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8. Rather than protecting women, prevailing traditions generally tend to reinforce their subordination by reinforcing habits and customs which legitimize discrimination. The persistence of traditions, certain religious and other values which enshrine the inferiority of women, but above all the weakness of institutions and the low priority attached to the issue in most countries' state budgets are all barriers to the eradication of this serious problem. Although Latin America and the Caribbean does not suffer from the infanticide, "female foeticide," genital mutilation and dowry-related violence seen in other parts of the world, there are situations prevalent in the region which are not sufficiently brought to public attention and which infringe the most elementary rights, such as trade and trafficking in persons, incest and the abuse of girls involved in child labour.

9. Innovative rules and mechanisms such as the Convention of Belém do Pará and its monitoring mechanism coexist with the impunity that affects the victims of violence, referred to as "survivors" in the report of the Secretary-General. This is reflected in the fact that the causes of femicide include long chains of slackness, ineffectiveness and impunity, which contribute to the deaths of many women. Although many countries have enacted new legislation in accordance with the Convention, as will be seen below, much remains to be done in order for justice to be done properly. All legislation must be harmonized with the principles of human rights, eliminating where necessary the remnants of legislation which is patriarchal, and providing appropriate legal definitions of all forms of violence; new investment is needed in sectoral policies in fields such as education, health, public safety and labour, and international agreements must be incorporated into states' foreign policies so that the protection of women's rights becomes part of the backbone of countries' activities.

10. The institutional changes which have taken place in the past ten years in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government have failed to keep up with social and legal changes. This contrasts with growing social awareness of the gravity of the problem. Some 90% of the people surveyed in the region on the issue of whether the problem of domestic violence is "important" or "somewhat important" respond that it is important. This ranges between 97% of respondents in Chile and 80% in the Dominican Republic.⁶ The scale of statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence and society's perception of its seriousness contrast with the scarce presence of this issue in political agendas, the scant resources allocated to it and the behaviour of judicial systems. This reveals a gap between public demand for action and the response of the state.

11. This report is an appeal, firstly for governmental authorities swiftly to adopt all necessary measures so that the region can move forward from feeling proud of its words and its legislation to providing protection and eradicating all forms of violence against women. The report also calls on international bodies, civil society organizations and the media to promote broad consensus for the eradication of violence and impunity.

12. The report is in four parts. The first defines violence against women in the region and places it in context; the second provides an analysis based on available sources, considers the status of information and describes the impacts and costs of violence; the third part describes existing progress, initiatives and best practices; and the fourth describes the challenges and possible measures to be taken by governments and society, proposing a tried and tested model

⁶ See data in Latinobarómetro 2006 (Lagos, 2007).

for care and a regional observatory for full-time monitoring of violence against women. The annexes reflect the information available in the countries of the region, legislation on violence against women, policies, programmes and budgets, and international instruments to combat violence against women.

13. The information used comes from bibliographical sources, material published on the Internet, government reports, research by non-governmental organizations and academic centres, and documents from the United Nations system, updated to the end of 2006. Another source was the analysis of responses to the questionnaire for United Nations entities on activities addressing violence against women”, circulated in January 2005 by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and to two questionnaires sent in January 2006 to organizations of the United Nations system and to offices for the advancement of women in the countries.

The data on violence

14. The production of an updated analysis in order to achieve full awareness of the nature, prevalence, causes, consequences and repercussions of violence against women upon the women themselves and upon society as a whole is a task which remains to be performed. There is still no baseline from which to monitor and assess the impact of policies, legislation, plans and programmes. There are still no data as to the true magnitude of the various types of violence against women. Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have no basic information with which to measure that magnitude and construct indicators and those States where surveys have been conducted on the subject and data are available still lack indicators to represent the magnitude of violence on a basis which is standardized and comparable over time, within and outside the countries.⁷

15. This analysis seeks to provide such a baseline, from which it will be possible to assess the impact of the application of legislative frameworks and the execution of various strategies, as well as the consequences of the plans and programmes which have been implemented in the region for the purpose of prevention, caring for victims and penalizing violence against women.

16. In general, the collection of information on violence against women is based on the definition contained in national laws, which includes physical, psychological and sexual violence, and economic or property violence is covered in the legislation of some countries in the region, as the expression of violence which consists of depriving a woman of the economic means of subsistence for herself and her children or harming her property.⁸ Economic violence is based on the mechanisms used by men —usually spouses— to control women’s economic behaviour. It includes deprivation of the basic resources needed for sustenance and wellbeing, which isolates them socially, deprives them of freedom of movement and of independence.

⁷ For additional information on the methodological aspects of the measurement of gender violence which were taken into consideration in preparing this report, see annex I on the information available in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁸ The following countries have adopted legal definitions of economic or property violence: Costa Rica (Law against Domestic Violence N° 7,586, 1996); Dominica (Act on Protection against Domestic Violence, 2002); El Salvador (Law against Family Violence, 1996); Guatemala (Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Family Violence, 1996); Guyana (Law on Equal Rights N° 19, 1990); Honduras (Law to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women, 1997, and Law on Domestic Violence, 1998); y Uruguay (Law on the Prevention, Early Detection, Handling and Eradication of Domestic Violence, 2002).

17. The various expressions of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women, girl children and adolescent girls, as well as femicide –the ultimate link in the long chain of violence to which women are subjected– can be distinguished on the basis of different factors such as situations of great vulnerability (such as HIV/AIDS, migration by women, trafficking in girl children, adolescent girls and women, poverty, and the ethnic dimension), the relationships

The aim of the programme is to provide databases and analysis to population bodies, so as to help them consider options and make informed decisions, expand the international database on population and maternal and child health, contribute to advances in sample survey methodology and consolidate technical capacities and resources for the implementation of complex population surveys in participating countries. The consultancy ORC Macro is implementing the Measure DHS + programme with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

22. Most countries do not yet have a statistical system on violence against women, and there is no official regional system to compile data on the subject. Although progress has been made in terms of statistics on partner violence, reliable figures remain scarce on many other forms of violence against women. In the region, there are no regular nationwide surveys on violence against women that would enable methods to be standardized and comparable statistical data to be collected. This has a negative impact on the design of programmes aimed at combating violence against women.

23. This report includes data from surveys carried out from 2000 that include a module on gender violence. Information was provided by the following countries and territories:

- **Bolivia:** Demographic and Health Survey (MEASURE DHS+) (October, 2003), for which 17,654 women aged 15 to 49 were interviewed. The sample was designed for analysis with various levels of geographical disaggregation and to provide a nationwide, stratified, two-stage probabilistic sample. Technical and financial assistance was provided by the Ministry of Health and Sports, through the Health Reform Programme, and with funding from the World Bank. Assistance was also provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the FORSA-CANADA Health Fund

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- **Mexico:** National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (ENDIREH, 2003), carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI).
- **Peru:** Population and family health survey (ENDES, 2004).
- **Puerto Rico:** Statistics on the murder of women from the Office of the Women's Advocate (2005).

ECLAC initiatives to combat violence against women

24. ECLAC has proposed violence indicators;
A technical assistance guide has been produced for the formulation and use of gender indicators;
There are plans for a regional gender observatory;
Publication of the inter-agency regional report "Not one more! Women's right to a life free of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean".
