

Fondo de Mujeres del Sur

ACTIVISMS IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

Systematisation and analysis of feminist strategies
implemented by organisations supported by the Fondo de
Mujeres del Sur during the COVID-19 emergency



FONDO DE
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DEL SUR

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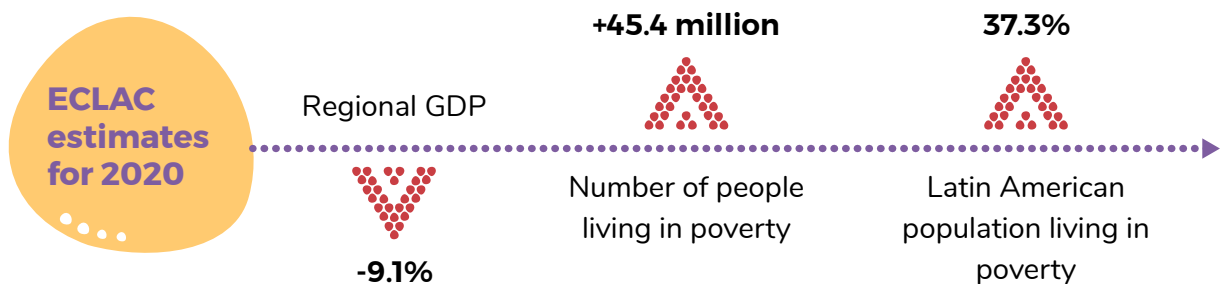
Publication based on the report prepared in Spanish by Aileen Allen for Fondo de Mujeres del Sur, September 2020. Translated into English by Christina Hamilton.



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Introduction

Latin America and the Caribbean, like the rest of the world, are experiencing an unprecedented crisis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the outbreak of the virus in the region, in March 2020, most governments have adopted, depending on the epidemiological evolution, containment measures based on the response capacity of health systems and the political-economic situation. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimated for 2020 a 9.1% fall in gross domestic product (GDP) at the regional level, and a 45.4 million rise in the number of people living in poverty, which takes the percentage of the Latin American population living in poverty to 37.3%.¹



In this context, **Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (Women's Fund of the South) (FMS)** decided to systematise and analyse the strategies that the organisations that it directly supports (grantees)² used to continue their activism during the COVID-19 pandemic. This publication's objective was twofold: on the one hand, to have evidence-based information to inform the decision-making processes of FMS in this new and challenging scenario; and, on the other hand, to learn about, make visible and promote the rise of more and improved strategies to address the impact of the health and economic crisis in organisations that fight for gender equality and the rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people in the region, from a feminist and intersectional perspective.

¹ [ECLAC, 15 July 2020, "Contraction of Economic Activity in the Region Intensifies Due to the Pandemic: It Will Fall -9.1% in 2020".](#)

² "Grantees" refers to the organisations that receive direct financial support and technical-political support from FMS.

I. Fondo de Mujeres del Sur: Resource Mobilisation During the Pandemic

Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS) is a foundation that provides financial grants and support to organisations that promote the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people in Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.³ Its mission is to mobilise financial resources and provide technical assistance to strengthen organisational capacities of women's and LGBTIQ+ organisations in situation of most socio-economic, political, cultural, geographic and environmental disadvantages, which aim to advance gender equality and social justice. Thus, it aims to strengthen movements with a view to building more egalitarian societies.

FMS is a feminist fund, conceived as such since its inception, that works from an approach based on human rights, gender perspective, empowerment, intersectionality and interculturality. Its priority areas are: leadership, voice-agency and political participation; economic justice; eradication of violence and discrimination; socio-environmental justice; and diverse identities and sexualities. It is part of a global community of women's funds, created due to the struggle to mobilise resources for feminist groups and organisations that were not reached by international development aid.⁴

Since it was founded in 2007, FMS has supported and strengthened more than 265 groups, organisations and networks of women and LGBTIQ+ people, which are mostly grassroots organisations, for a total of approximately USD 7.7 million. In 2020, the general and special grants made under the different programmes exceeded USD 2 million and were provided to 151 grantee organisations that promote the human rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people. For this report, six strategic programmes –that were being implemented at the beginning of the pandemic– and the complementary initiative called *Let's Get It, Sister*, which cuts across all of these programmes, were analysed (see Table I).

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³ FMS is also implementing *Leading from the South*, a programme in 21 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁴ FMS is a member of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Funds Alliance and the International Network of Women's Funds (INWF/Prospera).

For all of its programmes, FMS undertakes:



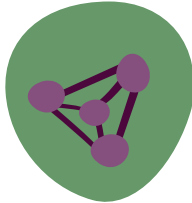
Fundraising



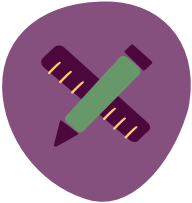
Grantmaking and Providing Support



Fostering Participation



Connection and Bonding



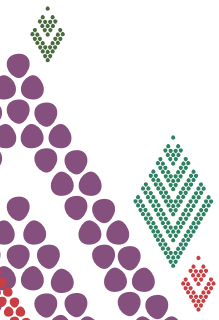
Capacity Building



Movement Strengthening

TABLE I. Programmes analysed

NAME / SCOPE	OBJECTIVE
<i>Strengthening Women Environmental Defenders (EEDD) / Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay</i>	Contribute to the strengthening of grassroots women’s groups that fight for their rights from a gender and socio-environmental justice perspective. It includes groups led by women in defence of water, land, their rights and the rights of their communities and families. It articulates different strategies with indigenous, rural and urban women against socio-environmental violence.
<i>Women Out Loud: Promoting Political Participation / Paraguay</i>	Promote the social and political participation and advocacy of indigenous, rural, or marginalised urban women in the different state and community decision-making realms, thus strengthening capacity building and technologies to that goal.
<i>Our Rights, Our Pride (OROP) / Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay</i>	Strengthen the work of LGBTIQ+ organisations as key agents for a transformation towards more just and egalitarian societies, and in turn a transformation of the diversity movement in its task of creating a culture of integration and inclusion that fosters the advancement of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people.



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**Networks and
Alliances Free from
Violence (REDAL) /
Argentina, Paraguay
and Uruguay**

.....

Prevent violence against women using a double strategy: support for women frontline defenders and support for women's organisations characterised by diverse identities, including women that are migrants, black/Afro-descendant, indigenous, peasants, young, lesbian, from rural areas, living with HIV/AIDS and from popular urban sectors.

.....

**We Want Us Alive /
Argentina**

Strengthen the historical fight women have battled in favour of sexual and reproductive and non-reproductive rights, supporting organisations that carry out initiatives that promote those rights and demand their effective fulfilment. Priority is given to organisations that work in conservative regions and that articulate with key actors in communities in situations of greater socio-economic, geographical and cultural disadvantage.

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**Leading from the
South (LFS) /
Latin America and
the Caribbean**

Support activism for the defence of women's rights and the advocacy work of women's organisations, movements and networks at the regional, national and community levels in the Global South. LFS is a feminist alliance led by four women's funds: Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIWF)/AYNI Fund (AYNI) and Women's Fund Asia (WFA). FMS coordinates the programme in Latin American and the Caribbean.

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**Fundamentally
Feminists (FF) /
Argentina, Paraguay
and Uruguay**

Strengthen the capacity of feminist movements, LGBTIQ+ and human rights defenders to respond to attacks against democracy and human rights by religious fundamentalisms and the far right. It is aimed at organisations that address the issues of gender violence and diverse identities and sexualities.

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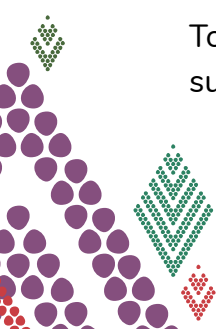
**Complementary
Initiative - Let's
Get It, Sister:
Towards a Feminist
Philanthropy /
Latin America and
the Caribbean**

Provide support to organisations related to local resource development from a feminist philanthropy perspective with a view to promoting their long-term economic sustainability.

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Based on the pandemic outbreak and the different measures adopted by governments where our grantees are located and work, FMS acted quickly to guarantee the continuity of its support and respond to the demands that were emerging due to the health and economic crisis that was made worse in the region. In this regard, FMS was able to identify two different stages throughout 2020: initially an immediate need for more flexible resources and at a later stage, the need to expand on these.

To begin with, in response to the urgency, FMS decided to make current and future support more flexible. Grant time frames were extended, activities were adjusted to



the possibilities within the context, and flexibility was given to reallocate up to 30% of resources to community responses to the emergency, which helped guarantee the basic conditions required for activism.⁵ In the case of *Our Rights, Our Pride* (OROP), between March and July, special grants were given to certain grantee organisations to meet the needs of LGBTIQ+ groups, which were especially affected by the pandemic.

Secondly, two calls for proposals were organised in order to increase the availability of resources to deal with –directly or indirectly– the pandemic and thus meet the needs of women and LGBTIQ+ people. The first call for proposals was set up within the framework of the OROP programme, with resources that were already destined for grants, to support national organisations that “design a strategy that considers the vulnerable situation of LGBTIQ+ people generated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic”.⁶

The second call for proposals was within the *Leading from the South* programme. It was made possible by reallocating budget items for travel and face-to-face meetings (which became impossible due to the pandemic) to grants for the strengthening of feminist movements in the region and their community responses to COVID-19. Eligibility was extended to include current and previous grantees of the programme. In this case, the grants aimed to strengthen the activism affected by the adverse context, emphasising institutional strengthening and advocacy strategies that are also key when it comes to strengthening the response to the needs in the region.

In both calls –one in April and the other in July– an effort was made from management to shorten the times between when the proposals were submitted and the allocation of grants, in such a way that they did not exceed 15 days, well below the average time of calls for proposals prior to the pandemic. Additionally, strong advocacy work was undertaken by FMS with its donor institutions to raise awareness about the need for greater flexibility to respond to the emergency.

The change in context put to the test the response capacity, flexibility and strategic outlook that characterise women’s funds in general as donors, given how close they work with grantees, and to FMS in particular. It also gave rise to a new opportunity to urge diverse actors to put the needs of feminist and diversity groups and organisations at the centre of discussions, adding weight to their decisions based on their inside knowledge of the realities where they work.

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⁵ In communication with grantees the following was highlighted: (1) “Priority will be given to organisations and populations especially affected by the context of the pandemic, who apply or are in an obvious emergency situation, otherwise the evaluation will be conducted on a programme-by-programme basis”; and (2) “A percentage of the grant received by your organisation may be used to adopt adequate measures to promote health, protection and safety (such as food expenses, cleaning supplies, medications, and promote safe places for people in situations of violence and vulnerability)”.

⁶ *Our Rights, Our Pride* Programme Closed call: COVID-19 Emergency Grants.

On the other hand, due to the health emergency and the mandatory isolation measures adopted in most of the countries where programmes are implemented, FMS was also forced to change planned meetings and training workshops and redesign them to be completed online. During the first five months of the pandemic, meetings with grantees were organised within the framework of REDAL (three meetings) and *Women Out Loud: Promoting Political Participation* (three meetings on digital security), as well as a regional meeting of *Women Out Loud* in which grantees from four other initiatives (OROP, REDAL, EEDD and FF) participated.

Furthermore, the “Escuela de formación virtual de defensoras del territorio en Paraguay y Bolivia” (“Online training school for land defenders in Paraguay and Bolivia”) was held with grantee organisations of the *Strengthening Environmental Defenders* programme, within the framework of the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA). In this framework, various distribution materials were created for digital empowerment in the COVID-19 context, and a joint statement was issued in support of the territorial rights of the women of the Qom people, whom belong to the Organización de Artesanas Santa Rosa (Organisation of Craftswomen from Santa Rosa), facing the threat of agro-extractive deforestation due to the plantation of eucalyptus monocultures in indigenous territory.⁷

It is important to point out that despite the limitations imposed by working online, for FMS it was key to continue prioritising spaces for learning, exchange and articulation between grantees, and to address strategic aspects such as community- and self-care, sustainability and building networks while taking into consideration digital security conditions. These are fundamental aspects that strengthen feminist and diversity activisms, and that during the pandemic became even more relevant to be able to face emerging demands. For this reason, FMS also developed communication products that highlighted best practices during the pandemic as a way of giving increased visibility to actions carried out by grantee organisations.⁸

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⁷ [Observatorio de Impactos del Extractivismo y Derechos Colectivos \(Observatory on the Impacts of Extractivism and Collective Rights\)](#), 12 August 2020. “[Pronunciamiento en respaldo a las defensoras del territorio del pueblo Qom en Paraguay](#)” (Statement in support of the defenders of the territory of the Qom people in Paraguay). (Only available in Spanish)

⁸ The campaign “Feminismos para vivir: respuestas territoriales en la emergencia” (Feminisms for living: territorial responses in the emergency) can be reviewed on the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur Instagram account: <https://www.instagram.com/fmujeresdelsur/>

II. COVID-19: Some Data on its Impact

The health and economic crisis that has worsened since the pandemic has severe consequences for women and LGBTIQ+ people. This is because some human rights achievements of recent decades have been jeopardised and existing gender inequalities have been exacerbated, especially when intersected by other inequalities such as class, race and ethnicity.

According to UN Women, reports of gender-based violence have increased since the pandemic began: mandatory isolation posed a risk for those who had to live 24 hours a day with their aggressor.⁹ Exposure to institutional violence was added to this during police controls implemented due to restrictions on free movement, which especially affects trans people.¹⁰ Furthermore, the overload of care tasks, due to the entire family group staying home continuously, had an impact on women and feminised identities –which in the region already spend on average three times more time on care tasks than men–, with the consequent deterioration of their physical and mental health.¹¹

Measures adopted to contain the pandemic generated a drastic reduction in economic activity, with the consequent loss of income for large sectors of the population, and especially in the informal sector that mainly affects women (female informal employment rate is higher than for males: 54.3% and 52.3% respectively) and LGBTIQ+ people.¹² Also, women represent 72.8% of the total number of people employed in the health sector, which placed them in the frontline of response for which they are still exposed to a greater risk of contagion.¹³ In turn, access to health care for women and other people with the ability to gestate, especially sexual and reproductive health services, was particularly affected and specifically access to contraceptive methods.¹⁴

The three countries that constitute the main geographical area where Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS) works –Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay– are not exempt from this regional reality, beyond the nuances that the impact of the pandemic may have on women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people in each country. In relation to

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⁹ UN Women, 9 April 2020. “Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women”.

¹⁰ OAS, 20 April 2020. “The IACHR calls on States to guarantee the rights of LGBTI people in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic”.

¹¹ ECLAC, 8 April 2020. “In Light of Women’s Greater Exposure, ECLAC Calls on States to Guarantee their Rights in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic”.

¹² ILO, 2018. “Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A statistical picture”.

¹³ ECLAC, April 2020. “The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the care crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean”.

¹⁴ UNFPA, May 2020. “Latin America and the Caribbean Region covid-19. Situation Report No. 4”.

gender-based violence, in Argentina 44,900 calls were registered through the Hotline 144¹⁵ from when the preventive and compulsory social isolation (PCSI) began up until 31 July 2020. This represents an increase of 25% compared to the same period in the previous year.¹⁶ In Paraguay, the Hotline 137 registered 626 calls in March, compared to 417 in March of the previous year, and in the first half of April, 325 calls had already been registered.¹⁷ In Uruguay, enquiries and requests for help¹⁸ to the telephone counselling service on gender-based violence registered an 80% increase. Between April and May, the number of calls for support and information reached 64 per day, with a peak in April of 2,231 consultations, which is equivalent to one call every 20 minutes.¹⁹

Some facts on gender-based violence during the pandemic

Argentina

- 44,900 calls to Hotline 144 from the beginning of PCSI until 31 July.
- (+) 25% compared to the same period in the previous year.

Paraguay

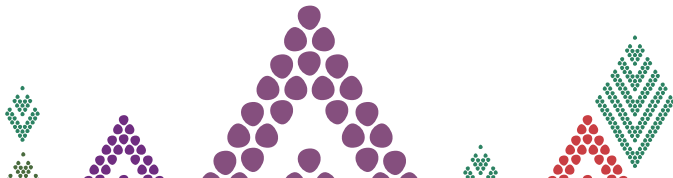
- 626 calls to Hotline 137 in March, compared to 417 calls in March of the previous year.
- (+) 50% compared to the same period in the previous year.

Uruguay

- (+) 80% enquiries and requests for help from the telephone counselling service on gender-based violence.
- 64 calls per day for support and information between April and May, with 2,231 calls in April, which is equivalent to one call every 20 minutes.

In terms of care work, in Argentina and Uruguay there was an overload of activities for women due to preventive isolation and the closure of educational, care and recreation establishments, evidencing the few or insufficient measures

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¹⁵ The Hotline 144 receives enquiries at three levels (National, Province of Buenos Aires and City of Buenos Aires) and since PCSI the call centre has incorporated new service channels (email and WhatsApp).
¹⁶ Ministerio de las Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad de Argentina (Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity). <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/linea-144/informacion-estadistica> (Only available in Spanish.)
¹⁷ [Ministerio de la Mujer de Paraguay \(Ministry of Women in Paraguay\), 17 April 2020, “Con alto número de bromas, el 137 ya recibió más de mil llamadas”](#) (“With a high number of prank calls, the 137 hotline has already received more than a thousand calls”) (Only available in Spanish.)
¹⁸ [La Diaria, 3 June 2020. “Los feminismos vuelven a movilizarse contra la violencia machista en el quinto aniversario del Ni Una Menos”](#) (“Feminisms once again mobilise against sexist violence on the fifth anniversary of Ni Una Menos”), by Stephanie Demirdjian (Only available in Spanish.)
¹⁹ [La Diaria, 11 June 2020. “Violencia de género durante la pandemia: una puesta a punto de la respuesta del Estado”](#) (“Gender-based violence during the pandemic: a reshaping of the State’s response”), by Stephanie Demirdjian. (Only available in Spanish.)



adopted by governments to reinforce care policies²⁰. In Argentina, 51% of women saw the burden of care tasks intensified during quarantine, especially around cleaning homes and taking care of dependants.²¹ In Uruguay, although in percentage terms men and women increased similarly their unpaid workload during the pandemic (16% and 15% respectively), in absolute terms the gender gap in average daily hours of unpaid work grew from 3.0 to 3.5 hours, that is, the gap increased by 30 minutes.²² Also, the percentage of women who declared feeling very or quite overloaded by household chores since the outbreak of coronavirus is five times higher than that of men (20% and 4% respectively).²³ For Paraguay, no specific data was found about use of time.

With regard to employment, women were particularly affected in all three countries. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in Argentina women are overrepresented in occupations related to caring for pandemic victims, as well as in the sectors most affected by restrictions on movement (commerce, tourism, hotels, among others). In turn, those who work in the informal sector were unable to sustain stable income beyond some direct transfer measures implemented in a timely manner by governments, but which were limited in their scope and magnitude. The most visible example was that of domestic workers –who represent 17% of salaried women in Argentina– since 75% of them are not registered.²⁴ In Uruguay, sectors such as education, health and social work, in which the activity of women and feminised identities predominate, were intensely disadvantaged by the pandemic and the measures deployed to contain it.²⁵ In Paraguay, a similar situation was observed in activities such as tourism and domestic employment (third source of employment for women), which were adversely affected by the pandemic, on top of the fact that there is a high level of structural informality in the Paraguayan economy.²⁶

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²⁰ In Argentina, the government granted leave for people employed in the public and private sectors who have school-aged children in their care, adopted telework modalities for non-essential staff in the public sector, and urged companies to reduce the presence of personnel in the workplace (Resolution No. 207 of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security). It also ran public awareness raising campaigns (#CuarentenaConDerechos, Cuidar en Igualdad (#QuarantineWithRights, Equality in Care)), and called a special meeting of the Interministry Board on Care Work. Refer to: [“Medidas en materia de género y diversidad en el marco de la emergencia sanitaria”](#) (“Gender and diversity measures in the health emergency context”) (Only available in Spanish). In Uruguay, it was granted by decree that workers over 65 years of age could remain in isolation for a maximum of 30 days and access a sick leave allowance (Decree T/16 dated 25/03/2020). Refer to: [“Subsidio por enfermedad para trabajadores mayores de 65 años”](#) (Sick leave allowance for workers over 65) (Only available in Spanish).

²¹ UNICEF, April 2020. [“Rapid Assessment on Perceptions and Attitudes of the Population. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and measures on daily life”. Findings Report”](#).

²² UN Women and UNICEF, May 2020 [“Encuesta sobre niñez, género, y uso del tiempo en el marco de la emergencia sanitaria en Uruguay. Principales resultados”](#) (“Survey on childhood, gender, and use of time in the context of the health emergency in Uruguay. Key Findings”) (Only available in Spanish.)

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ ILO, 3 April 2020. [“Informe de la OIT Argentina llama a contener a los grupos más afectados por la crisis”](#) (“ILO Argentina report calls to contain the groups most affected by the crisis”) (Only available in Spanish.)

²⁵ UNDP, 21 May 2020. [“Social and economic impact of COVID-19 and policy options in Uruguay”](#).

²⁶ [Informativo Mujer, 19 April 2020. “COVID-19 en la economía de las mujeres paraguayas”](#) (“COVID-19 in the economy of Paraguayan women”), by Fátima Rodríguez. (Only available in Spanish.)

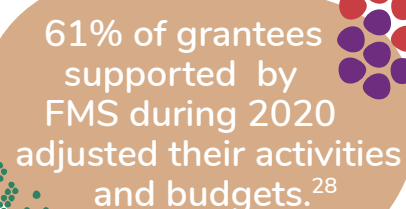
III. Activisms on the Ground: Grantee Strategies in Times of Pandemic

The pandemic outbreak and measures taken by governments in the region impacted the conditions required for feminist and diversity organisations to implement their activism plans. Isolation and social distancing measures, particularly restrictions on free movement, are some of the challenges to be overcome when attempting to sustain organisational work, mobilisation and participation in deliberative and decision-making processes, but they are not the only ones. The deepened economic crisis impacted on funding for and sustainability of organisations, and posed another important challenge for activism: banking complications to access funds, limitations on implementing resource mobilisation campaigns, incurring unforeseen expenses, and even the possible change in donor priorities to the detriment of the rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people.²⁷ The crisis also affected incomes of the activists themselves, both those who do paid work and volunteers who rely on other jobs for their income, thus limiting their economic autonomy and the possibilities of dedicating time to these causes.

The overload of care tasks for women during compulsory isolation, a product of the gender division of labour, also affected availability for activism. On top of this was the worsening of psychophysical exhaustion, the high risk of contagion for activists (and their families or partners) in the frontline of community response, and the increased risk of experiencing institutional violence due to the increase of police controlling movement. The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the pre-conditions for activism in general was exacerbated for those exposed to multiple situations of inequality, due to their class, race and ethnicity or gender identity.

All these circumstances forced a reconfiguration of activism to adapt to the emergency situation. The strategies that FMS programme grantees adopted for their interventions are presented below along with an account of the actions deployed by the organisations to meet the needs of women, girls and LGBTIQ + people in times of pandemic.

Although the focus of activism remains the same –the defence of the human rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people and gender equality– priorities and



61% of grantees supported by FMS during 2020 adjusted their activities and budgets.²⁸

²⁷ OECD, 22 September 2020. “Response, recovery and prevention in the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in developing countries: Women and girls on the frontlines”.

strategies used have changed. Actions related to community support and prevention, activists' self-care practices and care of those closest to them take on greater importance, without relegating other actions such as advocacy and monitoring of public policies during the pandemic.

- **Transition to the Digital World and Strengthening Technological Capacity**

The transition to working online and ensuring access to communications and connectivity was an essential strategy to sustain their work. Grantee organisations were forced to cancel or postpone face-to-face activities that involved travel or gatherings with numerous attendees, such as public hearings, meetings and participation in international spaces for advocacy and exchange. They also had to rethink other activities, especially those related to training, awareness raising and advocacy. For example, the Centro de Estudios Carolina Muzzilli (Carolina Muzzilli Investigation Centre) (City of Buenos Aires, Argentina) and the Red de Mujeres de La Matanza (Network of Women from La Matanza) (Argentina) shifted all training activities to online platforms, adjusting the content and pedagogical strategies. Presencia Joven (Young Presence) (Encarnacion, Paraguay) turned its “Feminist School” project into a completely digital experience, focused on a feminist youth agenda with political positioning.

Several organisations increased funds for infrastructure (internet) and purchased devices such as mobile phones, tape recorders and computers, in order to guarantee their communication strategies. Also, in the case of the most economically affected populations, grantees subsidised mobile phone data purchases to facilitate participation in online training, provide support to women in situations of violence and women leaders in isolated areas.

However, working digitally is not without its challenges and can be a barrier due to the lack of devices or familiarity with the applications that facilitate participation, or due to the general lack of access to infrastructure and connectivity – a product of the existing digital divide.

“During compulsory isolation, we’ve kept working on gender content and Comprehensive Sexual Education with adolescents. We managed to do this through talks, readings and recorded activities which we distributed on pen drives and external disks to secondary schools. We plan to continue working like this until classes are resumed, so we can stay in contact with the youth. We don’t want the lack of internet access to limit our work”.

Artistas Feministas de la Ensenada (Feminist Artists from La Ensenada), Argentina

²⁸ This percentage refers to the specific moment in which research for this report was carried out.

• Community Responses

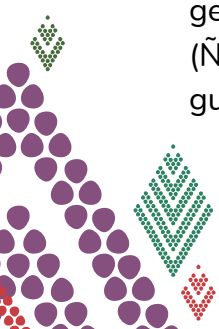
Most of the organisations redirected part of their resources to provide material support to members and the communities with which they work, providing basic supplies such as personal hygiene products and food. In this way they helped mitigate the most dramatic impacts of the pandemic in their immediate vicinity. Environmental defenders and grantees who work in rural areas also provided seeds to support family farming and to help set up community gardens, as a way to promote food sovereignty.

In Bolivia, the Centro de Capacitación e Investigación de la Mujer Campesina de Tarija (Training and Research Centre for Peasant Women in Tarija) (CCIMCAT) distributed vegetable seeds to contribute to food security by setting up two community gardens. Asociación de Mujeres de la Provincia de O'Connor (Women's Association of O'Connor Province) (AMPRO), the women belonging to the Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní de Yaku-Igüe (Assembly of the Guaraní People of Yaku-Igüe) and the Integración de Mujeres Organizadas del Municipio de Bermejo (Integration of Organised Women of the Bermejo Municipality) (INMUOR), in addition to providing dried food, also bought seeds and biosafety material.

The Sindicato de Trabajadoras Domésticas de Itapúa (Union of Domestic Workers of Itapua) (SINTRADI) (Paraguay) distributed personal hygiene kits and food to monitor the situation of 61 members who could not work due to mandatory isolation measures, and Asociación Panambí (Panambí Association) (Asuncion, Paraguay) did the same with more than three hundred trans people from different cities. Damas de Hierro (Ladies of Iron) (Jujuy, Argentina), which also works with trans people, in addition to donating food and personal hygiene kits, set up community clothing wardrobes in different locations across their province.

It is important to highlight that these examples of material support provided during the emergency were provided from a feminist approach. That is, it was articulated with a focus on protection and raising awareness about rights, building networks and promoting the values of sisterhood and care. This generated a community response that allowed women and LBTIQ+ people to know that they were not alone, even in times of isolation and emergency, and allowed organisations to position themselves politically as key actors with the capacity to respond in a context of extreme complexity.

The organisation of peasant women Brazos Unidos (United Arms) (Horqueta, Concepcion, Paraguay) promoted the collective creation of a community garden to attend to the food emergency and they distributed material with information on gender violence. The Centro de Investigación y Educación Sexual Grupo Ñepyrú (Ñepyrú Group Research and Sexual Education Centre) (Coronel Oviedo, Paraguay) organised the delivery of cleaning products and food to trans and lesbians in



emergency situations with talks on sexual health in the context of a pandemic, and biosecurity measures to avoid contagion. Rebeldes del Sur (Rebels of the South) (Asuncion, Paraguay) organised soup kitchens and assembled food kits that were delivered weekly to the Bañado Sur community, where they work. They also developed and distributed audiovisual material on COVID-19, to raise awareness about the risks and care required using easy to relate to vocabulary and language. La Berkins (Buenos Aires, Argentina) distributed cleaning, personal hygiene and food items to at-risk groups and women in emergency situations, together with informative material on the counselling services they offer. Asociación Espacio Encuentro de Mujeres (Women's Meeting Space Association) (Panama) made face masks with messages about gender-based violence.

On the other hand, some organisations focused their efforts on supporting local food production as a way of taking their gender advisory and counselling services to the rural communities in which they work, while also reasserting the need to look after the land for the sustainability of rural life and as a political act about food sovereignty and community economic empowerment. This notion runs counter to the idea of social welfare and became even more urgent and relevant during the global pandemic. For example, Tinamasté (which works in the North and Caribbean regions of Costa Rica) supported members of the Red de Mujeres Rurales (Rural Women's Network) to create a distribution network for local production, emphasising community, feminist and solidarity organisation. Part of their support consisted in the purchase of supplies (seeds, production materials) and the distribution of part of the crops, giving political meaning to the measures adopted by affirming the territory and sustaining life in rural areas.

The Chañar-Movimiento Campesino de Córdoba (Chañar-Peasant Movement of Córdoba) (MCC) (Argentina) used their resources for the community purchase of supplies and equipment to improve production conditions for the businesses run by women and peasant and indigenous dissident identities. They also proposed a strategy that included a rotating productive fund, which made supplies available to resolve urgent needs. These strategies are considered key by the organisation, as they allow it to reach communities and homes with their gender advisory and counselling services and maintain their awareness-raising campaign processes while fostering the exercise of rights among the community.

“We think it is fundamental to be able to continue supporting the role of women's human rights promoters who carry out the advisory and counselling tasks during these times. It is these community roles that allow women, in this context of isolation, to be able to feel supported and accompanied in situations of violence”.

El Chañar-Movimiento Campesino de Córdoba, Argentina

Some grantees started campaigns to appeal for donations, especially food and personal hygiene products, to assist people in emergency situations and collaborate with soup kitchens and community centres. In Argentina, 100% Diversidad y Derechos (100% Diversity and Rights), in coordination with other organisations, launched the fundraising campaign “We all take care of each other” to buy personal care items and food for transvestite and trans people from all over the country. Casa Comunidad (Community House) (Cordoba, Argentina) implemented a similar initiative with the campaign “Sexist violence is also a pandemic”, aimed at strengthening support for women in situations of violence by providing personal care items and cleaning products, food and phone cards.

It is important to mention that providing material support was not exempt from logistical and health care challenges for the organisations involved. It increased the psychophysical exhaustion of activists in the region: from the disinfection and packaging of all items with protective equipment and the logistics of safe transportation, to the coordination to establish the small teams of community advocates who were in charge of distribution and delivery at strategic locations.

“We wanted to reduce the impact of COVID-19 and preventive isolation on the lives of transvestite and trans people, one of the groups most affected due to their exclusion from formal work, healthcare, education, housing and the social care network. We launched the fundraising campaign ‘We all take care of each other’ in order to buy food and personal care items for transvestite and trans people from different provinces across the country”.

100% Diversidad y Derechos, Argentina

• Information Dissemination / Communication

In times of pandemic, the dissemination and access to reliable information is crucial, especially because it is an unprecedented situation that exacerbates uncertainty. For this reason, many grantees emphasised the dissemination of existing institutional resources, both for women in situations of gender-based violence and for those who qualified to receive benefits, such as the emergency household income and other assistance provided by the State. Femi Unidas (Femi United) (Asuncion, Paraguay) produced video tutorials and provided technical support to facilitate women’s access to public assistance services through direct hotlines. CCIMCAT (Tarija, Bolivia) produced bilingual Guaraní-Spanish material on care methods, prevention of COVID-19 and violence in homes in the context of confinement, which they disseminated through their radio programme and social media channels.

Consejerías Comunitarias Integrales en Derechos Sexuales y (no) Reproductivos de Salta (Comprehensive Community Advisory Board on Sexual and (non) Reproductive Rights of Salta) (Argentina), used the slogan “Your rights are not in lockdown” and distributed 300 posters with information and contact details to facilitate access to sexual and reproductive health services, such as the free national 0800 hotline, contacts for the Red de Profesionales de la Salud por el Derecho a Decidir (Network of Health Professionals for the Right to Decide), the Socorristas and that of the advisory councils themselves, in conjunction with the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion.

Other grantees decided to focus on encouraging alternative narratives related to the pandemic, to offer a feminist perspective with a view to foster critical reflections. Media Red (Media Network) (Montevideo, Uruguay) set out to create feminist content for social media and narrate the struggle of feminism using its protagonists’ voices. AzMina (Brazil) carried out a national campaign from a gender and race perspective, to share the reality of black and indigenous women, informal workers and women deprived of liberty in the context of the pandemic. They also created databases with information on the pandemic and related issues, and a guide with sources that included gender, race and region in public health analyses.

“During this time, we noticed that traffic on social media networks increased. We want to encourage other media with a feminist perspective and that fosters critical reflections. So we decided to focus specifically on the content and communication products for dissemination using social media”.

Media Red, Uruguay

• **Awareness Raising / Sensitisation**

In line with the dissemination strategy, grantees also focused on sensitising and raising awareness about the rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people, especially related to sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence. Some turned to art to capture their audience, looking for creative ways to maintain the connection, especially with young people, overcoming the challenges posed by the digital world.

Hilando las Sierras (Connecting the Sierras) (Cordoba, Argentina) were forced to adapt the face-to-face workshops that they planned to give in the neighbourhoods where they work. They designed a graphic campaign in public spaces, with posters and billboards, on the topic of the rights of children within the framework of Children’s Day. They thus sought to contribute new slogans to reinforce their campaign “En un mundo justo las niñas no son madres” (“In a just world, girls are not mothers”). Centro de Estudios Carolina Muzzilli (City of Buenos Aires, Argentina)

disseminated audiovisual material using social media networks. These were related to the 15-year anniversary of the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion using the slogan “Un proyecto de vida, una historia compartida” (“A life project, a shared history”) and for the second anniversary of the half-sanction of the voluntary termination of pregnancy project in the Lower House of parliament in Argentina. The Asociación de Mujeres Afrodescendientes del Norte del Cauca (Association of Afro-descendant Women of Northern Cauca) (Colombia) carried out an awareness campaign on gender-based violence during the pandemic, using the slogan #QueElMaltratoEnEstaCuarentenaNoSeaUnVirus (#MayTheAbuseDuringQuarantineNotBecomeAVirus.)

Emancipa Paraguay (Emancipate Paraguay) (that works across the entire country) reinforced communication using the YouTube channel, website and social media channels of their magazine. They conducted interviews on sexual and reproductive health with experts and organised a launch event to build alliances and broaden their reach. They also provided training on digital security and on how to put together a threat response plan.

Artistas Feministas de la Ensenada (Buenos Aires, Argentina), together with young people from secondary schools, made a series of spots to broadcast on community radio with information and reflections that young people wanted to hear in the media about their sexual and reproductive rights. They were produced after talks, shared readings and activities about gender and Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE). The Asociación por los Derechos de las Mujeres (Association for Women’s Rights) (ADEM) (San Luis, Argentina) also organised a Youth Forum using social media and decided to create videos and podcasts using secondary school curricular content on Comprehensive Sexual Education. Mujeres por Mujeres (Women for Women) (Tucuman, Argentina) organised a virtual forum called “Voluntariado Joven 2020” (“Young Volunteering 2020”) with debates and reflections on feminism, training on gender-based violence. They prepared a dissemination brochure on access to the Justice system and published a brochure called “Abortar es un derecho” (“Abortion is a right”). For its part, the Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito de Córdoba (National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion of Cordoba) (Argentina) worked on the creation of content and artistic visual tools, such as advertising campaigns, audiovisual short films with other social organisations, interventions, photographs, galleries, performances, among other artistic proposals in different parts of the city and the interior of the province, with a view to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive rights.

“This pandemic has further exacerbated the social, economic, gender and racial inequalities that exist in Brazil.”

Casa da Mulher do Nordeste (Northeast Woman’s House), Brazil

• Care Strategies

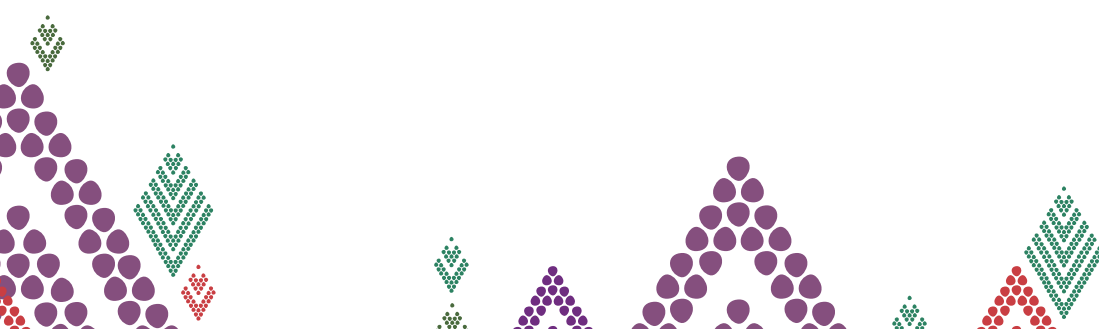
Emotional psychological support and self-care were also central strategies among the organisations, both towards the communities with which they work and for the activists themselves. These care strategies are centred around the idea of sisterhood, typical of feminism, characterised by connections and the collective. Some organisations have reported contagions and borderline situations amongst community promoters and activists and those closest to them, as is the case for members of the Red de Mujeres de La Matanza (Argentina).

Servicio a la Acción Popular (Popular Action Service) (SEAP) (Cordoba, Argentina), La Berkins (Buenos Aires, Argentina) and Casa Comunidad (Cordoba, Argentina) among other organisations, opened emergency telephone hotlines or WhatsApp channels to provide support to those in situations of gender-based violence.

Grantees that offer advice and information on sexual and reproductive rights also continued to respond to requests from users and those accompanying them over the telephone and through social media networks. Consejerías Comunitarias Salta (Salta Community Advisory Board) (Argentina), in the first four months of quarantine, provided support for 42 cases of Legal Termination of Pregnancy (LTP) and 13 cases requiring access to contraceptive methods and self-perceived gender adaptation hormones. Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas (National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women) (ANAMURI) (Chile) created spaces for exchange across the country to provide emotional support and the opportunity for rural and indigenous women to share quarantine experiences, adapting to the different possibilities with regards to access to technology.

Some grantees used creativity as a central element when providing emotional accompaniment. Mujeres Activando (Women Activating) (Cordoba, Argentina) carried out a series of workshops on cooking, raising awareness about self-care and healthy eating, women's soccer, how to establish a physical activity routine, and photography and art, as a means of expression to work on violence, comprehensive sexual education and self-care.

Other organisations emphasised the importance of capacity building related to digital security from a feminist perspective. Corporación Promoción de la Mujer Taller de Comunicación Mujer (Corporation for the Promotion of Women, Women's Communication Workshop) (Quito, Ecuador) organised the training programme #DiálogosNecesarios (#NecessaryConversations) on digital security and cyberactivism through secure virtual platforms.



“We aim to become a network that supports women, children and non-conforming people who need us in these difficult times. We want to put care of life, of our lives, at the core of everything beyond the pandemic”.

Juanita Moro, Jujuy, Argentina

• **Advocacy and Monitoring of Government Measures**

Monitoring government actions and advocacy to guarantee the effective fulfilment of the rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people are part of the strategies deployed by the organisations. These strategies were also affected by the new reality and the challenges it poses.

Some grantees monitored the emergency policies implemented by governments to address the health, economic and political consequences of the pandemic. The Rede de Mulheres Negras do Paraná (Paraná Black Women Network) (Brazil) monitored the social programmes called Bolsa Familia (Family Package) and Merienda Escolar (School Lunch), which a significant percentage of the population of girls, boys, adolescents, youth and black women in the country are eligible for. At the same time, they continue to participate in monitoring and advocating spaces such as the women’s, health and racial equality councils at the state and municipal level. Corporación Promoción de la Mujer Taller de Comunicación Mujer (Quito, Ecuador) carried out a registry of rights violation cases based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This led to them simplifying their registration forms and processes, adapting them to be uploaded online and via secure applications.

Advocacy work continued, but was moved to the digital world. Organisations that work on gender violence, such as Juanita Moro (Jujuy, Argentina) continued to carry out actions aimed at different State agencies in order to facilitate access to the justice system and adequate protection responses, and reduce the effects of the critical path and reduce exposure to institutional violence and re-victimisation of women who report or seek assistance. With a view to raising awareness, Tinamasté (which works in the North and Caribbean regions of Costa Rica) ran a communication campaign based on the results of an investigation into deficits in public policies for the agricultural sector and their impact on local peasant production, including the violation of human rights and breakdown of social fabric. This organisation also aims to increase visibility of women’s rural work, both on a day-to-day basis and in crisis contexts, in order to contribute to raising awareness about the value of such work.

At the regional level, the multi-country consortium led by Fundación AVP para el Desarrollo Social (AVP Foundation for Social Development) (Colombia), in conjunction with organisations that make up the Red Mujer y Hábitat (Women and Habitat

Network) in Latin America, organised two virtual forums on “Women, pandemic and post-pandemic” to establish an advocacy strategy for regional and international debates and forums, based on the agenda for women’s right to the city.

Grantees that promote sexual and reproductive rights continued to advocate for these rights to remain on the agenda. *Consejerías Comunitarias Salta* (Argentina) was able to achieve that access to sexual and reproductive rights services be declared as essential. *Mujeres por Mujeres* (Tucuman, Argentina) continued with advocacy actions in the justice system presenting twelve administrative and judicial presentations online, in defence of the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls. Given the lack of assistance to urban communities of popular sectors in Greater Asuncion, *Femi Unidas* (Asuncion, Paraguay) sent formal letters to the responsible local authorities.

Mujeres en el Horno (Women in Hot Water) (Uruguay) provides advice to women about Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy (VTP). With the change of national government in Uruguay and the pandemic, accessing this health practice became more difficult. The organisation changed the focus of its activities to; collect and update information on health and VTP services in Uruguay; identify difficulties in the VTP process through consultations with women and using a complaint form; identify mechanisms or people who facilitate the VTP process within health services; and, lastly, monitor established VTP mechanisms and access to VTP during restrictive measures in times of pandemic.

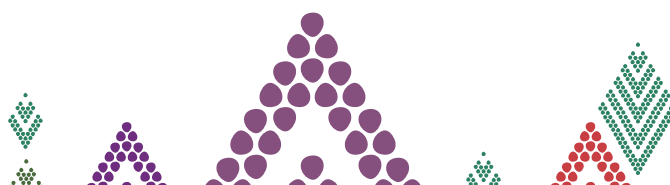
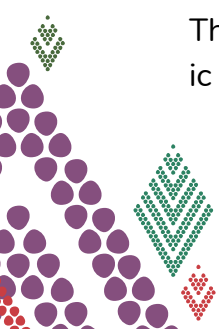
Despite the limitations that transitioning to the digital world posed for monitoring and advocacy strategies, the proposals made by grantees showed that they are necessary actions, that complement direct assistance in emergencies, and that they remain highly relevant to ensure that the demands of women and dissidents occupy a central place on the political agenda. This aligns with FMS’ priority to strengthen advocacy strategies and the political participation of women and LBTIQ+ people in all of its programmes.

“We consider it urgent to include the importance of sexual and (non) reproductive health within the framework of this global contingency, as well as support for access to Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy”.

Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito, Cordoba, Argentina

- **Knowledge Generation, Recovery of Traditional Knowledge and Dialogue Spaces**

The production and dissemination of evidence-based analyses of the pandemic and its differentiated impact on women, and the promotion of dialogue and



exchange through virtual forums, encouraging the involvement of a range of actors such as government, women's organisations and networks, have –and always will have– a central place in organisations. These strategies are consistent with the importance FMS gives to generating data –for example, surveying and compiling data on the needs of women in precarious situations and the analysis of topics such as care during the pandemic– and collective reflections as an input for the promotion of key issues regarding women's human rights, as well as for awareness raising in society in general.

Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios sobre el Desarrollo (Interdisciplinary Centre for Development Studies) (CIEDUR) (Montevideo, Uruguay), within the Red de Género y Comercio (Gender and Business Network) framework created the blog “Género, pandemia y cuarentena” (“Gender, pandemic and quarantine”), to exchange ideas on the impacts of the pandemic and prevention measures on the lives of women, and talk about the role of women in care, both at home and in the labour market. The collaborators share open articles that serve as a foundation for discussion such as a forum. The investigation entitled “Coronavirus, pandemia y cuarentena: ¿cómo afectan a las mujeres?” (“Coronavirus, pandemic and quarantine: How do they affect women?”) is one result of those exchanges. They also organised in conjunction with Asociación Lola Mora (Lola Mora Association) (Buenos Aires, Argentina) a seminar on community care in times of pandemic to reflect on the role and characteristics of community organisation led by women.

Ovejas Negras (Black Sheep) (Montevideo, Uruguay) mapped social organisations that provide services, to identify and register responses to the pandemic from within the LGBTIQ+ movement itself and thus be able to guide those who require assistance, without being limited exclusively to state agencies. SEAP (Cordoba, Argentina) surveyed the demand for support in Legal Termination of Pregnancy situations –which increased days after the Preventive and Compulsory Social Isolation (PCSI) was decreed throughout the country– and established a map with grassroots leaders to ascertain if sexual and reproductive rights were being respected in neighbourhood health centres. In addition, SEAP held a consultation with more than 400 people from 44 towns in the province of Cordoba to enquire about the effects of isolation measures on women, lesbians and trans people. The information collected was systematised and could be used for public policies. They also prepared, designed and published an Assistance Protocol for LTP Situations in Cordoba, and provided support for the Survey of Gender Promoters, promoted by the national Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity in Argentina. ANAMURI (Chile) motivated rural women and indigenous women from all over the country to make audio capsules recovering ancestral knowledge about health and nutrition, which would be useful to deal with the pandemic in a safe and accessible way.

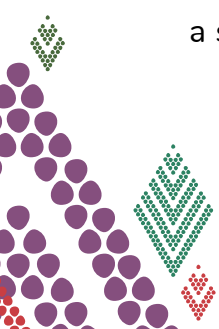
- **Capacity Building and Strengthening**

To the extent that the digital world allowed it, capacity building was a strategy deployed as a priority (although not exclusively) by organisations that promote sexual and reproductive rights, almost all of which are grantees of the *We Want Us Alive* programme. For example, the Centro de Estudios Carolina Muzzilli (Buenos Aires, Argentina) continued with their training programme called “Vocería por el Derecho al Aborto” (“Spokeswomen for the Right to Abortion”) with five theoretical-practical online meetings, targeted at those who undertook lobbying training in the previous year. SEAP (Cordoba, Argentina) and the Red de Mujeres de La Matanza (Argentina) supported community promoters training about tools to respond to situations of need or urgency related to sexual and reproductive rights in a pandemic. Between 82 and 105 people from organisations and institutions from all over Argentina participated in this training programme. Mujeres por Mujeres (Tucuman, Argentina) organised an athenaeum in which its team of professionals provided comprehensive advice to participants of the Ateneo de Salud del Noroeste Argentino (Athenaeum of Health of the Argentine Northwest) to ensure access to health for women, girls and adolescents in the region. Clinical documentation for the certification of causes for legal abortion was created collectively.

- **Coordination and Building Networks**

Another cross-cutting initiative was the permanent dialogue, coordination and networking with other organisations and human rights defenders, to be informed, maintain ties and exchange strategies around prevention plans to stop the contagion of COVID-19.

The Malona Colectiva Feminista (Feminist Collective Malona) (Mendoza, Argentina) coordinated virtual plenary session meetings to design and consolidate strategies between the different areas that make up the Mendoza regional area of the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion (Greater Mendoza, Eastern Zone, Valle de Uco, Alta Montaña, San Rafael, Malargüe, General Alvear). Furthermore, with a view to strengthening networks and alliances between organisations, they held seven virtual meetings with the National Campaign and another with the Red de Profesionales de la Salud por el Derecho a Decidir (Network of Health Professionals for the Right to Decide) in Mendoza. Palabras (Words) (Santa Fe, Argentina) structured its work based on digital encounters with grassroots referents from different organisations in the province. The aim was to map the territorial coverage of groups and their scope, identify issues, prioritising those related to access to LTP and Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE), and collectively develop a shared approach and monitoring strategies for advocacy.



Juanita Moro (Jujuy, Argentina) created a network system of fellow activists in the region to activate local resource socialisation, identify at-risk situations and provide close accompaniment. As an organisation, they decided to prioritise strengthening ties with activists who are part of the project and generate supportive responses based on sisterhood and feminism. Puntos de Encuentro (Shared Meeting Points) (with specific interventions in Honduras and Nicaragua) coordinated with other organisations to define and implement prevention plans that contribute to curbing the spread of COVID-19. Lastly, Rebeldes del Sur (Asuncion, Paraguay) established strategic alliances with other organisations to coordinate assistance for the Bañado Sur community.

IV. Repercussions: Grantees and Fondo de Mujeres del Sur towards 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic context and its impact on grantee organisations lead to a reflection on the role of the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur, as an organisation aimed at strengthening activism in favour of the human rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people and gender equality. Firstly, **the gender impact of the pandemic highlighted the relevance and opportunity of women's funds as donors** because it was precisely feminist groups, organisations and networks that were on the ground attending to the needs of women and LGBTIQ+ people during the emergency. They also continued the fight to protect and recognise their rights, and ensured their demands were included in the measures governments were adopting to contain the contagion and alleviate the crisis.

Secondly, mandatory isolation and mobility restrictions in many of the countries (which were gradually relaxed but still limit the opportunity for groups to meet) made the transition to the digital world inevitable, and this **requires rethinking the ways in which articulation strategies as initially designed and that characterise FMS programmes are established**. One thing that the deepening of the crisis confirmed is that the exchange of experiences, alliances between grantees and establishing cooperation networks at all levels to expand the scope of work along with regional and international advocacy capacity are fundamental.

Thirdly, given that the emergency not only affects women and LGBTIQ+ people and the exercise of their rights, but also their relationships, it is **essential to understand the gender impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges and opportunities that this poses in the medium and long term for the leadership and activism of feminist and diversity organisations**. It is important to exchange views and

experiences on the **different activism strategies that emerged in this context, and the advantages and limitations that they may have.** Therefore, it is important to give rise to the voices of grantees and feminist activists, academics and leaders with extensive knowledge about the realities of the region. Such permanent analysis constitutes a key input to guide any internal review of the strategies deployed by FMS to support the activism of organisations in the region.

On the other hand, **the pandemic has placed the care of both activists and the communities in which they work at the forefront.** FMS has supported the self-care and community-care strategies implemented by some grantees, especially in relation to the risks posed by the actions of fundamentalisms in the region. However, the differential impact of the pandemic on the lives of women, especially those in unequal positions, requires that this issue be given greater attention and prominence.

Care is part of the conditions required for activism, which have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as freedom of movement and assembly, economic sustainability of organisations and activists, and even their survival and physical integrity, in cases where it may be threatened. To that effect, it is **advantageous to think –in our role as a women’s fund– how to contribute to guaranteeing the conditions necessary to facilitate activism.** Adaptations should contemplate and promote in turn those strategies that are emerging precisely from this new context: What activisms are necessary and possible given COVID-19? Some of the pivot points around which the strategies described in the previous section are organised account for these new modes, which will surely change according to the context.

Sixthly, the gender impact of the pandemic has highlighted the **importance of having feminist donors** from the region. We are funders that work closely with grantees, that share a focus on human rights, that understand the needs and restrictions that organisations face, the flexibility we have and the ability to listen to meet those demands, are what have given grantees the opportunity to reallocate resources and redirect activities in the context of the pandemic. In this process, not only were the organisations strengthened in their response capacity, but the relevance and opportunity of FMS and its strategic programmes were also strengthened.

It is within this framework that FMS’ support to grassroots or community responses deployed by the organisations must be understood. From a feminist approach, ensuring grantees’ perspectives are centre stage implies respecting their autonomy in decision-making to respond to realities on the ground while also understanding that if that reality calls for basic needs, such as food and personal hygiene products, to be met in the emergency then this circumstantial support is profoundly political. Not only because grantees often accompany such assistance work with awareness-raising on rights, but also because it allows them to establish even deeper ties to the communities in which they implement their activism strategies.



And because **activism cannot be separated from the context**: activism is political, and wanting to separate it from the context implies turning it into a purely technical issue that does not lead to social transformation. The demand to see the most basic needs met is still a synthesis of the deep gender and socio-economic inequalities that persist in the region and that are evident more than anything in the bodies and use of time of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people.

Therefore, supporting the community responses implemented by grantees (and any of the other strategies used) is to continue trusting in the continuous activism of the organisations in favour of gender equality and diversity. It is to continue investing in responses that are based on feminism and sisterhood, which lead to structural changes. It is to continue investing in the coherence between FMS' feminist origins and its current practices, characterised by the quest for more horizontal and transparent power relations, and the conviction that flexibility in the relationship with grantees contributes to their sustainability and autonomy and, ultimately, to strengthen feminist and sexual diversity movements in favour of more just and egalitarian societies.

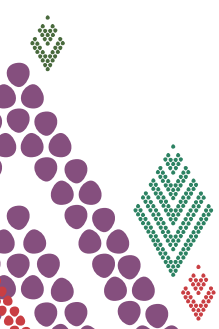
With regards to financial support, the emergency **forces us to rethink disbursement and financial reporting mechanisms** as a donor organisation that implements various programmes. Access to fast and flexible funds would allow grantees to adapt to a changing reality and meet unforeseen needs. This would imply reviewing the requirements for the application, approval, monitoring and evaluation of projects, in order to analyse how much more flexible they can become, and what creative strategies can be employed to allow for that flexibility. In that sense, the experience and best practices of other women's funds can be valuable.

Finally, as a women's fund, fulfilling the demand might require **reinforcing support to grantees beyond the grants already awarded, requiring an additional influx of resources to pay for institutional needs and deal with the situation of women as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic**. Open dialogue with donors becomes crucial along with ensuring that resources from official development assistance, which are being committed to combat the pandemic, do not relegate the gender agenda or the role of women's funds to reach feminist movements in all their diversity.

V. Strengthened Activisms

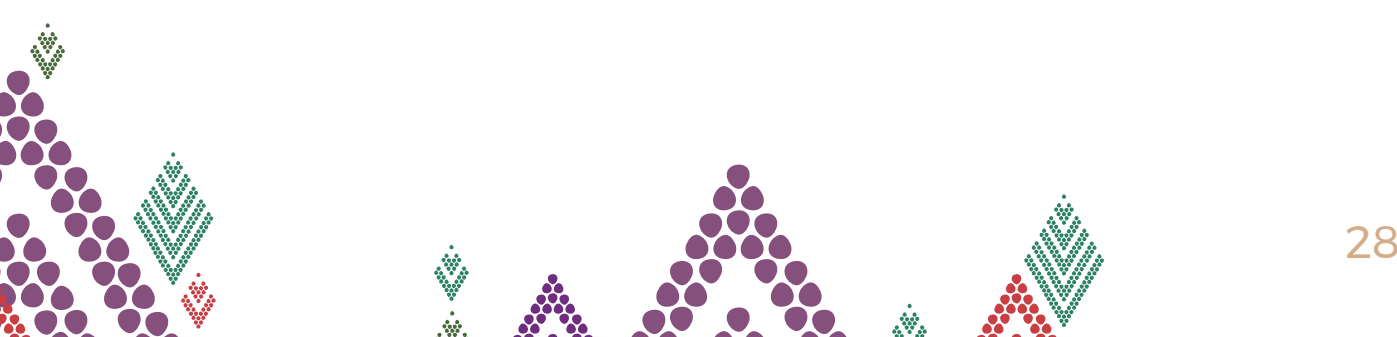
By way of conclusion, the strategies utilised by grantee organisations of the different FMS programmes, which reassessed resource allocation when faced with the COVID-19 emergency, highlight some facts that are detailed below.

- **Gender inequalities and their intersectionalities persist** (with class, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation, among other variables) in Latin American societies. This became even more evident and marked during the emergency –from gender violence, unequal distribution of unpaid care tasks and job insecurity, to difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive rights, among others.
- **Grantees have thorough knowledge of the reality of women** in their countries, and they have established strong articulations with other groups and networks of women and actors from civil society and the government, both in their localities and at the national and regional levels.
- **Grantees have demonstrated a great capacity to adapt and respond rapidly** to the consequences of the pandemic, evidencing **their institutional strength**. Attention to the most immediate material needs did not lead to the abandonment of advocacy activities –which continued to be key to positioning women’s demands on the political agenda– but, on the contrary, they were complemented by adopting a feminist approach. Grantee institutional strength has been demonstrated by the range of strategies implemented to guarantee support for women and LGBTIQ+ people in situations of violence, overcoming the limitations imposed by the emergency through help hotlines, the creation of care spaces, the dissemination of information on basic resources, the collection of data or the strengthening of territorial networks, among other measures.
- In times of crisis, **practices used in the feminist movement** are important, such as sisterhood, dialogue, participation, articulation, building networks, collective construction and care strategies.
- **Closeness and flexibility are necessary characteristics in a donor, especially in emergency contexts**. The proximity of the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur as a donor has allowed FMS to bring resources closer to all kinds of women’s organisations and LGBTIQ+ people, but above all to grassroots organisations, who did and do strong ground work in their countries and are often excluded from development aid; while flexibility has facilitated FMS’ ability to respond to a dynamic scenario such as the one posed by the emergency.
- **There is a need to be permanently gauging changes in the context**, in line with the idea of closeness and flexibility in a donor. Activism, in both its aims and implementation, is a living process that changes according to each context. To this regard, activism requires support that can identify changes in the context and adapt to the new needs that these changes imply.



- **It is important to continue to support feminist organisations with financial and technical resources** so as to enhance their work to defend the human rights of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people as they play a key role in the path to gender equality.

The health and economic crisis that deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic unavoidably highlighted the gender gaps that persist in Latin America. Relentless activism by feminist organisations plays a key role in amplifying the voices of women, girls and LGBTIQ + people, their needs and demands, in order to guarantee responses from the States. They also extend a network of sisterhood of social support in the emergency. The strategies employed by grantees of all the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur programmes are a clear example of this. To this regard, the COVID-19 outbreak and its consequences in the region have only ratified Fondo de Mujeres del Sur's deep conviction to continue investing in strengthening feminist and diversity movements, to build more egalitarian societies in which women and LGBTIQ+ people effectively enjoy their rights and can live free from violence and discrimination.






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