarian legislation and institutional practices, traditional gender roles, sexist beliefs and perceptions towards women and girls continue to pose barriers to their access to rights, justice, resources and opportunities.
- A growing socio-political influence of anti-rights movements reinforces traditional gender roles and strengthens prejudices and discriminatory stereotypes towards girls. These groups threaten existing advances in the effective integration and application of a gender perspective in public policies and programs at all levels.
- Girls in the region have advanced significantly more than their male counterparts in the deconstruction of sexist stereotypes and practices; nevertheless, in their viewpoint, emancipatory perspectives and visions coexist with more traditional ones shaped by the machista system in which they live.
- The media and advertising play a fundamental role in deconstructing or, on the contrary, reinforcing discriminatory gender stereotypes. Of particular importance is their contribution to the hyper-sexualization of Afro-descendant girls and a devaluing of their capabilities and potential. "Indigenous" continues to be associated to a large extent with servitude, ignorance, aggressivity and backwardness. Racist stereotypes are added to prejudices against migrant girls.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a reinforcement of sexist stereotypes and gender roles.

S03 Key findings - Promote and protect the rights of girls and teenage girls and increase awareness of their needs and potential.

- All Latin American and Caribbean countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child; while in Latin America most countries have developed national standards for its implementation, in the English and French Caribbean such development is in the minority.
- National legislation and policies on children tend to lack a gender perspective, except in a few Latin American countries. In turn, national gender legislation and policies often ignore the specific needs and interests of girls.
- Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was an important step in recognition of the rights of children with disabilities. Although most Latin American countries have ratified it, in the Caribbean many have yet to do so.
- As in other areas, the main challenge lies in the application of child protection laws. Girls demand participation in their elaboration and denounce that, in most cases, these laws are developed and implemented without taking their opinions into account.
- Girls in 2020 have heard about and know more about their rights than before; school and, more recently, social networks have played a fundamental role in this. However, the advance of ultra-conservative forces in the region and increasing dissemination of false information on social networks themselves, increase the complexity of this advance.



S04 Key findings - Eliminate discrimination against girls in education and vocational training.

- There has been notable progress in access to primary and secondary education for girls in the Latin American and Caribbean region in recent decades. However, this access is disrupted when considering other exclusion variables: household poverty, residence in rural areas, belonging to indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, disability and migrant status.
- Secondary school dropout among teenage girls continues to be a major pending issue throughout the region. It is affected by a series of factors that have a greater impact on girls living in poverty, are pregnant or have been mothers at an early age, often as a result of sexual violence.
- Gender stereotypes and roles continue to mark inequalities in performance in subjects such as mathematics and science that persist in favor of young boys throughout the region, limiting the potential of girls in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), linked to greater opportunities for quality jobs, and especially in context of the new realities resulting as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.
- Violence remains a scourge in schools, despite the few studies that illustrate the problem. Violence against girls manifests itself through harassment, abuse and racism, with both peers and teachers as perpetrators. All of this occurs in a context with little teacher training on gender issues and a gender-blind curriculum that reinforces stereotypes and unequal gender roles.
- School closures due to Covid-19 have left more than 156 million students out of school and endangers the return of girls in particular. Similarly, the option of continuing online teaching poses disadvantages to girls and teenage girls in rural areas due to the low level of access to the Internet and ICTs. School dropout due to the crisis is expected to have a very negative impact on the increase in early unions and pregnancy in the region, which, in turn, will have a negative impact on girls dropping out of school.

S05 Key findings - Eliminate discrimination against girls in education and vocational training.

- Significant progress has been made in reducing early pregnancy rates, although marked inequalities persist in relation to rurality, ethnicity and race, with higher pregnancy rates among indigenous and Afro-descendant teenage girls and those living in rural areas. Pregnancy rates and early motherhood in the region are exacerbated by partial or total prohibition of pregnancy termination.
- Lack of knowledge regarding pregnancy and maternity and, in general, sexual and reproductive health in children under 15 years of age is serious throughout the region, and does not appear in official statistics. Also serious, although to a lesser extent, is lack of specific data on the 15-18 age group within women of reproductive age (15-49), which prevents an adequate analysis of the problem and therefore the design of targeted policies.
- Education continues to determine gender norms with such force that, for many teenage girls, being a mother at that age may be conceived as desirable, in imagining their life plan as mothers and caregivers; motherhood often becomes their only life project.
- Access to sexual and reproductive health services continues to be quite limited among Afro-descendant and indigenous teenage girls living in the most remote areas, resulting in greater risks when they are pregnant or less access to contraceptives when they begin sexual relations. For girls living with disabilities, the barriers are multiplied.
- Comprehensive sexuality education is one of the great absences in the educational curriculum of the region, despite being one of the great demands of teenage girls. Implementing comprehensive sexuality education is an essential tool for reducing teenage pregnancy and for living a life free of violence, but it still continues to be a challenge for Latin American and Caribbean countries, increased by the influence of conservative, anti-rights groups in the region.

- The Covid-19 pandemic has had consequences that threaten girls' sexual and reproductive rights, and impacts are expected to deepen inequality gaps in access to health and nutrition services, which will may imply major setbacks in the exercise of these rights. The most evident consequences include increases in teenage pregnancies and the impact on girls' mental health.

S06 Key findings - Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labor and protect working girls.

- All Latin American and Caribbean countries, except Belize and Anguilla, have set a minimum age for admission to employment between 14 and 17 years, as required by ILO Convention 138. Despite this regulatory development, the reality is that in 2016, 10.5 million children in the region were engaged in child and female adolescent labor; a good part of them in conditions considered at risk.
- Gender continues to be the main denominator of the work performed by children. In rural and urban areas, girls work, although they are less visible than their male counterparts due to the invisibility of unpaid domestic work in their own households and paid work in third-party households.
- When girls engage in domestic work, they often do so in servitude and exploitation, with low or no pay, and combining domestic work with school attendance thereby increasing absenteeism and dropout rates. It is in their own or other people's homes that girls are most subject to mistreatment and sexual violence. Most teenage girls work informally and without social security affiliations making their access to social protection minimal.
- Child and female adolescent labor reproduces and amplifies inequalities. Its incidence is directly related to poverty, unemployment, low income, family economic insecurity and insufficient educational opportunities; the most exploited girls in the labor market are Afro-descendent, indigenous and migrant girls and those living with disabilities.
- Girls and women with disabilities may be subject to economic exploitation because of their condition, that in turn may expose them to additional violence; women and girls with physical or visible disabilities may be trafficked for the purpose of forced begging in the belief that this may generate more sympathy among people.

- In the short-term, the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the burden of domestic and care work for girls at home. In the long term, the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis risk reversing the gains in the region by accentuating inequalities and increasing rates of child and female adolescent labor, as well as the rate of children and female adolescents involved in hazardous work, especially among the poorest groups or those facing multiple discriminations.

S07 Key findings - Eradicate violence against girls.

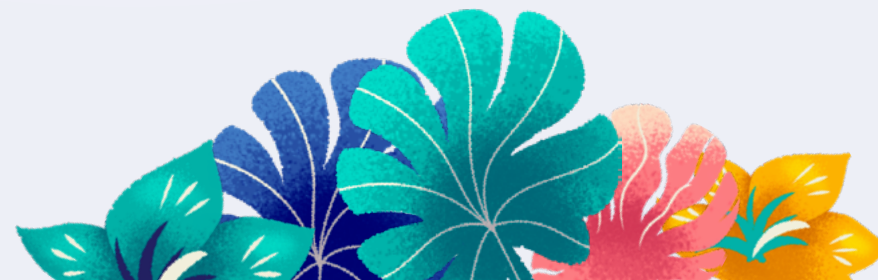
- Important normative advances have been made in prevention, attention and prosecution of violence against women. All the countries have first-generation laws (laws on domestic and intra-family violence); 13 countries in Latin America have regulations for comprehensive protection against specific forms of violence against women; 18 countries in Latin America and 3 in the Caribbean criminalize femicide or female homicide; several countries have regulations against sexual harassment and/or workplace harassment, and even street harassment; and, as a pioneer, the Plurinational State of Bolivia has a law against harassment and political violence against women. In general, regulatory advances are much greater in Latin American countries than in the Caribbean (ECLAC Gender Observatory; IACHR, 2019).
- Femicide is the most lethal form of violence against women and girls. Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, and Jamaica are among the countries with the highest homicide rates for girls worldwide.
- Perpetrators are close to girls; home, school or family are the most unsafe places for girls. Family violence and immediate surroundings ranges from psychological violence and physical aggression to sexual abuse.
- Eighty percent of sexual violations in the region are committed against girls between 10 and 14 years of age, and 90% of these cases involve a context of repeated rape. The culture of impunity and insufficient access to justice for girls and women invites perpetrators to repeat.
- Teenage girls are victims of forced sex primarily by their husbands or partners, but also of incestuous sexual abuse and rape by family friends and neighbors. Early union or marriage is associated with higher reported rates of gender-based violence victimization, including sexual violence.

- Street harassment and abuse begins when girls are 9 or 10 years old, intensifying between the ages of 12 and 15. Some 60% of teenage girls and young women aged 15 to 25 have experienced some form of harassment on social networks.
- Girls represent the majority of trafficking victims in Central America and the Caribbean (55%) and 31% of victims in South America; they are also 40% of trafficking victims for sexual exploitation in Central America and the Caribbean, and 26% of victims destined for forced labor in South America.
- Rural girls face higher risks of violence, while services for survivors are scarce in the areas where they live. Violence rates are higher for Afro-descendant and indigenous girls, who also often suffer recurrent violence of land disputes in remote and rural areas.
- Violence and abuse against girls with disabilities, although not quantitatively measured, is a very serious phenomenon that is rarely addressed.
- School closures due to the Covid-19 crisis has increased violence against girls in their households, the worst expression of which is sexual violence perpetrated by their “close loved ones”, particularly stepfathers, fathers, brothers and other relatives. It should also be noted that during the pandemic, there has been a greater diffusion of child abuse material trafficking, denigrating and objectifying girls.

S08 Key findings - Promote girls' awareness and their participation in social, economic and political life.

- Girls' social participation in the region is poorly documented. Existing participation indicators only reflect the situation of adult women's access to decision-making positions in State bodies.
- In spaces created by adults, girls point out that their participation is mostly decorative and symbolic, and denounce predominant adult centrism, meaning that their voices are not taken into account in decision-making processes.
- In recent years, teenage and young feminists in the region have positioned themselves at the forefront of social struggles against government measures that threaten democracy and human rights, as well as to achieve legislative changes that guarantee women's right to decide about their bodies.
- Absence of spaces for participation in rural areas, and limited access to the Internet in places far from urban centers, particularly limits the participation of girls living in poorer and more precarious conditions, often affecting indigenous and Afro-descendant girls to a greater extent.
- The Covid-19 crisis has limited girls' participation and mobilization in face-to-face spaces. At the same time, lockdowns – combined with being part of a generation that is more connected and familiar with digital media - has led to a greater articulation of their actions and demands in social networks against abuses of their rights.

²All official data sources are available in the report.



Key findings of Climate Justice for Girls

- Although most international and regional climate change and risk management policy instruments recognize the importance of women's participation and gender mainstreaming, girls are scarcely mentioned.
- Latin America and the Caribbean is a region particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Twenty-six and a half million Latin American and Caribbean children live in high-risk areas. More than 60 million children in Latin America and the Caribbean have been affected by an extreme weather event or disaster in the last 30 years.
- Girls and youth in the region, recognizing interconnections between different struggles, have positioned themselves at the forefront of movements demanding climate justice; likewise, feminist movements in the region are visibly incorporating the fight against climate change into their agendas. Even so, and as in other areas, decision making continues to be male dominated.
- The poorest girls, who in the region are over-represented among rural, indigenous, Afro-descendant and girls with disabilities, are also those that suffer and will suffer the most from climate injustice. Thus, poverty increases vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, and these in turn generate more poverty.
- Girls and indigenous communities must play a leading role in the fight against climate change not only because of the enormous impacts it is having on their lives, but also because of their ancestral knowledge and closeness to nature.





Girl's wish list

In 2050, I would like:

- That we do not have to worry about sex education.
- No stereotypes, for example, of beauty.
- That there would be full participation for girls, the world would know we are here, we are present..
- That we can express ourselves freely and be heard.
- That you are not singled out for your body, for your hair color, for how you speak or express yourself.
- That we do not have to think about marriage.
- That what is written paper is reflected in reality.
- That public policies have a gender perspective.
- That civil servants be trained on gender.
- That schools are an important actor in the defense of girls' rights.
- That the feminist movement will include children and youth when talking about feminism.
- That society accepts girls as they are and leaves aside machismo, racism and homophobia
- That gender equality is achieved and discrimination against girls and women and LGBTI+ people be put to an end.

- That every girl, teenage girl and young woman be respected.
- That girls have access to justice.
- That we can decide about our bodies.
- That we reach a society without machismo.
- That there is respect for diversity since we are different as people.
- That there is no fear of the State and we have confidence in it.
- That the situation for black Caribbean girls improves.
- That we treat each other equally.
- That the rights of children be respected.
- That the problems we are going through now do not exist.
- That there would be less discrimination.
- That there would be fewer children on the street.
- That there would be less pollution.

“In 30 years, I imagine a world governed by women and girls”.

The Girls' Chapter is still valid: the “old” issues have become more complex and new ones have been added to them, in a context where ultraconservative and anti-rights forces have made inroads into political decision-making in many countries of the region. Girls' reality in Latin American and Caribbean is crossed by multiple and varied identities that derive from the continent's own history as a rich and diverse original territory, and at the same time one of colonization, conquest and exploitation. A territory and a history marked by a deeply rooted racist patriarchy that determines high levels of inequality and exclusion.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNICEF LACRO / 2020 / González

Twenty-five years after the IV World Conference on Women, leading to the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, most of the issues included in its Chapter on Girls, dedicated to girls, are still relevant in Latin America and the Caribbean. Profound changes that have taken place in the region, especially as a result of the advance of neoliberal and technological globalization, have meant that in many cases these “old” problems, such as child pregnancy or early marriage and unions, have become more complex and have acquired new and diverse expressions. At the same time, new concerns, such as climate justice or harassment on social networks have become present and are having an increasingly strong impact on the lives of girls in the region. The struggles of different social movements, feminist, LGBTI+, for racial equality, for the rights of indigenous peoples and people with disabilities have made visible different faces and margins in terms of distinct identities of people in the region, and factors and mechanisms of discrimination affecting them.

As is always the case with “powerless” groups, in this case girls, the struggle to exercise

their rights is plagued with contradictions where progress and setbacks coexist, making their analysis and treatment more complex. A clear example is around the access to education, where the most objective advances have been identified at the regional level, and today girls outperform their male peers at all levels and in almost all countries. Despite this, education systems continue to be permeated by stereotypes and practices that mark different roles and expectations for girls and boys. Likewise, girls today are much more aware and knowledgeable about their rights than they were 25 years ago; despite this, social networks and the media impose upon them attitudes and practices that are contrary to their freedom and autonomy.

Similarly, remarkable progress has been made by the increasing participation of girls in feminist and environmental movements in different countries, coexisting within a regional context where ultraconservative and anti-rights forces have managed to enter into political decision-making and, in several countries of the region, jeopardize the progress achieved to date.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a pioneer region in working on a regional agenda for women's rights; yet, girls are still not very visible. In terms of progress, it is necessary to recognize, although much remains to be done, the important normative, institutional and policy development around child protection, and also on women's rights and gender equality advancement that has taken place in the region and has allowed progress to be made in making visible and addressing living conditions and the specific needs of girls. Recognizing this, it is important to mention that, in practice, child and adolescent protection agendas often fail to include a gender perspective, while agendas in favor of women's rights and gender equality often lack a life-cycle and intergenerational perspective.

Something similar occurs in the normative frameworks that have been developed for the protection of rights and the eradication of ethnic and racial discrimination, many of which, although they make an effort to make visible and integrate the demands of women and for gender equality, almost always lack an age perspective that allows, while addressing existing intersectionalities, to render visible and address specific problems faced by girls in the region, acknowledging their diversity.

If the implementation of regulatory frameworks is in general a pending debt in the region, it is even more so in relation to girls. The limited political will translates into a scarcity of public resources allocated to the different State agencies for their effective implementation; scarcity of knowledge and skills of responsible public officials, allows stereotypes and discriminatory practices to persist in their application, as well as mismatches and lack of regulatory harmonization between different levels of State administration, limiting to a large extent the ability of girls to exercise the rights conferred upon them by law. The Covid-19 crisis has made this even more difficult, especially for those living in greater conditions of poverty and exclusion, and those belonging to the most discriminated groups such as indigenous or Afro-descendant girls.

Girls, especially those most discriminated against, remain invisible in official statistics. Although the Montevideo Strategy (2016) points out the importance of developing indicators and statistical systems to understand and address the situation of girls, adolescents and women, with the objective of “transforming data into information, information into knowledge and knowledge into political decision”, Latin American and Caribbean girls continue to be statistically invisible, with limited national and sectoral exceptions. This fact has been clearly identified throughout this report, and in each of the sections that analyze the issues contained in the SO of the Girl’s Chapter and emerging issues. Except for very few issues related to child marriage and early unions, teen pregnancy or schooling rates, girls, and even more so those under 12 years of age, do not appear in official statistics, much less when it comes to regional data. While this is serious, much more so is the statistical invisibility of Afro-descendant, indigenous, LGBTI+, migrant and displaced girls and those living with disabilities, that are absent in most cases from any official statistics.



PHOTO CREDIT: UNICEF Bolivia / 2018 / Andrade



Girls' Priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean

The girls consulted prioritized a series of problems that they face in their daily lives which has shaped the organization of the recommendations. These will be shared, discussed and validated with girls who participated in consultations, feminist movements and organizations working for equality, UN agencies and institutional representatives.

Global priorities identified by girls consulted are encompassed in 7 areas, that are further developed in the report. They are as follows:

1. **Girls demand to live free of violence:** girls say no more sexual violence and sexual exploitation; they demand to be able to walk down the street in peace and safety; they demand an end to impunity of abusers and maltreaters; and want to grow up and live without fear.
2. Girls, and even more so Afro-descendant girls, **demand and end to objectification and sexualization.**
3. Girls **want to be treated without any discrimination:** girls want their rights to be respected and to be treated equally in their homes and communities; girls demand equal education.
4. Girls **demand comprehensive sexual education** and to be able to decide about their bodies.
5. Girls want to **participate and decide** on issues that concern them.
6. Girls need **climate justice** in order to live and grow.
7. Girls must be **visible in statistics.**



PHOTO CREDIT: AndreaRegoBarros, Recife (Brazil) 2018

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

March 2021

Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Alberto Tejada street, building 102

City of knowledge

Panama, Republic of Panama

P.O. Box: 0843-03045

Phone: +507 301 7400

www.unicef.org/lac

Twitter: @uniceflac

Facebook: / uniceflac

unicef 

for every child