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Gender-Based Violence Impunity Regional Study: Honduras Case Study

Latin America and Caribbean Learning and
Rapid Response (LACLEARN)

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Gender-based Violence Impunity in Femicides of Garifuna Women and Transgender Women in Honduras

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ACRONYMS

CODEH	Committee for the Defense of Human Rights-Honduras
CONADEH	National Human Rights Commission-Honduras
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IDI	In-depth individual interview
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LACLEARN	Latin America and Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Plus
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
OFRANEH	Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras
VOIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol
ZEDE	Employment and Economic Development Zones

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Honduras country case study is one of eight case studies that comprise the Latin America and Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response (LACLEARN) Gender-based Violence (GBV) Impunity Regional Study. Applying an intersectional gender and political economy approach, this case study explores impunity for femicide and transfemicide among transgender women and Garifuna women in Honduras. Transgender and Garifuna women (both cisgender and transgender¹) are disproportionately affected by GBV impunity, and face catastrophic consequences of impunity in the near and long term. These women have the least resources to access justice, protection, or recovery support services, are socioeconomically marginalized, and are politically targeted for their gender and ethnic identities and as human rights defenders. Garifuna women as environmental and land rights defenders, and transgender women as members of a minority gender identity and transgender rights defenders face extraordinary discrimination, intimidation, and violence as documented by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Global Protection Cluster, investigative journalists, and in data that civil society organizations collect.

The Honduras case study involved collection and analysis of data from: 1) a review of available scholarly and grey literature and secondary statistics on structural gender inequalities, such as poverty, unemployment, and social and political disparities, that create the conditions within which high levels of GBV and impunity persist, especially towards transgender women and Garifuna women (cisgender and transgender); and 2) views shared in 30 in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) with GBV survivors and their representatives among transgender women and Garifuna women, relevant institutional actors, and civil society organization service providers that interact with GBV survivors or victims' representatives in their work in Honduras. The team used an adapted qualitative data analysis Framework Method with integrated thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and interpret key themes emerging from the interview transcripts.

The case study first diagnoses the state of GBV impunity in Honduras, then identifies solutions to address impunity, and finally provides practical recommendations to USAID on strategies for operationalizing changes needed to promote pathways to GBV accountability that survivors recommend.

DIAGNOSIS OF GBV IMPUNITY IN HONDURAS

Honduras reports one of the highest estimated rates of homicides and femicides against transgender women in Latin America. Garifuna women also face increased risks of GBV as defenders of human and environmental rights. Multiple structural inequalities contribute to conditions for GBV impunity in Honduras. High levels of poverty, racism, a culture of *machismo* or male dominance, conservative religious values, and political corruption confer power to those with political, social, and economic advantage, denying justice to gender and ethnic minorities. Inequalities further shape gang and criminal organization activities, including drug trafficking, that use and maintain violence and control over many communities across Honduras. Corruption and discrimination in all levels of public institutions disrupt and weaken public security forces, reduce skills and capacities to provide GBV survivor-centered protection and law enforcement, and limit access to justice for transgender women and Garifuna women. Societal patriarchal

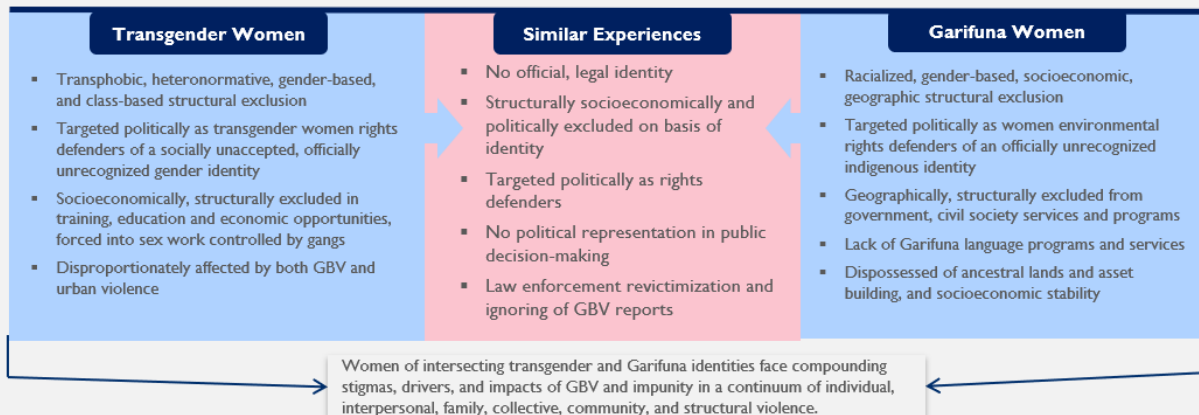
¹ Merriam-Webster defines cisgender as “of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cisgender>. Merriam-Webster defines transgender as “of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transgender>. Accessed August 28, 2022. In this report the term Garifuna women includes cisgender and transgender women.

norms tolerate revictimizing practices in public institutions tasked with preventing and responding to GBV. Legal frameworks do not recognize or protect transgender identities and there is no official recognition of Garifuna as an indigenous group in Honduras. Transgender and Garifuna interviewees described how in their views, religious fundamentalism combined with an under-resourced education system exacerbate societally discriminatory beliefs and inequitable gender norms that perpetuate GBV victimization and revictimization against them. GBV protection initiatives provided by Honduran institutions are generally under-resourced, precarious, overwhelmed, and inefficient. There are no prevention programs funded by State institutions, though limited programs are funded by national and international non-governmental organizations. Existing prevention and protection programs exclude transgender women. For Garifuna women, programs do not reach the more remote and isolated Garifuna territories, reflecting a history of marginalization by the state and international investors in tourism and extractive industries. Together with high levels of poverty according to estimates from the Autonomous University of Honduras, GBV and impunity are key factors driving internal and external cross-border migration of transgender women and Garifuna women and their dependents, as reported by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees and in academic research.

SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS GBV IMPUNITY

Transgender women and Garifuna women experience extremes of GBV impunity driven by socioeconomic and political exclusion among vulnerable populations in Honduras. By focusing the case study on these groups, similar patterns emerged in the dynamics and drivers of discrimination, violence and exclusion, revealing how structural and contextual factors intersect to increase GBV vulnerabilities and risks at all societal levels, especially among transgender women and Garifuna women. Transgender women and Garifuna women survivors of GBV and impunity envisioned pathways of GBV accountability based on their experiences in the case study both directly as survivors and indirectly as rights defenders, offering specific and differentiated suggestions to promote legal and institutional reforms to overcome discrimination of transgender women in compliance with recommendations in the decision and sentencing of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) case of femicide of Vicky Hernández among other experienced-based recommendations. Changes are required to improve shelters and protection services to ensure inclusion of transgender women and provide legal and psychological counseling, education, employment opportunities, and direct economic assistance. Income earning opportunities outside of sex work are particularly important to reduce vulnerability to GBV, and direct economic assistance is required for survivors to recover from GBV and enable them to pursue justice through the legal system. Garifuna people also lack and need GBV prevention, protection, recovery, and justice services in Garifuna territories. Special efforts are needed to reduce religious fundamentalist, racist, and gender discriminatory ideologies and practices in the school system, and among justice and security officials. Awareness raising among GBV survivors and victims' representatives of their rights, improved access to legal and judicial services and protection mechanisms for diverse women defenders of human rights are needed. Monitoring of international funding to local organizations and engagement in local languages should be improved to prevent and address discrimination against and exclusion of marginalized populations and GBV survivors among them.

Transgender and Garifuna women face similar and differentiated experiences of GBV and impunity disproportionately:



Similar and differentiated strategies needed for equitable and transformative GBV prevention, protection, and justice:



Despite substantial need for formal institutional and organizational reform and informal societal change to reduce impunity for GBV, interview participants did cite several examples of current good practices related to GBV prevention and protection in Honduras. Organizations highlighted as contributing to reduced impunity include the Network of Young Feminist Women of Atlántida, the Lesbian Network Cattrachas, Doctors Without Borders, and the USAID-supported shelter, Ixchel, in La Ceiba.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID: STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GBV IMPUNITY

Operational recommendations for USAID’s contributions to advancing transgender and Garifuna inclusive GBV survivor-centered accountability recognize that patterns of GBV impunity are both similar and different, calling for both coordinated and differentiated strategies for GBV justice, protection, and prevention in Honduras. These include:

Strategies for GBV justice:

- Advocate for the Government of Honduras to implement Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) recommendations in the Vicky Hernandez case to improve femicide and GBV prevention, protection, and justice with and for transgender women.
- Improve processes for selecting and training qualified and sensitized staff in justice institutions to avoid investments in personnel that may mismanage or misuse resources, not use resources for

the benefit of populations that need those resources the most, including both transgender women and Garifuna women.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of, “community service sentences.” in addressing recurrence of GBV and perpetrator recidivism in the law enforcement system. Evaluations should include review of community service sentences in convicted cases of GBV against transgender women and Garifuna women.
- Develop direct accountability mechanisms for all members of international consortia and partnerships led by international development consulting companies to ensure equitable distribution and use of USAID funding support in order to reduce clientelism and discrimination based on political affiliation. Implementing this recommendation would help increase equitable and fair access to programs and services for transgender women and Garifuna women survivors supporting them through legal processes.
- Strengthen capacity of elected or appointed public officials (e.g. ministers, mayors, governors) to work with USAID programs promoting inclusion of transgender and Garifuna people in ‘roundtables’ or other opportunities for exchange with public officials in decision-making about initiatives affecting their communities.

Strategies for GBV protection and recovery support:

- Expand access to shelters for all women and their dependents who need emergency protection, especially transgender women, and improve support for the creation of protection services for Garifuna women in their language and communities.
- Invest in, monitor, and evaluate economic recovery assistance programs for transgender women and Garifuna women ensuring their inclusion.
- Identify and build the capacity of local transgender women’s and Garifuna women’s organizations to receive and manage USAID funding support directly rather than receiving funding support through a partner organization.
- Evaluate the Public Ministry’s witness protection program with a focus on shelter protocols and the active inclusion of transgender women and Garifuna women in their language, accessibility, and management of funding for relocation of survivors, and confidentiality and safety of witnesses.
- Evaluate the protocols and practices of programs such as Ciudad Mujer in providing access to their programs to ensure inclusion of transgender women among LGBTQI+ GBV survivors.
- Extend non-discriminatory healthcare and educational services to transgender women and ensure all national services and programs are available and accessible in Garifuna communities, are culturally competent, and provide materials and services in Garifuna language.
- Evaluate existing programs and identify effective models for inclusive support for the reintegration of deportees from the US back into Honduras, particularly transgender women and Garifuna women.
- Strengthen programming to focus on medium-term and longer-term processes rather than one-off activities, and involve local transgender women’s and Garifuna women’s organizations and communities in planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions

Strategies for GBV primary prevention:

- Resource and implement intergenerational school-based and community-based social norm change programs to contribute to primary prevention of GBV with transgender women, and with Garifuna women in Garifuna language in their communities

- Address the role of gang violence as a key contextual factor driving impunity for GBV and increasing GBV risks and impacts for transgender women and Garifuna women
- Assess USAID's contributions to Garifuna communities affected by extractive industries and tourist operations, and address root causes of persistent GBV against Garifuna women using culturally competent strategies including working in Garifuna language and promotion of Garifuna staff working with Garifuna communities
- Evaluate existing communication campaigns aimed at GBV prevention to ensure cultural coherence with diverse community contexts, including using inclusive approaches with transgender women, and in Garifuna language with Garifuna women
- Fund diverse and inclusive GBV prevention programs over the medium- and long-term to address the considerable funding and programs gaps for GBV primary prevention initiatives with transgender women and Garifuna women

LACLEARN Background and Case Study Methodology

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the Latin America and Caribbean Learning and Rapid Response (LACLEARN) Task Order under the Analytical Services IV Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contract. The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Bureau’s Office for Regional Sustainable Development manages LACLEARN. LACLEARN contributes to improving USAID’s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance work in LAC through state-of-the-art, gender-informed analytical work, assessments, research, and special studies; results management support; training that contributes to sector learning in the region; and building an evidence base for effective programming. NORC at the University of Chicago, with the support of partners Making Cents International and Development Professionals Inc., leads the LACLEARN, “Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Impunity Regional Study,” which comprises eight country case studies and regional synthesis of findings and operational recommendations for USAID. Figure 1 provides an overview of the regional study participating countries and country case study focuses.

Table 1: GBV Impunity Regional Study Countries, Focus Types of GBV, and Focus Populations

Country	Focus type(s) of GBV	Focus population(s)
1. Jamaica	Sexual violence (partner and non-partner)	Women and men of diverse gender identities living in gang contexts
2. Guatemala	Transfemicide and homicide (non-partner)	Transgender women, gay men, and indigenous LGBTQI+ people
3. Honduras	Sexual violence, transfemicide, and femicide (non-partner)	Transgender women and Garifuna women
4. Mexico	Femicide and transfemicide (partner and non-partner)	Cisgender and transgender women
5. El Salvador	Transfemicide and homicide of gay men (non-partner)	Transgender women and gay men
6. Dominican Republic	Sexual exploitation (non-partner)	Women of a Haitian migrant background
7. Peru	Sex trafficking	Low-income and geographically excluded women
8. Colombia	Sexual exploitation (non-partner)	Migrant women of diverse backgrounds and origin countries

The regional and country case studies investigate structural barriers, enabling environments, and social norms that perpetuate or challenge impunity for GBV. The country case studies explore the critical question, “What would constitute meaningful accountability for diverse GBV survivors?” and chart survivor-centered pathways of accountability to inform USAID investments in LAC for GBV prevention, recovery, and justice.

CASE STUDY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Honduras case study are to: 1) diagnose among transgender women and Garifuna women the current state of GBV impunity and accountability rooted in structural socioeconomic and political gender inequalities, and the links between social acceptance of GBV, GBV impunity, and

corruption; 2) identify GBV survivor-centered, trauma-informed pathways and examples of interventions for increasing accountability and structural gender equality; and 3) to provide grounded recommendations to USAID on how to bring about changes needed to promote survivor-centered, trauma-informed pathways to GBV accountability. The study's guiding principles place GBV survivors, and the allies and support services staff who support them directly, at the center of each phase of the research. The study recognizes these groups as having forms of power to shape needed changes, and identifies how their power, resources, and influence may be bolstered.

KEY TERMS: “GBV” AND “IMPUNITY”

The GBV Impunity Regional Study and Honduras Case Study define “GBV” according to the updated 2016 “United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally:”

“GBV is an umbrella term for any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity. It is rooted in structural gender inequalities, patriarchy, and power imbalances. GBV is typically characterized by the use or threat of physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, social, and other forms of control and/or abuse. GBV impacts individuals across the life course and has direct and indirect costs to families, communities, economies, global public health, and development.”²

The study conceptualizes “impunity” both within and beyond legal definitions and attends to both formal institutional and structural lack of accountability for and informal societal acceptance and normalization of GBV.

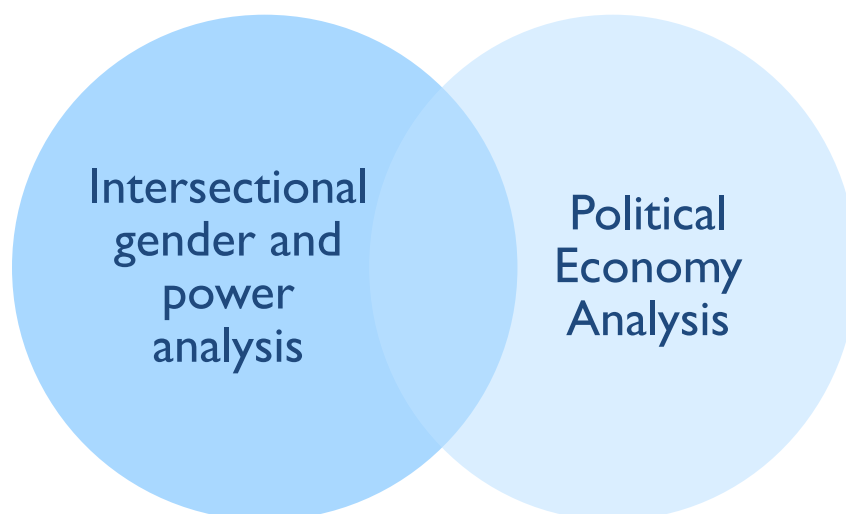
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Honduras GBV impunity case study applies an intersectional, gender, power, and political economy analytical approach to investigating GBV impunity related to femicide and transfemicide among transgender women and Garifuna cisgender and transgender women. Transgender women and Garifuna women are disproportionately affected by GBV impunity in Honduras. These groups have the fewest resources to access justice and survivor recovery support services, and experience extreme GBV vulnerability due to discrimination and social, economic, and political exclusion. Transgender women and Garifuna women face severe impacts of GBV and GBV impunity. The GBV Impunity Regional Study and Honduras case study adaptation of political economy analysis (PEA) shares core elements with USAID's, “Thinking and Working Politically through Applied Political Economy Analysis,” framework.³ To paraphrase USAID's PEA Framework, both approaches foster reflection on foundational influences, the impact of immediate events and actors, the institutional framework, and the dynamics between these forces along with actors' incentives and interests that shape the behaviors and outcomes observed. Figure I summarizes the methodological approach.

² (2019). “United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV Globally: 2016 Update,” U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development. See page 7 for full definition of GBV.

³ USAID (2018) Thinking and Working Politically Through Applied Political Economy Analysis: A Guide for Practitioners. Washington, DC. See: <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1866/thinking-and-workingpoliticallythrough-applied-political-economy-analysis> (last accessed March 2, 2021).

Figure 1: GBV Impunity Regional Study Methodological Approach



The GBV impunity study adaptation of PEA goes beyond this framework through integrating an intersectional gender and power analysis.⁴ While the approaches share similarities, there are also important and complementary distinctions between them. “PEA explores the political and economic processes in societies to provide an in-depth analysis of the power relations between groups. Gender and power analysis explores the power relations between men and women [girls, boys, gender diverse, and gender-non-conforming people], and often frames this as explicitly political [and economic].”⁵ An intersectional gender, power, and political economy approach to researching GBV impunity considers how diverse GBV survivors are agents and influencers themselves of both human rights and national development, and how institutional duty-bearers could end impunity through exposing and addressing underlying socioeconomic and political barriers, and strengthening or forging GBV survivor-centered pathways to accountability. The methodological approach sheds light on “how the political economy impacts men and women differently, whether men and women are differentially able to access power—including patronage networks, influence institutions, and how gender dynamics contribute to or block change.”⁶ Intersectional gender, power, and political economy analyses of GBV impunity help identify which individuals and groups are differentially and disproportionately affected by GBV impunity, and the individuals, groups, and institutions that can drive change for improving inclusive accountability for GBV

⁴ Kimberlee Crenshaw coined the sociological term, “intersectionality,” in 1989. In 1991, she expanded the concept to show how some feminist and anti-racist discourses excluded Black women and other women of color in her Stanford Law Review article, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” (Vol. 43, No. 6 Jul., 1991, pp. 1241-1299). The concept of intersectionality provides an analytical framework to identify multifaceted power structures and processes that produce and sustain oppression and structural inequalities. Discrimination perpetrated on the basis of intersecting aspects of identity, such as age, gender, biological sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics, lead to cumulative injustices, inequities, and inequalities in human development, health, and wellbeing outcomes over the life course. See, for example: Kapilashrami, Anuj et al. (2018). Intersectionality and Why it Matters to Global Health. The Lancet, Volume 391, Issue 10140, 2589 – 2591.

⁵ Browne, E. (2014). Gender in Political Economy Analysis. Helpdesk Research Report. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC). AusAID. See also: Haider, H. and Rao, S. (2010) Political and Social Analysis for Development Policy and Practice: An Overview of Five Approaches. GSDRC. AusAID.

⁶ Peterson, S. V. (2005). How (the meaning of) gender matters in political economy. *New Political Economy*, 10(4), 499-521. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13563460500344468>. Cited in Browne, E. (2014). Gender in Political Economy Analysis. Helpdesk Research Report. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC). AusAID.

justice, protection and recovery, and prevention. The analytical approach investigates the informal and formal power hierarchies used to maintain diverse and compounded structural gender inequalities and harmful social norms that together underpin and perpetuate GBV impunity. Analyses assess GBV survivor access to prevention and response services and resources; focusing on both the harmful and protective processes and outcomes of survivor engagement with health, judiciary, and economic systems, as well as national laws, policies, and informal gender norms that facilitate either GBV impunity or accountability.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

The study protocol received ethics approval and research clearance from NORC at the University of Chicago’s Institutional Review Board and an *ad hoc* Ethics Committee. Three Honduran GBV researchers selected contrasting, high impact, emblematic cases of GBV related to assassinations of transgender women and Garifuna women to ground the qualitative interviews exploring GBV prevalence, social acceptance, and diverse survivor-centered pathways of accountability. The regional study leadership team conducted training workshops with the Honduras team covering qualitative, trauma-informed, GBV survivor-centered interviewing techniques and role-plays with technical support feedback; ethics, and safety protocols; and good practices for self- and collective management of trauma and stress in GBV research. Following the training workshops, the team finalized a mapping of available GBV referral support services (psychosocial counseling, legal aid, economic recovery support, safehouses/shelters, hotlines) and developed an information sheet of verified contact details. They then field tested and finalized the interview guide. The team then employed careful ethics procedures to contact, build trust, and invite key informants into interviews as safely as possible for both participants and the research team. Over a period of four months, the team completed 30 KII with 10 of each of three participant types: Transgender women and Garifuna women GBV survivors and victims’ representatives; civil society organization staff; and government staff whose daily work involves interaction with GBV survivors and victim representatives. See Figure 2 below for a description of the study sample.

Figure 2: GBV Impunity Honduras Case Study Qualitative Interviews Sample Summary



Transgender and Garifuna survivor profiles as interview participants intersect as often both GBV survivors and representatives of civil society organizations. All transgender women interviewed in this study are GBV survivors and as part of their resilience they are leaders in formal and informal organizations dedicated to defending the rights of transgender people. Likewise, most Garifuna women interviewed in this study have been survivors of serious rights violations such as state repression, and gender and ethnicity-based threats, harassment, and forced displacement. The Garifuna women

interviewed in this study are activists in community organizations defending Garifuna land and environmental rights. For transgender women and Garifuna women survivors, activism and engagement in civil society organizations demonstrates both strength and commitment to justice, and increases their socioeconomic vulnerability and risks of suffering more violence and exclusion.

Given the socioeconomic and political exclusion of the study populations and the sensitive nature of researching GBV impunity with them, the research team prioritized the safety and confidentiality of study participants and researchers through extensive security measures dynamically throughout multiple contextual challenges. Several data collection challenges merit mention. First, national elections occurred during the period of field work. The electoral process was critical, and most transgender women were either involved in political activism or were cautious due to the high level of political risks. Second, the field work was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. To maintain physical distancing and prevent the spread of the virus, data collection was virtual. Building trust with GBV survivors to participate in online interviews required additional time and many GBV survivors had limitations with internet connectivity. Third, violence increased during the field work. One key informant recruited for the study, a transgender woman, was murdered on the day of her scheduled interview and consequently additional time was needed to reestablish trust in the transgender community. All data collection activities were conducted online via end-to-end encrypted Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) platforms to adhere to safety protocols for privacy and confidentiality and COVID-19 prevention.

The team used an adapted qualitative data analysis Framework Method⁷ with integrated thematic analysis⁸ to identify, analyze, and interpret key themes emerging from the interview transcripts. The researchers agreed collectively on a Honduras contextualized codebook for qualitative data analysis that they adapted from the regional study codebook. The codebook retained a set of *a priori* codes to enable future synthesis with the other seven country case studies. Each team researcher then coded, analyzed, and interpreted data individually from transcripts and collectively through team interpretation discussions weekly or bi-weekly to ensure consistency and reliability in the analytic process. The team produced data reduction tables of key themes and illustrative quotes in the interview data, disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity, and profile of respondent (i.e., GBV survivor, CSO staff member, or government institutional staff member). The report presents the Honduras research team's analysis and interpretation, featuring several quotes from survivors and those who work daily with them to put their voices at the center. The analysis presents how drivers and factors of GBV and impunity intersect in the lived experiences of both transgender women and Garifuna women. Differences among these groups are highlighted, yet the analytical focus of this study is to explore the intersectionality of GBV impunity and the similar patterns of socioeconomic and political targeting at all societal levels, and disproportionate impacts on both groups.

⁷ Steps in a Framework Method qualitative data analysis process include: Transcription; familiarization with the interview data; coding; developing a working analytical framework; applying the analytical framework; charting the data (data reduction); and interpreting the data. "Used effectively, with the leadership of an experienced qualitative researcher, the Framework Method is a systematic and flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data and is appropriate for use in research teams even where not all members have previous experience of conducting qualitative research." Gale, M. Heath, M., Cameron, E., Rashid, S., Redwood, S. (2013). Using the Framework Method for the Analysis of Qualitative Data in Multi-disciplinary Health Research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 13:117. <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2288/13/117>, last accessed May 18, 2022.

⁸ Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., Braun, V. (2017) Chapter 2: Thematic Analysis. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Sage Research Methods. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555.n2>, last accessed May 19, 2022.

REPORT STRUCTURE

The Honduran case study report presents findings that build upon existing academic and gray literature, available statistics, and interview participants' views to **diagnose GBV impunity**, including:

- an overview of the academic literature, grey literature, reports, and relevant secondary statistics on the structural context of gender inequalities that underpin GBV;
- structural underpinnings of GBV impunity;
- the history and current state of GBV, justice, protection, prevention and,
- power and incentives driving GBV impunity.

The report then outlines **solutions for improving accountability** as identified by GBV survivors and Garifuna women and those who work most closely with them, including:

- survivor-centered pathways to GBV accountability;
- formal and informal change needed for GBV accountability; and,
- examples of current good practices related to GBV justice, protection, and prevention.

Finally, the report concludes with **survivor-centered recommendations** outlining key strategies for USAID to invest in operationalizing needed change for promoting inclusive pathways of GBV accountability with and for diverse victims and survivors.

DIAGNOSING GBV IMPUNITY IN HONDURAS

LITERATURE REVIEW AND STRUCTURAL CONTEXT

While Honduras has reported sharp declines in homicide as the most explicit expression of violence, since 2012, high levels of GBV, including femicide, persist against women and gender and ethnic minorities.⁹ Political corruption, natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated existing structural inequalities, contributing to conditions for persistent GBV impunity. In November 2020, two hurricanes struck the northern, most industrialized region in Honduras, damaging homes, schools, and infrastructure, and driving more than 7,000 people into shelters, half of whom were women. The estimated proportion of Hondurans living in poverty climbed from 59% in 2019 to 70% in 2020.¹⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic worsened economic and social disparities, particularly for transgender women and ethnic minority groups, further exposing a pattern of violence against transgender women and human rights defenders.¹¹ Lack of recognition of diverse gender and indigenous minority identities in legal frameworks and inadequate implementation of existing legal protections for women, LGBTQI+, and indigenous groups shape the current state of GBV impunity in Honduras.

⁹ World Bank. Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 people).

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=HN>. Accessed: February 21, 2022.

¹⁰ Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (2021). Tasa de pobreza en Honduras pasó del 59.3% en el 2019 a 70% en el 2020, indica el Boletín Económico de la UNAH

<https://presencia.unah.edu.hn/noticias/tasa-de-pobreza-en-honduras-paso-del-59-3-en-el-2019-a-70-en-el-2020-indica-boletin-economico-de-la-unah/> Accessed: February 14, 2022.

¹¹ 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Honduras (2021). US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HONDURAS-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>. Accessed August 31, 2022.

Femicide and Transfemicide

In 2020, Honduras reported the highest rate of femicide—defined as the killing of a woman by a man because of her gender—across Latin America. Available statistics estimate 227 femicides reported in 2020—a rate of 4.7 per every 100,000 women, according to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean.¹² The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras (CONADEH) estimated that between 2006 and 2020, approximately 6,266 women died in violent circumstances: 90% of these deaths remain unresolved or not investigated.¹³ A 2013 revision of the penal code recognized femicide as a crime. However, since 2013, there have only been 15 convictions of femicide, although more than 7,000 cases of homicide or parricide involving women victims were reported to the attorney general’s office between 2014 and 2018.¹⁴

Highly stigmatized transgender women and rights activists face increased GBV risks. The lesbian, feminist collective and civil society organization (CSO), Cattrachas, advocates for the human rights of LGBTQI+ people in Honduras through compiling data on human rights violations against LGBTQI+ individuals. These data recorded 373 violent deaths among LGBTQI+ people in Honduras between June 2009 and March 2020, of which 111 were trans femicides.^{15,16} GBV against transgender women spiked during the June 2009 coup d’états with the extrajudicial murder of Vicky Hernandez, a transgender woman activist and member of the Colectivo Unidad Color Rosa. Twelve years after her death, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) found the Government of Honduras’ failure to investigate, identify, and prosecute the perpetrators of Vicky Hernández’ murder to be in violation of the American Convention on Human Rights.¹⁷ Hernández’s transfemicide formed an emblematic case in the larger context of impunity for lethal violence against LGBTQI+ individuals, and particularly transgender rights defenders and sex workers in Honduras. Six of the seven women who founded Unidad Color Rosa, a collective for the protection of transgender rights for which Vicky Hernandez worked, have been murdered.¹⁸ Most recently, Thalia Rodriguez, a transgender woman and rights defender, was murdered in her home in Tegucigalpa on January 10, 2022.¹⁹

¹² Caribbean, E. C. for L. A. and the. (2021, November 24). ECLAC: At Least 4,091 Women Were Victims of Femicide in 2020 in Latin America and the Caribbean, Despite Greater Visibility and Social Condemnation. CEPAL. <https://www.cepal.org/en/pressreleases/eclac-least-4091-women-were-victims-femicide-2020-latin-america-and-caribbean-despite> Accessed: June 15, 2022.

¹³ García, D, González, G, Matamoros, E, & López, C. (2020). Informe Anual: Situación de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras y la Actuación Institucional durante 2020 (p. 283). Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos.

¹⁴ Foro de Mujeres por la Vida (2018). Femicidios: monitoreo de fuentes oficiales y medios de comunicación escrita. <https://www.forodemujeresporlavida.org/biblioteca/#fb9=11,fb4=1> Accessed: February 25, 2022.

¹⁵ CATTRACHAS. (2021). Informe Sobre Muertes Violentas de personas LGTTBI Cattrachas 2009-2020. Cattrachas. <https://www.cattrachas.org/sistemas?lightbox=datattem-kphb9bmb3>

¹⁶ Catherine Calderón (2020). Encerradas y sin derechos: así viven la pandemia las mujeres trans en Honduras <https://contracorriente.red/2020/07/07/encerradas-y-sin-derechos-asi-viven-la-pandemia-las-mujeres-trans-en-honduras/>. Accessed: February 24, 2022.

¹⁷ LGBTI Rights | IACHR finds Honduras in violation of the rights of murdered trans human rights defender. (2021, July 8). ISHR. <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/lgbti-rights-iachr-finds-honduras-in-violation-of-the-rights-of-murdered-trans-human-rights-defender/>

¹⁸ LGBTI Rights | ISHR intervenes in regional legal proceedings against Honduras in case of transfemicide of defender Vicky Hernández. (2020, November 11). ISHR. <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/lgbti-rights-ishr-intervenes-regional-legal-proceedings-against-honduras-case-transfemicide/>

¹⁹ <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/honduras-cfwij-condemns-brutal-murder-of-prominent-trans-activist-thalia-rodrguez>. Accessed March 20, 2022.

Intersectional discrimination on the basis of gender expression and ethnic identity increases GBV risk factors for women both in transgender and indigenous communities, as defenders of the rights of LGBTQI+ people and of land and natural resource management rights.²⁰ As there is no official legal recognition of Garifuna as an indigenous group in Honduras, collective rights over their ancestral lands are not recognized or upheld in policy or programs.^{21,22,23,24} Garifuna women leaders, such as sisters Marianela and Jennifer Solorzano, both who defend land and LGBTQI+ rights, face judicial charges and potential sentencing.²⁵ No evidence has been found to support any crimes committed by the Solorzano sisters. In a breach of international norms, human rights observers from the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights-Honduras (CODEH) were barred from legal proceedings. Other Garifuna leaders were killed, such as Mirna Teresa Suazo, who was a community leader in Masca, Omoa, defending Garifuna territory against the installation of Employment and Economic Development Zones (Zonas de Empleo y Desarrollo Económico, ZEDE) and hydropower projects.²⁶ The murder investigation stalled, and the perpetrators have never been identified. The IACHR has condemned the prevalence of femicides and other forms of GBV against Garifuna women in Honduras, based on their gender and their ethnic-racial origin; and has requested that the state develop inclusive strategies to prevent GBV, to protect Garifuna women at risk, and to fulfill their due diligence obligations to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators.²⁷ A 2019 UN special report linked violence and threats against indigenous and Garifuna communities to defending and protecting ancestral lands and natural resources against national and international businesses.²⁸ The report describes these businesses as often failing to consult with indigenous and Garifuna communities and as colluding with discriminatory and corrupt public officials and landowners. In addition, the report documents women land rights defenders being threatened with death and sexual violence and intimidation by police as the women were assisting GBV survivors in filing GBV reports and judicial processes. Sexual violence against women land rights defenders is seldom

²⁰ Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Honduras, advanced unedited version distributed 19 March 2018 (A/HRC/37/3/Add.2), para. 10.

²¹ World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Honduras Garifuna. The United Nations Refugee Agency, Available at, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b9f70157.html#:~:text=As%20with%20other%20indigenous%20communities%2C%20Garifuna%20are%20closely,it%20detracts%20from%20their%20unique%20culture%20and%20identity>. Accessed August 28, 2022.

²² Mallent, Juan Vincent Iborra. The Limits of the Politics of Recognition and the Right to Prior Consultation in Honduras. The Garifuna Case, 2020. Autonomous University of Mexico, Master's thesis. Available at, https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?pid=S0185-26202020000200051&script=sci_arttext. Accessed August 28, 2022.

²³ The Case of the Garifuna Community Triunfo de la Cruz vs Honduras, Inter-American Court on Human Rights, 2015. Available at, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_305_esp.pdf. Accessed August 28, 2022.

²⁴ Global Protection Cluster. 2022. Protection Analysis Update: Honduras. September, 2022, <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/index.php/publications/481/reports/protection-analysis-update/honduras-protection-analysis-update>, accessed September 13, 2022.

²⁵ Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (2021). Con argumentos racistas criminalizan y dictan medidas sustitutivas de prisión a defensoras garifunas. <https://im-defensoras.org/2021/03/alerta-defensoras-honduras-con-argumentos-racistas-criminalizan-y-dictan-medidas-sustitutivas-de-prision-a-defensoras-garifunas/>. Accessed: February 25, 2022.

²⁶ Somos (2020). Informe situacional de las personas LGBTI en relación a la pandemia del Covid-19 en Honduras. http://online.anyflip.com/fltd/zumw/mobile/index.html?fbclid=IwAR204BI399_2t6xW_U7p0mkAuHTo9HYLp6Sbv0ezrfcLi_o41fMWk7FVki8. Accessed: February 25, 2022.

²⁷ OAS (2019). CIDH condena la prevalencia de asesinatos y otras formas de violencia contra mujeres garifunas en Honduras. <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2019/238.asp>. Accessed: February 26, 2022.

²⁸ UN Human Rights Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders 2019

reported in part because of social stigma.²⁹ Between September and October 2019, 16 Garifuna were assassinated, 6 of whom were women.³⁰ The National Commission for Human Rights–Honduras (CONADEH) 2020 annual report recorded 22 complaints registered by Afro-Hondurans for human rights violations at the national level.³¹ The Garifuna struggle with a lack of state attention to guaranteeing economic and social rights and face high rates of poverty and exclusion from state funded social, health, educational, economic, law enforcement, and judicial services.³²

Security and the Role of the Police

Interlinked corruption, impunity, and political crisis have increased citizens' distrust of the public sector and lack of institutional legitimacy including of the justice system and security forces, and an overall dissatisfaction with democracy. In the most recent Latin American Opinion Poll (LAPOP) survey, Honduras experienced a significant decline in support for democracy from 34% in 2018 to 30% in 2020.³³ After the 2009 coup, government administrations have expanded the political role for the military in governmental decision-making, particularly related to public security.³⁴ The use of police and military forces during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 was excessive and led to abuses and violations of human rights.³⁵ Data from the National Police shows that between March and June 2020, there were 47,060 arrests for violating lockdown regulations; and many of these arrests occurred when people were seeking food.³⁶ Many in the transgender community faced critical economic insecurity during lockdown as they were unable to continue sex work, which is often their only source of income.³⁷

Corruption, Gang Violence, and Collusion

It is estimated that the political system in Honduras depends on funding generated by illegal activities including drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption, and tax evasion.³⁸ The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is a measure of perceived public sector corruption where a lower score indicates higher perceived corruption. In 2021, Honduras scored 23/100 on the CPI and ranked 159th out of 180 countries assessed. Corruption and anti-democratic politics have weakened public institutions allowing criminal organizations, especially drug trafficking cartels, to influence and control politics and

²⁹ Ibid, 2019.

³⁰ Ofraneh (2019). Basta ya de asesinatos contra el pueblo Garífuna. <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2019/11/05/basta-ya-de-asesinatos-contra-el-pueblo-garifuna/>. Accessed: February 25, 2022.

³¹ García, D., González, G., Matamoros, E., & López, C. (2020). Informe Anual: Situación de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras y la Actuación Institucional durante 2020 (p. 283). Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos.

³² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner. (2018) “Human Rights Council Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice”.

³³ Latinobarometer (2021). Report 2021: Adiós a Macondo. <https://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>. Accessed March 21, 2022.

³⁴ Otto Argueta and Knut Walter (2020). La función política de los militares en Centroamérica. <https://sv.boell.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Funci%C3%B3n%20Militares%20Centroam%C3%A9rica.%20APAZ-hbs.pdf>

³⁵ Ibid, 2020.

³⁶ Lizz Mejia (2020) Servir y protege ren tiempos de pandemia. <https://contracorriente.red/2020/07/18/servir-y-proteger-en-tiempos-de-pandemia-%EF%BB%BF/>

³⁷ Somos (2020). Informe situacional de las personas LGBTI en relación a la pandemia del Covid-19 en Honduras. http://online.anyflip.com/ftd/zumw/mobile/index.html?fbclid=IwAR204BI399_2t6xW_U7p0mkAuHTo9HYLp6Sbv0ezrfcLi_o41fMVk7FVkl18. Accessed: February 25, 2022.

³⁸ Daniel M. Sabet (2020). When corruption funds the political system: a case study of Honduras. Wilson Center for Scholars, Latin American Program. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/When%20Corruption%20Funds%20the%20Political%20System_Final.pdf. Accessed March 21, 2022.

communities.³⁹ Trial outcomes in United States (US) courts have shown how drug trafficking became embedded in the Honduran political system through high-level governmental officials, as evidenced in the April 2022 extradition to the US of the former president Juan Orlando Hernández on drug and arms dealing charges. However, the current situation is also the result of local politicians protecting drug traffickers' long-term activities and traffickers' use of legal businesses to hide illegal economic activities.⁴⁰ At the community level, street gangs have transformed into organized crime groups and gang violence is often related to control of drug markets.⁴¹ Gangs regulate interpersonal conflicts within the communities they control, including intimate partner violence, among other forms of GBV, to avoid unwanted attention from security forces and police.⁴²

Between 2008 and 2018, fundamental pillars of democracy such as open and fair elections, freedom of expression, and independence among state branches, substantially and significantly decreased in Honduras while political polarization and instability persisted or increased.⁴³ Public institutions co-opted and limited by corrupt private and public actors increase structural inequalities and unjust public decisions regarding access to and use of natural resources, which drive violent social conflicts and repressive state responses through security forces and justice institutions. The Tierra de Resistentes database reported a total of 528 lawsuits between 2009 and 2020 against individuals linked to a range of socio-environmental conflicts.⁴⁴ State repression and the lack of peaceful resolution of socio-environmental conflicts increase the marginalization of affected communities, especially women, and disproportionately transgender and Garifuna women. This is illustrated in the effects of large tourism development projects along the Caribbean coast that displace Garifuna communities from their ancestral lands, reducing opportunities for development and security. These projects affect the economic security of women disproportionately, of which many are single mothers, and become a driver of out migration. An example is the community of Tornabé where at least 70% of people who emigrated from the community between 2014 and 2015 were women with their children.⁴⁵

GBV Linked to Internal and External Migration

External migration from Honduras to other countries is evident in the high numbers of asylum applications and apprehensions at the US-Mexico border.^{46,47} In one study, US Customs and Border Protection data from 2012-2020 showed a consistent increase in family-unit apprehensions of Hondurans at the US-Mexican border, which was associated with declines in rainfall, an indicator of food insecurity, and violence.⁴⁸ Massive migrant caravans have departed Honduras at critical moments,

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Steve Dudley (2019). Epílogo: Cómo élites y narcos hacen negocios en Honduras.

<https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/analisis/epilogo-elites-narcos-negocios-politica-honduras/>. Accessed: February 23, 2022.

⁴¹ Argueta, Otto (2016). Transformaciones de las pandillas en El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras. Marco Pérez-Navarrete (Ed.) Re-conceptualización de la violencia en el Triángulo Norte. 111-133, Heinrich Böll Foundation.

⁴² Insight Crime (2015). Special Report: Gangs in Honduras. <https://es.insightcrime.org/investigaciones/informe-especial-pandillas-en-honduras/>. Accessed: February 22, 2022.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 21.

⁴⁴ Tierra de Resistentes. <https://tierraderesistentes.com/es/index.php/datos/>. Accessed: February 25, 2022.

⁴⁵ Ariel Torres Funes (2016). Garifunagu Ágüdahei Hamua. Garifunas en defensa de sus territorios. https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/honduras.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/Gar%C3%ADfunas%20en%20defensa%20de%20sus%20territorios.pdf. Accessed: February 25, 2022.

⁴⁶ <https://www.worlddata.info/america/honduras/asylum.php>

⁴⁷ <https://dcid.sanford.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2021/03/Honduras-Migration-Policy-Brief-Final.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 2021.

such as in October 2018 nine months after president Juan Orlando Hernandez took office; and again in January 2021 following two tropical storms that devastated northern Honduras.^{49,50} Diverse women's stories reveal multiple reasons for fleeing Honduras, including community violence, the precarious economic situation, gang harassment, and lack of protection and justice from intimate partner violence among other forms of GBV, including partner and non-partner femicide.⁵¹ Violence and gender inequality have been identified as the most important drivers for women's migration from Honduras.^{52,53}

Legal Frameworks Addressing Gender Equality

The Sustainable Development Goals Gender Index (SDGI) is a composite measure of structural gender equality in alignment with the UN's sustainable development goals. According to the 2019 SDGI, Honduras ranked 81st out of 129 countries with a score of 61.0; and ranked 18th out of 21 countries in Latin America.⁵⁴ Although Honduras elected its first woman president, Xiomara Castro, in 2021, only 21% of members of the National Congress were women in the same year.⁵⁵ Honduras has taken steps to affirm equal rights for women, but gaps still exist in legal protection against GBV. The Honduran government ratified the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1983; but failed to ratify the Optional Protocol of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Honduras does not have a comprehensive law on the right to a life free of violence as required under the Belem do Para.⁵⁶ There is no legal framework for antidiscrimination, although the constitution does establish the principle of nondiscrimination in Article 60 stating that, "All Hondurans are equal under the law", and "discrimination based on sex, race, class, and any other is declared punishable." In recent years, the government has adopted laws relevant to women's rights and gender equality, including the:

- Act on Protection for Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Workers (2018);
- Act on Wage Equity (2015);
- Act for Protection of Earnings and Regularization of Informal Employment (2013);
- Act on Responsible Maternity and Paternity (2013);
- Equality of Opportunity of Women Act (2000); and the
- Act on Domestic Violence (1997).

Honduras' Penal Code classifies domestic violence, femicide, and sexual violence as crimes. Several national plans ending in 2022 are currently being implemented including the Second Plan for Gender

⁴⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/28/honduran-migrant-caravan-joined-by-other-latin-american-nationals/>

⁵⁰ Allan Bú (2021). De regreso de la caravana con los sueños golpeados. <https://contracorriente.red/2021/01/23/de-regreso-de-la-caravana-con-los-suenos-golpeados/>. Accessed: February 23, 2022.

⁵¹ Jennifer Avila (2018). Crossing the Border is Only the Beginning. <https://contracorriente.red/en/2018/10/29/crossing-the-border-is-only-the-beginning/>. Accessed: February 28, 2022.

⁵² Maaret Jokela-Pansini (2020). Complicating notions of violence: An embodied view of violence against women in Honduras. *EPC: Politics and Space* 2020, Vol. 38(5) 848–865.

⁵³ Denise N. Obina (2020). Seeking Sanctuary: Violence Against Women in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. *Violence Against Women* 1–22. Sage publications.

⁵⁴ Key Findings. (2020). Equal Measures 2030. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/datahub/2019-sdg-gender-index/key-findings/>

⁵⁵ World Economic Forum. (2021, March). "The Global Gender Gap Report 2021." https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

⁵⁶ Freidenberg, F. (2019). Women's Political Representation in Honduras: A Comparative Perspective on Party Resistance and Inclusive Reform Proposals (Policy Brief). Atlanta, GA: The Carter Center. https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/americas/womens-political-representation-honduras.pdf

Equality and Equity in Honduras (2010-2022) and the Plan Against Violence Towards Women (2014-2022). However, a UN report from 2018 found that these legal and policy frameworks have not been systematically implemented in practice.⁵⁷

STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES UNDERPINNING GBV IMPUNITY

Findings from the case study interviews corroborate that multiple structural inequalities contribute to conditions for and persistence of GBV impunity in Honduras. Poverty, racism, a culture of male dominance, conservative religious values, and political corruption ensure power to those with political, social, and economic advantage, excluding gender and ethnic minorities access to justice. A weak state with a poor record in upholding human rights is often unable to guarantee fundamental rights and basic needs—such as access to education, health care, shelter, livelihood stability, and safety. Political and economic power are maintained through corruption, collusion, and societal and institutional impunity. In this context, taking an intersectional view, disadvantage, stigma, and exclusion become compounded for women of minority racial, ethnic, and gender identities discriminated against as marginalized groups. Corroborating the available literature, interview participants identified transgender women and Garifuna women as at disproportionate risk of GBV and impunity, facing multiple forms of violence in daily life, often living in gang-controlled communities, with limited to no access to protection. These groups rely on insecure economic activities and any non-governmental organizations (NGO) for basic services and support accessible in their area. Case study participants discussed state tolerance for GBV and cited the government’s failure to adequately fund the judicial system or to provide policies for sentencing in proportion to the crimes committed. Failure of the legal and justice system to meet constitutional obligations, or to adhere to international human rights conventions adopted by the Honduran government, societal norms, and institutions routinely condone GBV. Quote 1 illustrates this perspective:

“The issue is that if there is no sentence, if they [perpetrators] go unpunished, ehh, or decisions are made that are not attached to international standards for the protection of women’s rights, there is a message to society and that message is that in this country you can rape women, you can commit femicides, you can commit domestic violence or any gender-based violence and that is tolerated by the State. That is very serious.”

Quote 1: Government institution staff member

SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS RELATED TO GBV IMPUNITY

Transgender women interviewed for this case study identified *machismo* and patriarchal gender norms as the most pervasive causes of GBV and GBV impunity. Transgender interview participants discussed facing gender-based threats and intimidation on reporting cases to the police or in seeking protection. Participants identified military and police officers as both the clients of transgender women sex workers, and the perpetrators of violence and discrimination against transgender women. Interviewees also reported experiences of threats of sexual violence and intimidation of Garifuna women when attempting to report GBV cases or access the judicial system. Interview participants discussed how patriarchal gender roles lead to the exclusion of transgender women from GBV prevention and protection

⁵⁷ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner. (2018) “Human Rights Council Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice”.

programs, as transgender women are still not identified legally as women. Quote 2 illustrates how shelters can exclude transgender women:

“[...] although the law in Honduras says that men and women [are a] force among equals and we include here LGBTI couples, they [the state] don't want to recognize them [...]. [W]hen we wanted to protect a transgender woman from gender-based violence—seek for shelter—we were not accepted because, let me tell you in this context, we are women with a penis and when entering these shelters we were going to, ‘infringe on cisgender women’. They would feel uncomfortable because they were women. I said in that moment that for me to be a woman is beyond genital organs, giving birth, or menstruation.”

Quote 2: CSO staff member, transgender woman

Transgender discrimination becomes exacerbated when public authorities, mostly cisgender heteronormative men,⁵⁸ identify a person as part of the LGBTQI+ community and as a human rights defender. Garifuna women interview participants felt that impunity and harassment intertwine, particularly for women identified as community leaders. Garifuna women said that the judicial system and security forces increase repression, exacerbating the marginalization and violence they already face in their territories. A Garifuna woman survivor describes this process in Quote 3:

“Yes, I forgot her name [Mirna Suazo], I knew her well, she was from OFRANEH, [...], she was an excellent person, but she was against the sale of the territory, [against] ZEDES and she was in the way of people that wanted to commit those acts of impunity and then what they did was to kill her to do this big development here in Masca.”

Quote 3: Garifuna woman, survivor

In interviews, survivors also discussed how violence and harassment against transgender women increased during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures, from security forces—mainly the military—deployed to control the public in the streets during curfews. A transgender woman and GBV survivor describes police and military violent repression of transgender people in the pandemic, including arbitrary arrests and sexual violence, in Quote 4:

“Well, you know, we came to the lockdown, our constitutional rights were suspended and anyway our companions [transgender women]—faced violence. There were actually killings due to the situation we were facing because [...] the society forced them to go to the streets. And then, in that moment, that was when others [police and military] took advantage and committed violence. I am talking specifically about the military, police agents, because most complaints that we received were because of such persons, they are the human rights perpetrators of our companions, when they make arbitrary arrests only to practically rape them

⁵⁸ Merriam-Webster defines “heteronormative,” as, “of, relating to, or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heteronormative>

because some of them [transgender] are forced to have sex with them [security personnel].”

Quote 4: Transgender woman, survivor

In addition to patriarchal gender norms, interviewees said that religion plays an important role in deepening GBV impunity for transgender women. Participants viewed religion as a source of hate against transgender women and an influence for discriminatory behaviors and social acceptance of GBV against transgender people. Interview participants mostly agreed that conservative religious values introduced into the school system promotes intolerance toward gender minorities.

“In political inequalities always predominate *machismo*. There is no social inclusion, no participation of women and opening for transgender [...] to run for political posts. As I tell you, religion has influenced a lot of political decisions, and look, religion considers this [transgender] as something wrong, as opposition and we, as transgender people do not have those kinds of opportunities [to hold a political office].”

Quote 5: CSO, transgender woman

In contrast, Garifuna women commonly viewed religion as a source of community cohesion in the defense of Garifuna territories and culture against encroaching corporate interests in land and natural resources.

Interviewees also referred to education as an important factor reinforcing LGBTQI+ and Garifuna discrimination and GBV against women and disproportionately affected, marginalized groups. They explained this problem in two ways. First, transgender women agreed that the lack of education in their community increases risks of impunity in that most are not aware of their human rights related to gender identity and freedom of expression. Second, young people in Honduras learn inequitable gender norms and expectations for socially accepted gender identities, roles, and behaviors starting in early childhood at home, at school, and in their community. Education and classroom practices in schools reinforce exclusionary gender norms against LGBTQI+ people, becoming an important site of intolerance and hate against transgender women as students transition into adolescence and adulthood. Ultimately, access to formal education becomes blocked once a person makes a gender transition. Quote 6 outlines how school becomes a site of GBV and of future prevention, protection, and response interventions to address GBV:

“Education [...] I think this is something we have to address since early ages, to change the gender roles we have, because for me this is the origin of violence, right? We learn it since we are kids, what we learn as normal since we are kids, although it is not, this perpetuates from one generation to the other. Then, I think education plays a very important role in the future of the country and to fight this chaos of gender-based violence.”

Quote 6: CSO staff member, transgender woman

For Garifuna women, education tends to reflect the structural marginalization they experience in general. Interview participants described schools in Garifuna territories as in poor condition, in part

attributed to the remoteness of many of the Garifuna communities and their schools. Participants said there were very few if any Garifuna teachers in schools in their communities, affecting their sense of inclusion and identity as Garifuna. Quote 7 presents a Garifuna woman's views on needed change for greater inclusion in the education sector:

“Interviewer: Regarding the school system, what should be improved to change this [GBV impunity] reality?

Participant: I think that education should be secular, right? As they [the state] say and in the communities, such as ours, out of 17 teachers not only three should be Garifunas. Let there be more Garifunas. We discriminate against each other for not having more Garifuna teachers in Garifuna schools”.

Quote 7: CSO, Garifuna woman

Interview participants discussed how dominant, heteronormative conceptions of masculinity drive the gang harassment, threats, and violence against transgender women and Garifuna women in gang-controlled areas. Gangs demand that transgender women working in sex work sell illegal drugs on the streets and threaten violence and death if they do not. In Quote 8, one participant working with transgender women, and a GBV survivor herself, talked about how she had to fill in the gap when there was no formal institutional response to gang harassment targeting transgender women in the community:

“I had to do different focus groups with different people, even with gangs. Why? [Was it] to avoid discrimination and violence against our transgender community because last year we were affected by organized criminal groups because they demanded our companions to sell, I mean, drug dealing, and if they [transgender] refused, gangs threaten to kill them? Then we had to face the situation, assuming the risk of talking with these gang members and explain to them why people from our community cannot take part [in drug dealing] because there was a risk of being killed or incarcerated. We reached an agreement with the gangs in which they will stay on their side and us in ours, without bothering each other and without going where they are because in doing so the gangs would consider us as their property.”

Quote 8: GBV survivor, CSO staff member, transgender woman

Although gang rules and community-level social norms obligate transgender women to hide their gender identity inside gang-controlled areas, gang members are aware of and permit sex work by these women outside of the gang-controlled areas. Social norms enforced both by gangs and communities seek to eliminate visible deviations from established gender norms, even when individuals' gender identities are known. Even though gang rules inside controlled neighborhoods are not viewed to be strictly enforced according to people living in these areas, rejection of gender diversity and stigmatization based in fundamentalist religious thinking persist because it is an issue on which gangs and communities generally agree. There are exceptions, such as in the historic areas of Tegucigalpa where gangs allow sex work to continue in exchange for transgender sex workers selling illegal drugs for the gangs controlling those areas of the city. Quote 9 illustrates links between gang-related drug trade, GBV, and transgender femicide:

“I have to tell you that this is the most difficult: The life of a transgender woman is very hard. We have cases of companions that are forced to sell illicit drugs, and they have to do it, otherwise they get killed. Gangs are very dangerous for people in general, but much more for the LGBTQI+ community because gangs mock us, attack us, discriminate against us. We are stigmatized. Gangs throw vegetables at us in the market.”

Quote 9: GBV survivor, CSO staff member

For Garifuna women, participants talked about collusion among police and men perpetrators in cases of GBV. In Garifuna communities, participants said perpetrators and their protectors bribe police officers with alcohol in return for not investigating GBV case reports. Interview participants viewed legal and judicial processes as revictimizing, giving multiple examples. In one case, a woman was brutally raped then treated in a public healthcare facility. After being treated, the doctors at the facility later shared details of her medical condition with other men unrelated to the case. Quote 10 describes an example of how inadequate survivor-centered practices in GBV case reporting and response procedures present obstacles for survivors seeking justice and allow GBV to persist with impunity.

“Interviewer: In your opinion, what can be done to improve the work of your organization with GBV survivors?”

Participant: [...] to file a record, but the man is not imprisoned. Actually, you can give alcohol to the police that are supposed to be looking for the man and then, they don't find him, then impunity continues. The fear of women grows and if there is one woman abused and with fear, all the rest who know that man are going to be abused too.”

Quote 10: GBV survivor, CSO staff member, Garifuna woman

LEGAL AND JUSTICE FRAMEWORK FOR GBV

For transgender women, participants agreed that the absence of a gender identity law persists as a major obstacle in accessing their rights and is the most important source of structural discrimination and GBV impunity. Without a transgender inclusive gender identity law, the state does not recognize transgender women as women and consequently lacking identity papers, they do not have access to public health, education, employment, or justice services. The Honduran state was obligated to create this law as part of the sentence of the IAHCHR 2021 case of Vicky Hernández, the transgender woman assassinated by members of the security forces during the coup in 2009. Civil society efforts to promote the creation of a gender identity law started in 2019, but without success to date. Although relevant international conventions have been adapted in Honduras, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), they have no impact on the protection of transgender women in Honduras due to the lack of a gender identity law. As described in Quote 11, according to transgender women, the absence of this law is a key driver of impunity allowing public officials, especially justice and security forces, to ignore GBV case reports that transgender women file.

“Interviewer: In your opinion, who are the most affected by gender-based violence here in Honduras?”

Participant: Well, in my opinion, being a representative of a transgender organization, I think that we, the women, have been invisibilized since many years ago and I think that we have suffered more gender violence; first, for being inexistent persons in our society and in our country; and, second, for not having legal recognition as women, or a gender identity law that recognizes all our economic, political, social and cultural rights inside our society, all the rights that have been limited since [a] long time ago.”

Quote 11: CSO, transgender woman

Staff of CSOs defending transgender rights shared how some try to build trust and create safe spaces for transgender individuals by helping them access a new government identification (ID) card to avoid discrimination and structural and legal obstacles. Issuing new ID cards was initiated in 2021, but inadequate electronic databases, lack of facilities and trained staff to receive people requesting new ID cards, and inefficiencies in processing the new ID cards have presented persistent barriers to issuance. COVID-19 exacerbated these problems. These challenges generated mistrust among transgender people regarding the handling of new ID cards. When new ID cards issuance was delayed for a large number of people a few months before the elections, many perceived that one political party manipulated the process to benefit their election results.⁵⁹ Transgender people could not legally update their ID cards with their new gender identity names and suffered further discrimination and structural violence when requesting new ID cards. In May 2022, President Xiomara Castro announced that the National Register of People (Registro Nacional de Personas, RNP) would implement a process to allow transgender people to change ID cards with their gender identity and new names. This change addresses one of the IACHR recommendations in the case of Vicky Hernández. However, there is no discussion to reform the law in the National Congress and an official legal process to change names of transgender people has not yet been defined.⁶⁰

Additionally, several LGBTQI+ and women’s organization representatives noted that current laws consider intimate partner violence a felony. These study participants said that judicial, investigative, and security forces reportedly discourage individual survivors from seeking to have a GBV case report filed, diminishing the numbers and priority of these cases in the work of investigative institutions. Several government sector attorneys discussed their experiences and observations of lack of prioritization of GBV cases in the legal system. While there have been investments in strengthening the legal response to GBV there are limitations to the effectiveness of these efforts. Citing the lack of specialized laws together with the lack of knowledge regarding gender diversity and inclusion, GBV, and a survivor-centered approach among investigative personnel, participants said GBV cases remain unattended, are regarded as infrequent, and of low priority compared to other cases that involve crimes better defined in Honduran legal frameworks. Quote 12 describes case prioritization and inaction on sexual violence cases:

⁵⁹ García, Laura (2021). Honduras retrasa entrega de 1,7 millones de DNI en medio de irregularidades. <https://contracorriente.red/2021/08/07/honduras-retrasa-entrega-de-17-millones-de-dni-en-medio-de-irregularidades/>. Last accessed: July 17, 2022.

⁶⁰ Hernández, Viena (2022). Todavía está por definirse procedimiento para cambio de identidad para personas trans: RNP. <https://criterio.hn/todavia-esta-por-definirse-procedimiento-para-cambio-de-identidad-para-personas-trans-rnp/>. Accessed: July 17, 2022.

“The Justice of the Supreme Court has neglected many instances and judges. Priority has been given to anti-corruption judges, anti-extortion judges, those are the ones receiving priority, but they don't care about the rest, right? The sentencing judges give it a little more attention. Some judges negotiate with justice, one sees that in some cases, right? I have had cases of rape of girls in my office where I know that the girl was raped by her father. Days later I see that the man was absolved—that man—how? It cannot be possible, when a girl is subjected, she gives her statement in which she said how she was sexually abused by her father. And then, the judge (juez de garantia) makes her revoke that statement and make a new statement where the girl says no, that it was a bicycle that damaged her ‘little thing’ (genitals). No, one sees terrible things.”

Quote 12: Government sector staff member

Participants from CSOs and survivors agreed that punishments imposed on GBV perpetrators are inadequate. They viewed, community service sentences, referred to as “distancing measures,” which are punishments in the form of community service, as ineffective and counterproductive. Regardless of the gender identity of the interviewees, participants agreed that there are no proper controls to guarantee that perpetrators fulfill the community service sentences that judges order, which normally involve street sweeping. More importantly, participants noted that sentences and punishments lacked strategies to rehabilitate men perpetrating GBV and prevent future violence perpetration. Interview participants shared anecdotes in which perpetrators used their community service time to drink alcohol and return home angry, at times revictimizing the same women who reported them to the police for committing GBV in the first place. “Distancing measures,” as sentences, do not apply to perpetrators of violence against transgender women because justice workers do not recognize them as having a right to legal recourse as women. Quote 13 illustrates how interview participants perceive distancing measures to be ineffective for preventing further violence:

“Interviewer: Is there something else you would like to add that we did not touch with the previous questions, but that you consider important to mention regarding gender-based violence?”

Participant: This depends on the justice operators, that they become aware, that they respect the work of the police. If we arrest someone for gender violence, that person has to pay for that. Do not take him out to sweep the streets because that is not punishment.

Interviewer: Do you consider that effective or ineffective?

Participant: No, it is not effective. Because the person goes to sweep streets and two hours later, he comes back, to what? What do you think that person comes back to? Look, he comes back angry to abuse the wife and children. No, at least the person must pay a sentence in a prison and above all, [the court should] give the victim psychological support.”

Quote 13: Law enforcement staff member, woman

Given the lack of legal frameworks recognizing gender diversity and inclusion, Transgender women and CSO representatives noted further that “distancing measures” as sentences, do not apply to

perpetrators of violence against transgender women. In their perception, justice workers do not recognize transgender GBV survivors as having a right to legal recourse as women.

Another shortcoming of “distancing measures” that interview participants highlighted is the absence of psychological support for GBV survivors and witnesses. Participants considered the lack of psychological support an important obstacle during investigations and trials because survivors and witnesses are highly exposed to potentially retraumatizing narratives, images, sound, and adversarial questioning during trial proceedings. Without proper psychological support and protection, many survivors and witnesses decide to migrate because of recurring threats from perpetrators. In some cases, survivors and witnesses have been killed after testifying in trials. Instead of professional psychological support, justice authorities recommend survivors receive religious counseling, mostly evangelical counseling, which most interview participants considered to be a form of revictimization generally and specifically for transgender survivors.

Overall, interview participants agreed that gaps persist in current laws regarding classification of specific types of GBV. One example is the lack of legal recognition of economic violence as a form of GBV, such as gender-based control over or destruction of a survivor’s income, property, lands, other productive assets, or interference with their paid work, food and housing security, and economic stability. Laws concerning intimate partner violence apply only to physical violence between heterosexual men and women, and not to transgender women. Laws related to intimate partner violence also do not apply in cases of femicide or other intimate-partner perpetrated, gender-based hate crimes. Law enforcement and judiciary staff classify physical and sexual violence in transgender couples as altercations between men. Yet, interview participants identified a key problem as a lack of institutional capacity to implement even the existing laws without law enforcement and justice personnel handling case investigations reproducing discriminatory gender stereotypes and inequitable norms.

The previous situation worsens in the case of Garifuna women due to the intersection of racism and state abandonment. For transgender Garifuna women, the intersectionality of discrimination against race and gender identity makes them more vulnerable to GBV. Garifuna women said that a major barrier persists for them that laws are written in Spanish only; and most investigative and justice staff only speak Spanish. Garifuna communities do not have access to laws in their own language, which is considered a lack of respect to cultural diversity even though most young Garifuna are bilingual. Spanish-to-Garifuna interpreters are often very limited in availability to support Garifuna survivors’ comprehension and participation throughout court proceedings. This also increases costs for organizations providing legal support during legal proceedings.

ECONOMIC GENDER INEQUALITIES UNDERPINNING GBV IMPUNITY

Interview participants considered economic gender inequality as a major driver of GBV impunity, especially among transgender and Garifuna women. With few employment opportunities, many transgender women resort to sex work or migrate abroad. Garifuna women suffer the impacts of poverty and structural exclusion. Garifuna communities face harmful impacts of commercial projects implemented without consultation, such as those promoted by national and international tourism companies.⁶¹ In addition, interviewees stated that Garifuna communities have been taken over by violent

⁶¹ Ariel Torres Funes (2016). Garifunagu Ágüdahei Hamua. Garifunas en defensa de sus territorios. https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/honduras.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/Gar%C3%ADfunas%20en%20defensa%20de%20sus%20territorios.pdf. Accessed: February 25, 2022.

drug trafficking cartels increasing their vulnerability to impunity driven by powerful formal and informal actors seeking to control natural resources in Garifuna territories. Survivors felt that many in the legal and judicial systems, including police, attorneys, judges, and other public authorities discriminate against women with lower economic status, which includes most transgender and Garifuna women.

Honduras has been ranked by the World Economic Forum as one of the most gender unequal countries in Latin America in terms of development (Gender Inequality Index of 0.479 versus Human Development Index 0.611), and with a gender gap of 27.8%.⁶² Economic inequalities affect women, children, and gender and ethnic minorities disproportionately, limiting human development and access to basic rights, including human security and justice. Normative, stereotypical gender roles emphasizing the social, economic, and political dominance of men deepen inequalities even for those women with access to formal or informal employment. In urban areas, socioeconomic discrimination widens where women have few opportunities for higher paying forms of work.⁶³ In rural areas, the absence of public institutions increases socioeconomic marginalization and GBV impunity. In rural and urban contexts, access to public services, including justice services, are further limited, even where available, for women and LGBTQI+ people through institutional gender discrimination, inequities, and power abuses, deepening harms to diverse GBV survivors.

Economic gender inequality also intersects with conservative religious values and gaps in legal frameworks, further disadvantaging transgender women. Interview participants said that pursuing a judicial process after filing reports implies expenses that transgender women are not able to cover, including follow up of case reports, payments to lawyers, transportation, and in many cases, moving from their homes to shelters for protection. Survivors are highly dependent on accompaniment and resource support from CSOs to advance their case reports through law enforcement and judicial processes. Garifuna women agreed that structural economic inequalities compound the nature and consequences of impunity as gender discrimination and racism combine with stigma against them as human rights defenders. According to Garifuna women, this compounded, intersectional discrimination becomes clear in their experiences supporting community struggles against national and international corporations exploiting natural resources in Garifuna territories. Powerful actors benefit from justice institutions while intense harassment against Garifuna women defending human rights and natural resources continues with impunity through gender discrimination by public authorities. Public servants interviewed in this study themselves shared perceptions of the negative influence of economic inequalities. Quote 14 illustrates the role of economic inequalities in GBV impunity from the perspective of a law enforcement staff member:

“Interviewer: Do economic inequalities influence GBV impunity? [If yes, how?]

Participant: Economic inequalities? In my opinion yes, they do, because, you know, as a police officer I can make a difference, I can do that, but to change the mentality of each person is a decision of each one. [Y]es, it [economic inequality] has a lot to do [with GBV impunity]. [T]here have been cases in which, for example, [if] I have

⁶² CARE-UN Women (2020). Rapid Gender Analysis in Honduras. An overview in the face of COVID-19 and Eta / Iota. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Rapid%20Gender%20Analysis%20in%20Honduras%20-%20an%20Overview%20in%20the%20Face%20of%20COVID-19%20and%20Eta-Iota.pdf>. Accessed: February 28, 2022.

⁶³ Argueta, O. (2021). Análisis interseccional de género. Un diagnóstico participativo en seis barrios de Tegucigalpa, Honduras. <https://alianzaparalapaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ANALISISAPAZHONDURAS.pdf>. Accessed: February 28, 2022.

money, then I can fix anything. [O]r you go to file a record but because you have money the authorities are going to listen to the one with money and the one that is poor, that came from far away, they do not pay any attention [to them] and say, ‘No, this woman bothers too much’. Then yes, economic inequalities have a lot to do [with GBV impunity] because that inequality has always happened, sometimes priority is given to someone that is economically stable and not to someone with few economic resources.”

Quote 14: Law enforcement staff member, woman

POLITICAL GENDER INEQUALITIES UNDERPINNING GBV IMPUNITY

Interview participants described Honduras as a highly polarized society with strong political identities based on political party affiliations ingrained over generations. There has been a long political tradition of “strong men” or *caudillo* politics that exacerbate *macho* politics in which important tactics of exercising political power include coercion and physical force. In this tradition, violence demonstrates patriarchal domination, producing discrimination against women and intolerance to the existence and political participation of people of diverse gender identities. Intolerance of gender diversity and social acceptance of GBV increase when clientelism and socioeconomic privileges across all levels of society are used to reward political loyalties. Most interview participants, except those working for public institutions, pointed out that clientelism, or “political colors,” meaning political affiliations, is assessed when a GBV survivor requests public assistance. Public services, including local police and health centers, are staffed by people that know community members well, including their political party affiliations. Political discrimination is not identified as a formal practice inside public institutions, but rather tolerated as an informal norm—a norm that fosters conflict dynamics. Corrupt politicians and public officials in part practice clientelism through creating NGOs to receive national and international funding which become often used for private interests or to finance political campaigns. Such NGOs in turn promote clientelism because they benefit only members of their political party. Interview participants perceived clientelism through NGO activities as a common practice of the National Party during Juan Orlando Hernández and now by LIBRE, the party of the current administration. Additionally, interview participants perceived benefits related to political party affiliation as linked to socioeconomic status. For most interview participants, political elites are responsible for introducing structural discrimination in public services based on political affiliation and electoral preferences. Public services are inadequate for most Hondurans, and access to services is for those loyal to the political party currently in power, leaving the rest either without services or with significant barriers to accessing services. Participants also highlighted those political inequalities also increase GBV impunity for transgender and Garifuna women, especially those identified as community leaders and human rights defenders. Quote 15 illustrates an example of how gender discrimination based on political inequalities affects GBV impunity:

“[...] the truth is that one can see that [political inequalities influence GBV impunity]. In this time, during the last years, it has been seen that to get something at the public level, in some public entity, well, it is necessary, as it is said in the society, ‘to have a lever’. And the truth is that yes, it depends on if it is known that the person that was abused is [...] is affiliated with some [...] some [...] how is it called? Some political entity—well it depends on which political entity is in the government at that moment.”

Quote 15: CSO representative

POWER AND INCENTIVES DRIVING IMPUNITY FOR GBV

Overall, interviewees described how in their views political elites maintain GBV impunity to protect their power, socioeconomic privilege, and control over resources. Corruption was a central point in most interviews when talking about impunity and accessing justice. A common perception among many participants further was that US support is not helping to improve performance of Honduran public institutions. Participants felt international funding is used by those in power for personal or political gain, manifested most concretely in public officials benefiting from programs that mismanage or misuse resources, contributing to clientelism, as noted earlier, and abuses of power that exacerbate impunity for violence especially among marginalized survivors. Participants discussed how political elites are often protected after being identified in allegations of sexual harassment or rape. Structural gender inequalities ensure a patriarchal system of benefits for political elites. Interviewees agreed that unequal socioeconomic and political power and incentives for protecting GBV perpetrators create the conditions in which justice, law enforcement, health, economic, and social institutions reproduce impunity based on discrimination and stigma. GBV impunity in government institutions is maintained and justified among public officials through a lack of resources, work overload, and inadequate gender diversity and inclusion education and GBV survivor-centered approaches in budgeting, policies, and programs.

As transgender women participants explained, however, in cases of GBV against transgender women, the most important incentive of impunity is societal indifference and the social norm that transgender people are, “immoral people.” By asking about emblematic cases of violence against transgender women, interviewees agreed that transfemicides, such as the case of Vicky Hernández, and cisgender femicides, for example, the case of Keyla Martínez, are the lethal consequence of multiple intersecting forms of structural, collective, and interpersonal GBV perpetrated with impunity against both transgender and cisgender women. Interview participants’ perspectives highlight the importance of differentiating femicides or other forms of GBV that public officials have perpetrated or contributed to, whether through direct involvement or indirect indifference through structural exclusion, or whether concerning femicides perpetrated in the absence and failures of adequate and timely GBV survivor-centered institutional response. According to Garifuna women interviewed, GBV impunity is the result of deliberate and direct state actions against Garifuna communities and produced indirectly through the lack of institutions and public services in Garifuna territories.

Considering that institutional support can only start after a GBV survivor files a formal complaint, and frequently discriminates against and revictimizes survivors who seek to report, widespread lack of trust in institutions and fear of revictimization and stigma remain major drivers of impunity. This situation worsens when support programs, such as Ciudad Mujer reportedly, exclude transgender women, and discriminate against GBV survivors who request to file a case and access support. As some interviewees said, for example in Quote 16, access to services can depend on political affiliations.

“Ciudad Mujer is a program of the State, right? But it is not a program for all women, there were so many protocols to be part of it or to benefit from their programs. You have to sympathize with the political party in the current government administration. I don't think that is correct.”

Quote 16: GBV survivor, transgender woman

Garifuna women maintained that the main driver for impunity in Garifuna communities is the power and incentives of political elites and national and international companies to exploit natural resources in Garifuna community territories. The overall impunity with which public institutions repress Garifuna territorial defense extends the conditions to spread impunity over specific forms of GBV, especially against Garifuna women community leaders and rights defenders.

In response to numerous failures of accountability and justice for GBV through formal institutional channels, interview participants mentioned informal strategies to seek redress and compensation. Informal, extrajudicial strategies focused on punitive solutions, such as identifying and injuring or murdering perpetrators, without pursuing a restorative justice process. In Garifuna culture, the Garifuna Security Committee makes decisions about interpersonal conflicts and administers justice according to Garifuna ancestral laws. In contrast, in urban settings, interview participants described how gangs can be called upon to seek 'justice' in interpersonal conflicts, including GBV, although requests for gang 'justice' implies owing the gang a favor that must be repaid later without refusal. Gang favor repayment could involve committing violent or other illegal acts. Interview participants reiterated how gangs impose and reinforce rules on gang members and residents of areas they control to alleviate unwanted attention of police to investigate and manage reports of GBV or other violent conflicts.

CURRENT STATE OF GBV JUSTICE, PROTECTION, AND PREVENTION IN HONDURAS

Study participants discussed how institutional justice and protection initiatives do exist in Honduras for GBV survivors, yet they felt many services are under-resourced, precarious, overwhelmed, inefficient, and discriminatory in their delivery. In participants' views, GBV cases are often not considered a priority among investigative, judicial and law enforcement institutions. Interview participants did not mention or identify well-functioning governmental prevention programs, and only identified national and international NGOs as providing justice response, protection and recovery support, or prevention programs, including limited support for accessing justice. Some participants identified programs supported by international donors, yet implemented by state institutions, as sites of discrimination against transgender women. In the case of Garifuna women, study participants noted total reliance on international programs as insufficient to compensate for the absence of state institutions in Garifuna communities.

Justice

Study participants shared a view overall that access to justice is not within reach for transgender and Garifuna women. Participants recognized the IACHR ruling holding the government of Honduras responsible for the death of Vicky Hernandez as a critical milestone in advancing human rights protections; yet highlighted that this legal gain required resources and support from several CSOs and international donors. Transgender interview participants said that although this case was a success, there is no capacity among survivors and organizations to request justice for each case of GBV against transgender women in Honduras. Without extensive resources and support from advocacy organizations, cases would not be heard. Garifuna women interviewed repeated how, in addition to GBV, they face racism and harassment in defending Garifuna territories from powerful national and international companies that are under the protection of public authorities, including from state justice and security forces. Garifuna interview participants said that resource shortages and deficient protection systems limit Garifuna GBV survivor group advocacy, especially those involving women human rights defenders. Advocacy groups for transgender women and Garifuna women are not able to formalize their own organizations or manage their resources because of the lack of formal inclusion and recognition of the Garifuna as an indigenous population in legal frameworks.

Case study participants working in the formal sector attributed inadequate access to legal and judicial processes to a lack of gender and diversity education among personnel, lack of interest on the issue among authorities, limited resources, constant rotation of personnel, intolerance, and prejudices. One participant in Quote 20 describes the judicial system as perpetrator-centric, resulting in very limited reparations for survivors in the judicial process:

“For example, in the case of violence against women, the Belem do Para and CEDAW conventions establish the obligation that judges have to make reparations, the obligation to repair all forms of discrimination or violence against women and that is an imperative and must be done. What happens is that we have a justice system in this country that is more focused on penalties of the perpetrator. Unfortunately, criminal matters are thought of from a point of view of the accused, the accused is the center of the criminal process, but the victim is forgotten. That is a practice that has been generated, but we have the tools to change this paradigm and focus on the victim and make reparations.”

Quote 20: Government institution staff member

Transgender women interviewed agreed that the indifference of the state to improve accountability and access to justice is evident in noncompliance with IACHR rulings and recommendations to the Honduran state in the Hernandez case. Media often portray transgender women femicide victims as “immoral” or as having committed “immoral acts,” effectively revictimizing the victim’s family and friends. Interview participants generally agreed that conservative religious beliefs influence most judges and prosecutors leading them to dismiss GBV cases against transgender and LGBTQI+ people in general. In the case of GBV impunity against Garifuna women, other factors compound the distinct mechanisms of impunity that they face, for example, racism and corruption from national and international companies and state support for business interests at their expense.

In interviews, participants discussed discriminatory practices of police in response to GBV case reporting for both transgender and Garifuna women. Driving this behavior are patriarchal norms within the police and the hierarchal internal organization of the police force. Police are provided limited gender training, and while there is an existing protocol for police in handling cases of GBV, it is mostly unknown and unused in practice by police. Reported cases of GBV depend on the police to transfer them to the Public Ministry for investigation. Without the proper protocols in use, cases are often not sent on for investigation, and are consequently lost in the process. Intersectional violence against Garifuna women compounds the lack of access to justice, as described in Quote 21:

“Very, very bad, access to justice here in my department, in my city of Tela, is very bad. Because we refer cases, we call the police and they never have gasoline, there is no driver, there is nothing, I don't know why. Is it because they think that the Garifunas have to look out for ourselves or are they just racists, or is it true that the government does not give them enough to be able to take care of Tela? I don't know, they are assumptions. I only have assumptions, something overwhelming [...]”

Quote 21: Garifuna woman, CSO staff member

Participants described police response to case reporting as mocking, threatening, or intimidating GBV survivors. The practice of advocacy organizations providing accompaniment of survivors or victims' representatives has been a long-standing practice, yet in the view of one participant, this has resulted in little change in police practices. Another participant from an advocacy organization noted in Quote 22 that during a routine monitoring visit to a police station in a Garifuna territory, the police remarked that they did not get involved in GBV case reporting:

“[...] the police officer told us that people in the Garifuna communities are stubborn that sometimes they want to take revenge into their hands and that they [the police] don't want to engage with Garifuna communities. He came with that, I mean, do you believe how [un]fair is that, that a police officer responds to you with such stupidity?”

Quote 22: Garifuna CSO staff member

Interview participants did provide some positive examples of police efforts to address GBV, such as the Gender Unit that the government created in response to international requirements. However, the unit has only eight agents nationally who are frequently re-assigned to different tasks. The Gender Unit lacks an adequate budget and vehicles yet is responsible for promoting gender equality throughout the entire national law enforcement sector. In the judicial system, case report processing is delayed, often taking years to process one case. Investigations are very often inadequate with participants providing multiple examples of cases reported that were never investigated. During the COVID-19 pandemic, specialized investigative units of the Public Ministry and the courts were overloaded with judicial processes that saturated the investigative and justice system. COVID-19 lockdowns exacerbated protection challenges for diverse and marginalized GBV survivors and victims. Participants reported neglect and omission of GBV case reports that had been filed without processing for a long period.

Interview participants agreed that widespread GBV impunity along with the lack of access to justice and trust in justice institutions are key factors pushing women, and particularly transgender women, to migrate. Survivors argue that the lack of protection after filing a report increases the risk of suffering retaliatory violence by perpetrators or their relatives or affiliated gang members. Survivors talked about the collusion of police and perpetrators where GBV cases are filed but then ignored or “lost” because the perpetrator is a friend of the police officer managing the case. Women risk further exposure to GBV as they migrate internally or across international borders. Transgender women, most of whom depend on sex work for survival, also face risk of violence from gangs, which have a pervasive presence across Honduras.

Participants discussed how the failures of law enforcement and the justice system to protect women from GBV, whether Garifuna, transgender, or cisgender, has led many women to flee with their children across borders in search of safety. As one participant described in Quote 23, historically migration outside of Honduras was primarily men going “in search of a life”, but more recently includes women and their children seeking freedom from violence.

“Apart from filing complaints, well, when Garifuna women are not taken into account and, I am sure that not only Garifuna women choose to emigrate from the country, of course not seeking justice, but rather fleeing to protect themselves and their children.”

Quote 23: Survivor representative

Protection

Protective and material assistance recovery services are mainly delivered in Honduras through NGOs, which serve as a critically important resource for GBV survivors and femicide and transfemicide victims' families. GBV survivors access physical and mental health services, and legal and economic recovery support mainly through CSOs. Study participants generally described protection services of NGOs and CSOs to have good quality but emphasized that many are unsustainable as only short- or medium-term projects. Post-GBV care service shortfalls combined with gang activities compound socioeconomic discrimination against transgender women and Garifuna women in their communities, while the lack of formal protective services leaves individuals and CSOs alone to deal with complex safety and protection dynamics in gang-controlled communities and areas of commercial operations.

Protection from retaliatory GBV against witnesses and secondary survivors also remains insufficient. Interview participants identified the Witness Protection Program of the Public Ministry as lacking enough LGBTQI+ inclusive safe houses and resources to cover protected transfers of witnesses. In some cases, poor management of sensitive and confidential information leads to witnesses migrating out of Honduras to seek safety. Study participants noted several murders of witnesses and survivors who were unable to leave the country.

“In the end, what we want is not to generate impunity, and that the perpetrator pays for what he did. But in most cases, witnesses are threatened, and they are forced to be moved, internal migration, because there is no support in such situations. A threatened person that was a witness and who has no support is at a disadvantage because they are unprotected.”

Quote 19: Government sector staff member

Data that the Public Ministry from the Witness Protection Program provided to this study show that between 2016 and 2021 there were 1070 case witnesses protected by the program of which 41 cases coincided with crimes related to GBV. However, GBV data are difficult to identify due to no classification for diverse gender identities and ongoing changes in legal case crime definitions.⁶⁴ According to interviews, the Witness Protection Program does not include protection nor prevention measures for children or adolescents; and transgender individuals are not accepted in shelters and safe houses. Interviewees noted that only some shelters run by NGOs accept transgender women. Many shelter programs do not offer comprehensive psychological, legal, or economic support services to GBV survivors. For some survivors, economic obstacles prevent them from accessing safe housing. Some facilities are in gang-controlled areas, increasing risks of retaliatory violence for survivors and witnesses, particularly for transgender women. Other shortcomings mentioned in interviews included the incorrect evaluation of risks leading the program to increase vulnerabilities of women who request GBV survivor support services to further violent episodes and deepening poverty, heightening risks to their livelihoods, health, and lives.

Prevention

Interview participants, including government sector and civil society representatives, agreed there was a limited focus on programs for primary prevention of GBV. Participants mentioned no government

⁶⁴ Data provided by the Office of Transparency and Access to Public Information of the Public Ministry requested for this research, February 15, 2022.

sector GBV primary prevention programs. A repeated theme in interviews was the need for changing engrained harmful gender norms and fostering tolerance for nonbinary gender identities as well as social inclusion to prevent GBV. Participants suggested GBV prevention education starting in primary school as a critical, long term prevention strategy. Programs designed to recognize signs of GBV in identifiable patterns of controlling gang, family, or intimate partner behaviors, for example, were highlighted as strategies for preventing violence. Participants identified alcohol and drug use as frequent factors in GBV, but there were few programs addressing substance use in the context of GBV. Participants described the institutional response particularly of the police to GBV involving drugs or alcohol as inadequate. Study interview participants described drug and alcohol consumption as a problem within the transgender community and a factor increasing the risk of GBV for transgender women in general in contexts of sex work, and at the hands of security forces.

Another key factor linked to the absence of GBV prevention programs is the lack of reliable, relevant administrative, crime, and epidemiological data. Existing official police and justice records lack critical classifications for transgender women, and information on the dynamics, and location of GBV incidents. There are few specialized observatories of violence against LGBTQI+ individuals and existing groups compiling data have limited resources and capacities to estimate the full scope and scale of different forms of GBV against LGBTQI+ people. Participants noted that valid, reliable, and available GBV data are required to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of targeted prevention initiatives. According to interviewees, most femicides and transfemicides could have been avoided if institutions and organizations providing protection could identify and act quickly on initial threats and reports of violence, and consequently prevent escalation to lethal violence. Study participants felt that the influence of politics limits the effectiveness of governmental institutions and programs dedicated to the primary prevention of GBV prevention. As one transgender GBV survivor described the current state of GBV prevention in Honduras, in Quote 17:

“Well, look, there are several organizations dedicated to that [GBV prevention programs], but their work is restricted due to the interference of such actions in politics and the government. It is not convenient for a country to say in front of the international community that they [the Government] are perpetrators of human rights violations”

Quote 17: GBV survivor, transgender woman

Many participants from CSOs felt that the contributions of local transgender rights or Garifuna serving organizations are undervalued. Local organizations are lowest on the food chain of funding, receiving a small portion of funds from intermediary organizations who receive funds directly from international donors, for the critical work of promoting programs in the target populations, gathering participants for activities, and engaging them directly to participate in programs. Participants from CSOs working in the transgender community said they felt “taken advantage” of and disregarded by donors. Transgender led organizations are disadvantaged because they cannot register officially as transgender individuals are not legally recognized, and therefore, these organizations are barred from receiving international funding directly. Interventions are often developed outside of the target communities, leaving out those critical to making interventions most relevant and culturally coherent for transgender and Garifuna communities. Normally, intermediary organizations report to the US contractor that activities were implemented, but not that the community designed and validated the activities In Garifuna communities, interventions often are not designed, planned, or implemented in a participatory process involving diverse community members. Quote 18 exemplifies the frustration of CSO staff participants in the

desire to receive direct funding, and to expand the role of local organizations and target populations in the design and implementation of interventions, beyond simply gathering participants for activities.

“Because the level of education that we have, [local NGO’s] take advantage of us, they take advantage from the weak one, from the ignorant one that accepts what little or nothing they give to him, or just a glass of water, a caress, or an I love you, come here drink a coffee and sign here. Organizations that are instrumentalizing us because of the focus on transgender women, LGBTQI+, and vulnerable populations and in the end, who get the projects are them [the NGOs] and the population that is supposed to be benefited gets nothing, those programs do not come to us as it is supposed to be.”

Quote 18: Civil society organization staff member, transgender woman

SURVIVORS’ SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS GBV IMPUNITY

Taking the study findings into account, this section presents a discussion of GBV survivor-centered pathways to accountability from the perspective of survivors and survivor representatives, and government and civil society personnel who work with GBV survivors and their representatives.

Figure 3 Similar and differentiated GBV impunity experiences and outreach strategies among transgender women and Garifuna women in Honduras

Transgender and Garifuna women face similar and differentiated experiences of GBV and impunity disproportionately:



Similar and differentiated strategies needed for equitable and transformative GBV prevention, protection, and justice:



Figure 3 summarizes similar and differentiated GBV impunity experiences and strategies needed as described in the study interviews. Based on the interviews, the report identifies formal and informal changes needed to support and strengthen survivor-centered pathways to GBV accountability in Honduras.

Experiences are shared and differentiated within and across those that transgender women and Garifuna women described in interviews. Corresponding strategies for addressing shared and differentiated experiences are shown in the bottom row of the figure. This diagram is included here to show where strategies are relevant for both groups where the underlying experiences are shared.

Finally, the solutions this section outlines includes existing good practices and models that interview participants identified. These solutions could be adapted or expanded to a larger scale, before turning to specific operational recommendations to USAID for future investments in GBV prevention, protection, justice, and accountability.

SURVIVOR-CENTERED PATHWAYS OF GBV ACCOUNTABILITY

Interview participants generally defined accountability as a legal process, engaging with the court system and receiving a sentence or sanction for perpetrators. Without a legal process, some participants felt there is no justice, given that the perpetrator has no understanding that what he did was wrong. Others highlighted the importance of psychological counseling support where some felt there was no guarantee a case would ever be processed in the overburdened legal system fraught with delays in case processing.

Transgender women talked about survivors relying on friends and their own individual resilience to heal from experiences of GBV. The precarious insecurities of everyday life for many GBV survivors, particularly transgender and Garifuna survivors, tended to focus interview narratives on the role of the state in doing better to guarantee protection from violence and to respect basic human rights. When protection from violence or the legal or judicial response was inadequate, survivors interviewed saw migration within Honduras or across borders to the US as a pathway to escape further violence and revictimization.

State implementation of IACHR recommendations

Transgender survivors and CSOs working with LGBTQI+ people agreed that a necessary pathway to reduce GBV impunity in Honduras is the state implementation of the recommendations included in the sentence of the IACHR for the transfemicide case of Vicky Hernández. Implementation will enable the viability of specific solutions, including:

- Educational programs focused on longer-term transformation of harmful and inequitable gender norms for primary prevention of GBV engaging children and teachers in the school system.
- Shelters that include transgender women with non-discriminatory recovery support services provided in response to GBV survivors' diverse physical and mental health, legal, and economic security needs before and after a case being filed.
- Gender diversity and inclusion education and training in protocols integrating GBV survivor-centered approach in the Police at all institutional levels, together with implementing non-discriminatory, adequate GBV case investigative protocols, budgets, and performance evaluation tied to police officers' continuing education and annual licensing review.
- Survivor-centered, LGBTQI+ inclusive investigative protocol development and implementation for GBV crimes against transgender people, which engage transgender people in protocol development for police and all institutions of all levels in the judicial sector.
- GBV survivor support care centers installed, resourced, and evaluated in rural areas, especially in Garifuna communities, including shelters accessible to and inclusive of Garifuna women.
- GBV primary prevention and protection programs that include support for victims' and survivors' children, elderly, or functionally impaired dependents, as well as pets.

Safety and protection programs

A common theme in interviews was the need for safe shelter and protection programs for cisgender, transgender, and Garifuna women escaping violence. Safe reporting processes, free of intimidation, discrimination, or threats of sexual violence and death are needed for women who want to pursue a judicial process. Many survivors seek shelter with their children, as single mothers or women who live with their perpetrator. Shelters specifically for transgender women are needed in urban centers but also in rural areas. Interview participants, as exemplified in Quote 24, identified safe houses for women who have been harassed by police, especially transgender women, as a critical solution.

“We need shelter. I believe that the State should get a little more involved, build a house here in the city so that these women who are threatened with death by the police can be housed.”

Quote 24: Transgender GBV survivor

Garifuna women migrate at a high rate out of their communities and territories to escape gang violence and harassment and repression by private investors, law enforcement, security forces, or public officials.⁶⁵ Participants called for the state to respect fundamental territorial and identity rights of the Garifuna people. GBV survivors discussed the critical importance of NGOs and survivor networks in reporting cases and pursuing legal processes. Courts often dismiss transgender women's cases without the support and representation of a CSO. Survivor networks are fundamental in seeking safety and protection, not only in accompaniment for reporting GBV cases, but in gaining access to health care, legal services, and psychosocial counseling.

Economic recovery assistance

Interview participants frequently discussed the lack of employment opportunities for transgender women and women in Garifuna communities as a driver of impunity. Survivors discussed the economic vulnerability of transgender women who in many cases leave school early, limiting their opportunities for employment, and face discrimination in hiring practices because of discrimination against their gender identity. Participants said most transgender women work as sex workers and are exposed to ongoing risks of violence, police harassment and arrest, robbery, and exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Pursuing cases through the legal system is costly, requiring payment for lawyers, court fees, transportation to court for hearings or appearances, childcare, and loss of income on days when work is interrupted. Safe and secure employment can increase stability and open up resources for pursuing legal processes in GBV cases or to move away from violent households, relationships, or community contexts. Women of all gender identities have few economic opportunities and are limited to traditional, low-paying occupations. Regardless of their occupation, women further experience unequal pay compared to men. The focus on punishment of perpetrators within the judicial system leaves little room for reparations, including economic, material, or other forms of reparation for survivors and victims' representatives. Economic assistance is fundamental to recovery from GBV. However, support to influence the government and the private sector to establish gender equitable salaries and respect gender diversity and inclusion in labor rights, is fundamental to reduce GBV-related drivers of migration. This includes influencing the private sector to open job opportunities to transgender women.

Multi-sectoral education and implementation of diversity and inclusion protocols for intersectional and survivor-centered GBV accountability

Interview participants described how public and community-based education, ongoing training, and performance evaluations within and across sectors in gender diversity and inclusion, and intersectional GBV and survivor-centered accountability practices, are needed to bring about fundamental and sustained changes for preventing GBV, protecting transgender and Garifuna survivors, and increasing access to justice. Participants emphasized how conservative religious values and harmful gender norms of men's socioeconomic and political dominance in Honduras could be transformed through public and community-based education to end societal policing of heteronormative gender identities, which underpins disproportionate risks of GBV among transgender women. Intersectional discrimination based on race, afro-descendent ethnicity, and nonbinary gender identities puts Garifuna women and transgender women at compounded risks for GBV. Women's interactions with police, the media, the courts, and the judicial system reflect and reinforce harmful gender norms and a general lack of understanding of gender diversity and inclusion, and GBV-related intersectional vulnerabilities among marginalized groups. Participants described the need to address and transform police intimidation,

⁶⁵ Ibid, 2016.

mocking, and refusals to accept GBV case reports from transgender women because they do not recognize nonbinary gender identities. Transgender women “deserving” violence because of their “immorality” was a commonly reiterated theme. Media reporting of GBV must be improved to become survivor-centered and end media use of graphic violent images without sensitivity to the survivors and witnesses involved. Addressing societal normalization of GBV against transgender and Garifuna women requires multi-sectoral education, protocols, and performance evaluation within and across institutions for improving societal conditions to better support sectoral reforms for GBV prevention, protection, and justice.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL CHANGES NEEDED FOR STRENGTHENING GBV ACCOUNTABILITY

A common theme among case study participants was the need to increase access to justice resources and political will for GBV justice response serving diverse GBV survivors and victims’ representatives, as well as strengthen survivor protection and recovery support services, and longer-term GBV prevention initiatives. Most importantly, participants recognized the need for support for CSOs that compensate for the precarity and limited resources of publicly available services. Below we describe GBV survivor-centered strategies to embolden the voices and influence of survivors and victim representatives, allied individuals and survivor advocacy groups, community-based organizations, CSOs, and institutions for forging pathways of formal institutional and societal GBV accountability.

Raising awareness of transgender women’s and Garifuna women’s legal and human rights

Participants discussed the need to improve knowledge of GBV survivors and victims’ representatives, and of the wider society, about the legal and human rights of transgender and indigenous people. Awareness of rights is particularly important for transgender people without a state-recognized legal identity and for Garifuna communities who lack access to information or legal documents in the Garifuna language, to understand rights violations against them and their rights to legal redress, recovery support, and compensatory actions. Overall, support for networks of GBV survivors, activists, and human rights defenders is needed to strengthen the capacity and coordination of these groups and to provide more opportunities to share experiences and unify efforts. In Garifuna communities, there are existing networks and community-led organizations that need ongoing resources and support. Rather than create new organizations, working with existing groups will build on the accumulated experience and knowledge, and will help to ensure adequate, culturally coherent, and community-driven programs.

LGBTQI+ participants, especially transgender women, express high expectations that the new government of Xiomara Castro will overcome legal gaps regarding the gender identity law and human rights violations. There has not yet been a formal proposal or discussion regarding a gender identity law in congress, an issue which was not part of the agenda of the first hundred days of the Castro-led government. Same-sex marriage, and legalization of abortion and emergency contraception, are all included in the governmental plan of Xiomara Castro and remain pending at the time of publication of this report.

Law enforcement, judicial and legal framework changes needed

Law enforcement

Participants identified several government programs and units within government institutions as important initiatives promoting change. Two such examples mentioned included the Gender Unit of the National Police and the specialized investigative units inside the Public Ministry. Additional funding support to formal institutional efforts in addressing GBV, such as these, should be provided. Participants acknowledged that there are existing protocols for handling GBV case filings and investigation for

transgender women. These protocols need to be evaluated and updated accordingly. Safe and effective case reporting processes need to be strengthened by providing gender and GBV training for police first responders most likely to receive initial GBV case reports. Strengthening law enforcement and judiciary presence and GBV survivor-centered and interculturally competent skills in rural area could facilitate case reporting among Garifuna populations and increase more equitable access to the legal and judicial systems for all GBV survivors.

Judicial processes

Study participants viewed sentencing and sanctions against GBV perpetrators as insufficient and ineffective. Sentencing policy revision is needed to ensure sentences are proportionate to the crimes. An evaluation of the effectiveness of “distancing measures” is needed to assess the extent to which they succeed in rehabilitating perpetrators and preventing recurrent violence. Perpetrator rehabilitation programs and policies should be evidence-based. In addition, participants noted a need for creating legal sanctions for hate speech against racial minority, ethnic minority, and transgender individuals. Participants identified hate speech as reinforcing discrimination and violence against transgender women and women of afro-descent in Honduras.

Legal frameworks

Participants highlighted the need for formulating and passing legislation recognizing and including all gender identities and indigenous groups in Honduras. Participants noted a particularly urgent need to revise the penal code to restore previous protections for all genders, gender identities, Garifuna, and ethnic minorities. For non-Spanish speakers, legal frameworks need to be translated into Garifuna and indigenous languages.

GBV prevention programs

Interview participants describe a general need for primary prevention programming. Prevention programs should be based on a public health paradigm for gender norms and behavior change, and human rights movement activism, rather than a church- or religion-based approach. Information on GBV prevention and support services should be effectively designed and tailored to diverse cultural community contexts. Communication materials are needed in the Garifuna language, with accurate and practical content, and in multiple formats to improve access to information about GBV, human rights, legal processes, and available GBV support services. Epidemiological and administrative data on femicides and violence against women are limited and need to be improved and expanded to inform development of inclusive and effective GBV prevention programming. Participants recommended establishing a national observatory with clear and inclusive classifications for documenting GBV-related crimes against people of all gender identities and indigenous groups.

Transgender women identified the need to strengthen and expand inter-institutional working tables including civil society, public officials, and community representatives that provide opportunities to share their experiences and needs. Roundtables created by the Eurojusticia program were a useful model in participants’ experience. These activities can foster tolerance and inclusion of transgender women in political and institutional spaces; and promote understanding about transgender women’s rights and concerns.

Gender norm change

To address embedded patriarchy and harmful gender norms, case study participants identified gender norm transformation as long-term change needed to improve GBV accountability. Participants described media coverage of GBV as stigmatizing, sensationalizing, and blaming survivors and victims for the

violence they experienced. The creation of a protocol and training for media and journalists reporting on GBV will help to ensure more accurate and adequate reporting; thus, preventing revictimization of survivors and victim representatives, reproduction of harmful gender norms, and social and gender discrimination.

As part of the overall shift in norms, participants identified scarce existing GBV prevention efforts and a need for a secular approach in GBV prevention programs. Participants highlighted the importance of separating churches from programs addressing needs of transgender people and the LGBTI community in general. In addition, participants viewed longer term change through development of a school-based, GBV prevention, gender justice, and socio-emotional learning education for all grade levels to end the intergenerational transmission of harmful gender norms, stereotypes, inequities, and GBV.

International and national non-governmental organizations

Study participants viewed the key roles that national and international NGOs play in providing essential services and support to GBV survivors, survivor representatives, and victims' representatives as fundamental for reducing GBV impunity. Participants identified NGOs as change agents because of their capacities to reach transgender and Garifuna populations that the state excludes. Participants mentioned Doctors Without Borders often as the only international organization providing quality health care services in marginalized, violent, and often gang-controlled communities without discriminating against transgender women. Interview participants named organizations dedicated to human rights protection of LGBTQI+ individuals in Honduras, such as Cattrachas, as essential to improving access to justice. NGOs provide legal and psychosocial support services to survivors and victims' representatives where there are significant gaps in state funded public service provision. Garifuna women participants also identified NGOs as fundamental change agents if they understand and respect Garifuna culture and community dynamics. Program coordination and support are paramount in improving access to justice. There is an immediate need to expand access to healthcare services--particularly mental health and counseling services.

Funding and program oversight

GBV survivors identified the need to improve monitoring and oversight of funding to local organizations. Interview participants raised concerns in the context of transgender rights organizational dependence on local NGOs to access resources from international donors. In interviews, participants described how local NGOs managing USAID funding have, "taken advantage," of transgender women's organizations, providing them inadequate resources for work critical for achieving program objectives. Participants identified a need for improved mechanisms to ensure resources are allocated fairly and cover staffing and programming costs adequately. Participants identified a need to improve respect for the cultural context in donor-funded efforts in Garifuna communities, specifically. Ensuring interculturally competent programming will not only enhance program effectiveness, but also will help to mitigate potential unintended community harm and foster local program ownership. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced important opportunities to identify interlinked issues and affected populations where international donors can improve programming, such as GBV prevention, protection, and justice supporting marginalized groups. Participants noted that international programs were not able to adapt to the rapidly changing pandemic environment, moving from routine implementation to emergency response. Shifting needs during the epidemic required flexible reallocation of resources and to allocate resources to humanitarian aid items not previously budgeted for, such as food and shelter. Another lesson which interview participants recommended ought to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is expanding

the definition of GBV survivor to include the children and dependents of survivors, consequently allowing GBV services provided by international programs to support them alongside the survivor.

EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES RELATED TO GBV PROTECTION AND PREVENTION

Despite a substantial need for formal and informal changes to reduce impunity for GBV in Honduras, interview participants did cite several examples of current good practices related to GBV protection and prevention. These examples include:

- **The Network of Young Feminist Women of Atlántida** promotes women rights, advances advocacy, delivers training, and raises awareness about GBV against women in the department of Atlántida. The Network is a locally based group working in remote rural areas and in urban settings affected by high levels of violence and conflict. Focusing on training and awareness raising on women's rights, the Network also works with other networks and groups at the national level.
- **The Lesbian Network Cattrachas** (Cattrachas) focuses on legal support and advocacy for LGBTI rights and compiles data on femicide and violence against LGBTQI+ individuals through a specialized observatory. Cattrachas provided support to transgender survivors during the trial in the IACHR against the Honduran state for the assassination of Vicky Hernandez. Cattrachas supports small and locally based LGBTQI+ organizations in using strategic litigation at national and international levels. Cattrachas has raised the visibility of LGBTQI+ and awareness of their needs and demands. They have developed technical capacities to generate accurate information on violence against LGBTQI+ often underreported in official records due to inadequate categorization of crimes, discrimination, and indifference.
- **Doctors Without Borders** provides health and psychological services in neighborhoods and communities highly impacted by violence, gangs, and marginalization from access to government services. This is the only organization in Honduras which participants recognized for including transgender women without restriction. They provide healthcare services without discrimination to LGBTQI+ people, sex workers, and people living with HIV, populations often facing discrimination and exclusion in public healthcare facilities.
- **The shelter Ixchel in La Ceiba**, supported by USAID, is a successful model for support to women GBV survivors and integrated services provision through referrals to collaborating institutions and NGO programs. The shelter provides legal, healthcare, and psychological support; and accommodation and training for entrepreneurship for women survivors of GBV. These services are provided to women and their children coming from extremely violent areas of La Ceiba. The shelter is supported by the municipality of La Ceiba through the municipal office for women increasing coordination with the Public Ministry and the National Policy to respond to survivors of GBV. Funding for the shelter comes primarily from private donations. Protocols have been developed to protect the safety and confidentiality of program participants, including the location of the shelter. The group lobbies with congressional representatives in La Ceiba to improve respect for human rights in the region.

OPERATIONALIZING CHANGE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID

Interview participants across GBV survivor representative groups, civil society, and public institutions recognize USAID as being the most reliable donor to support cisgender women, transgender women, and LGBTQI+ people in Honduras. However, Garifuna women do not have the same view of USAID in their communities. According to interviews, this situation may be related to the limited presence of

USAID in Garifuna territories and the perception that USAID represents the interests of the US and by extension the interests of US companies present in Garifuna territories. As such, while the recommendations in this section are broadly applicable to USAID's interventions to reduce impunity for GBV in Honduras, USAID should also recognize that additional groundwork must be done to develop trust and a track record of collaborative, effective cooperation with Garifuna communities to support accountability for GBV and reduced impunity in these communities. Crucial to this work is co-designing interventions with transgender and Garifuna GBV survivors, their allies, and community members directly and engage them throughout processes of monitoring and evaluation.

Operational recommendations for USAID's contributions in Honduras to advancing transgender and Garifuna inclusive GBV survivor-centered accountability for improving GBV justice, protection and recovery support services, and longer-term primary prevention, include the following. Please see Annex I for a detailed table summarizing how the Honduras case study findings link to the recommendations.

GBV justice and equity:

- **Advocate for the Government of Honduras to implement IACHR recommendations in the Vicky Hernandez case to improve femicide and GBV prevention, protection, and justice with and for transgender women.** Implementation of these recommendations will make primary prevention more feasible. Although the new government has implemented some recommendations regarding symbolic reparation (public recognition of the state responsibility of the killing and ask for forgiveness to the victims), changes in laws and institutions have not been yet implemented. Recommendations include improving inclusive shelter space for transgender and Garifuna women and their dependents; gender diversity and inclusivity training in police protocols for handling GBV cases; and investigative protocols for law enforcement at all levels; and installing survivor care centers in rural and Garifuna areas, including shelter space.
- **Improve processes for selecting, training, and regular performance evaluation of justice sector staff working with GBV survivors to identify and avoid investments in personnel that may revictimize GBV survivors, not use resources for the benefit of target populations, or mismanage or misuse resources.** Avoid the rotation of trained personnel to other institutions after receiving training by USAID-supported programs in public institutions by incentivizing them to improve retention. This is particularly important for programs supporting the National Police Force and the Public Ministry. Include conditional clauses in work contracts requiring public officials' implementation of international norms and procedures for cases concerning GBV.
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of community service sentences in addressing recurrence of GBV and perpetrator recidivism in the legal system.** Results of this evaluation can inform improvements in current "distancing measures" regulations or lead to the identification and adaptation of alternative models in monitoring and reducing recurring GBV among perpetrators.
- **Develop direct accountability mechanisms for all members of international consortia led by international consulting companies to ensure equitable distribution and use of USAID funding in help reduce clientelism and discrimination based on political party affiliation.** This implies improving monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure compliance among implementing partners, municipalities, and other members receiving USAID funds directly or through national and international consortiums to prevent resource

misappropriation and loss. Legal recognition of LGBTQI+ and Garifuna organizations and collectives is needed to remove their dependence on intermediary implementing partner organizations. This will strengthen NGO administrative capacities among USAID partners, while recognizing the capacities of local organizations to reach and engage with program beneficiaries.

- **Strengthen capacity of elected or appointed public officials (e.g. ministers, mayors, governors) to work with USAID programs promoting inclusion of transgender and Garifuna people in ‘roundtables’ or other opportunities for exchange with public authorities in decision-making about initiatives affecting their communities.** This includes advocacy and support for legal reforms and the formulation of gender inclusive legal frameworks and protections, ensuring accurate information and communication.

GBV protection and recovery support:

- **Expand access to shelters for all women and their dependents who need emergency protection. Shelter space specifically for transgender women and children of victims is needed.** The location of shelters should consider the “invisible borders” in territories controlled by gangs to improve access for transgender women who are frequently targeted with gang violence. Shelters specialized in protection for transgender women and their relatives are needed. Shelters should offer or refer survivors to expanded recovery support services, including healthcare, psychosocial counseling, economic assistance, job training, legal aid, and court accompaniment services. There is a lack of shelters in Garifuna communities.
- **Invest in and monitor economic recovery assistance programs for transgender and Garifuna women.** Technical and vocational training programs are needed to support transgender women to pursue alternative, safe livelihoods. Small business development support in establishing income generating activities such as grocery stores could help expand safe livelihood options. Funds for completing educational degrees or certificates for transgender women and Garifuna women who left school early or who have limited job skills training are needed.
- **Identify and build the capacity of local transgender women’s organizations to receive and manage USAID funding support directly rather than receiving funding support through a partner organization.** This includes improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of resources granted to local organizations working with LGBTQI+ communities to guarantee that benefits are reaching target beneficiaries, including transgender women.
- **Evaluate the Public Ministry’s witness protection program with a focus on shelter protocols and the inclusion of transgender women, accessibility, and management of funding for relocation of survivors, and confidentiality and safety of witnesses.** Recommend specific actions based on the evaluation results. Develop a safety and protection protocol specifically for transgender women participating in the witness protection program.
- **Evaluate the protocols and practices of programs such as Ciudad Mujer in providing access to their programs to ensure inclusion of transgender women among LGBTQI+ GBV survivors.**
- **Extend non-discriminatory healthcare and educational services to transgender women.**
- **Ensure all national services and programs are available and accessible in Garifuna communities, are culturally competent, and provide materials and services in Garifuna language.**
- **Evaluate existing programs and identify effective models for inclusive support for the reintegration of deportees from the US back into Honduras, particularly**

transgender and Garifuna women. These programs should include shelter, economic assistance, educational opportunities, healthcare and employment services, and legal support for reporting and pursuing legal action in cases of human rights violations.

- **Strengthen programming through a focus on improving processes rather than one-off activities, and involve local organizations and communities in planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions.** This includes strengthening capacities of local organizations to be able to register and receive international funding directly; and in involving local organizations and communities in the planning, design, implementation of interventions. This will increase cultural coherence of programs in existing cultural context and community dynamics and promote local ownership of programs.

GBV prevention:

- **Design or adapt and implement school-based and community-based social norm change programs to contribute to primary prevention of GBV.** School-based education programs at all grade levels on gender diversity and inclusivity, and gender justice and equality are needed for long-term transformation of harmful norms and social acceptance of GBV. Programs should be secular, multi-level (interpersonal, group/collective, family, community, national) and should be developed and evaluated in a participatory manner to ensure relevance and positive effects in promoting new positive norms and behaviors contributing to GBV accountability.
- **Address the role of gang violence as a key contextual factor driving impunity for GBV and increasing GBV risks and impacts for transgender women.** Programs designed to prevent gang participation and gang related violence should include gender equality and GBV prevention activities. Inclusion of GBV prevention elements in violence prevention programming will improve coordination among implementers and will align with other recommendations from ongoing research on how to prevent community violence. Prevention programs should engage both children and adult family members of gangs in order to increase the acceptance of prevention programs in gang-controlled areas. Implementation of violence prevention programs and messages among children whose adult relatives are gang members will have limited success and acceptance in gang-controlled communities without strategies for engaging community members intergenerationally.
- **Assess USAID's contributions to Garifuna communities affected by extractive industries and commercial tourist operations, and address root causes of persistent GBV against Garifuna women.** Addressing root causes should include developing strategies to encourage local organizations in Garifuna territories to receive US government funding and technical support. These strategies should address negative perceptions of the US government's alleged links to repressive companies, be culturally coherent and interculturally competent, and promote Garifuna staff working with Garifuna communities, including working in Garifuna language.
- **Evaluate existing communication campaigns aimed at GBV prevention to ensure cultural coherence with diverse community contexts.** Ensure that violence prevention messages are developed in a participatory manner to increase their acceptability and effectiveness.
- **Fund and evaluate GBV prevention programs over the medium- and long-term to address the considerable funding and program gaps in primary prevention.** Identify, adapt, and evaluate models that have been successful in reducing GBV in diverse settings. Prevention programs should be designed, implemented, and evaluated to promote targeted

positive social norm change over time periods sufficient to allow for community-level reflection, dialogue, and behavior change beyond one-off campaigns or trainings.

ANNEX I. MAPPING CASE STUDY FINDINGS TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 2: Case study recommendations by intervention strategy, theme, and finding for reducing GBV impunity in Honduras

Intervention strategy	Theme	Finding	Recommendation
GBV justice and equity	Justice and accountability	IACHR recommendations in the Vicky Hernandez are perceived as a success by civil society organizations and are a route map for their advocacy.	Advocate for the Government of Honduras to implement IACHR recommendations in the Vicky Hernandez case to improve femicide and GBV prevention, protection, and justice with and for transgender women
	Management of resources	Management of USAID funding by the justice system perceived as ineffective.	Improve processes for selecting and training staff in justice institutions to avoid investments in personnel that may mismanage or misuse resources, not use resources for the benefit of the target population.
		Lack of legal recognition of LGBTQI+ and Garifuna organizations and collectives makes them dependent on intermediary organizations and limited recognition of the crucial role of transgender women and Garifuna women in engaging their respective communities.	Develop mechanisms to monitor compliance of equitable distribution of USAID funding support among organizations owned and implemented by public officials who are or represent beneficiaries of USAID sponsored projects and initiatives to help reduce discriminatory clientelism in service delivery.
	Transgender women and Garifuna women inclusion in public decision-making	There is no coordination among justice and security institutions	Strengthen capacity of public authorities to work with USAID programs promoting inclusion of transgender and Garifuna people in 'roundtables' or other opportunities for exchange with public authorities in decision-making about initiatives affecting their communities
	Perpetrators	Perpetrators remain in impunity and revictimize	Evaluate the effectiveness of "distancing measures"

Intervention strategy	Theme	Finding	Recommendation
		women due to inefficiencies in the justice system	in addressing recurrence of GBV and perpetrator recidivism in the legal system.
GBV protection	Protection mechanisms	Existing shelters and protection programs discriminate and exclude transgender women and are not present in Garifuna territories	Expand access to shelters for all women and their dependents who need emergency protection. Shelter space specifically for transgender women and children of victims is needed
			Evaluate the Public Ministry's witness protection program with a focus on shelter protocols and the inclusion of transgender women, accessibility, and management of funding for relocation of survivors, and confidentiality and safety of witnesses
		Transgender women perceive that resources coming from USAID programs are not reaching the expected population Intermediary organizations may be exploiting informal transgender women organizations	Identify and build the capacity of local transgender women's organizations to receive and manage USAID funding support directly rather than receiving funding support through an intermediary partner organization
	Protective inclusion	Transgender women and Garifuna women organizations have the perception that intermediary organizations include them only in activities, but not in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation across the entire USAID project cycle	Strengthen programming through a focus on improving processes rather than one-off activities, and involve local organizations and communities in planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of interventions
	Protection services	Transgender women and LGTBI+ organizations said that Ciudad Mujer is providing good services to cisgender women. However, transgender women and	Evaluate the protocols and practices of programs such as Ciudad Mujer in providing access to their programs to ensure inclusion of transgender

Intervention strategy	Theme	Finding	Recommendation
GBV protection (continued)		LGTBI+ are in general excluded	women among LGBTQI+ GBV survivors
		Very limited access to healthcare services and high levels of discrimination in health and education systems for both transgender women and Garifuna women Protection services are absent in Garifuna territories and projects are not well adapted to cultural context	Extend non-discriminatory healthcare and educational services to transgender women and ensure all national services and programs are available and accessible in Garifuna communities, are culturally competent, and provide materials and services in Garifuna language
		Lack of programs specialized in economic recovery assistance for transgender women and Garifuna women	Invest in and monitor economic recovery assistance programs for transgender and Garifuna women
	Protection against GBV impunity targeting migrants	Transgender women and Garifuna women are at high risk of suffering GBV and discrimination when they are deported from the US	Evaluate existing programs and identify effective models for inclusive support for the reintegration of deportees from the US back into Honduras, particularly transgender and Garifuna women
GBV prevention	Existing social norms driving GBV and impunity	School system reproduces violent social norms and practices against trans women School system increases discrimination against Garifuna population	Design or adapt and implement school-based and community-based social norm change programs to contribute to primary prevention of GBV
	Gang violence increasing GBV and impunity	In gang-controlled territories violence against transgender women increases Gangs force transgender women to engage in illegal economies increasing the risk of suffer violence and killings Children exposed to gangs are in high risk of reproducing violence and violent norms against LGTBI especially transgender women	Address the role of gang violence as a key contextual factor driving impunity for GBV and increasing GBV risks and impacts for transgender women.

Intervention strategy	Theme	Finding	Recommendation
GBV prevention (continued)	Perceptions of USAID and US government in Garifuna communities	Garifuna organizations have negative perceptions of USAID and USG since they associate them with conflicts produced by international companies investing in extractive and tourism projects in their territories	Assess USAID's contributions to Garifuna communities affected by extractive industries and commercial tourist operations, and address root causes of persistent GBV against Garifuna women and Garifuna rights defenders
		<p>Awareness raising communication efforts are not reaching Garifuna and other affected populations.</p> <p>Transgender women and LGBTI+ organizations recognized the contributions of USAID, but mentioned that resources are not reaching the right populations reducing impacts</p> <p>Garifuna women recognized the lack of presence of USAID programs in their territories</p>	Evaluate existing communication campaigns aimed at GBV prevention to ensure cultural coherence with diverse community contexts
	GBV prevention projects	Lack of preventive GBV programs oriented to transgender women and Garifuna women	Fund prevention programs over the medium- and long-term to address the considerable funding and programs gap in GBV primary prevention